

Pugs, poodles, bulldogs and more - humans love their dogs

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What is the point of a pug? Photo: DodosD via Wikimedia Commons

Almost every single dog we love today once had a real purpose. And it was not just to snuggle with its owner!

What about dog breeds? Where do they come from?

Ancient Dog Breeds Might Not Be So Old

A breed is a group of dogs with very similar physical and behavioral traits. These traits might have occurred naturally. Or, they might be the result of human actions, like breeding.

Research shows that the domestication of dogs began in Asia and spread to Africa. This happened somewhere between 9,000 and 34,000 years ago.

A number of dogs have been claimed as "ancient breeds." However, dog breeds are probably not so ancient. Scientists looked at DNA evidence. DNA contains the instructions for how our bodies grow and develop. Genes are tiny sections of DNA.

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Some Dogs Used To Have Specific Jobs

They did a study in 2004. It looked at similarities in genes among dog breeds. It found distinct groupings of dogs linking to times in history when humans bred dogs. By ancient Roman times, groupings of dogs had begun to form around certain purposes. These included guard dogs as well as herding dogs and hunting dogs.

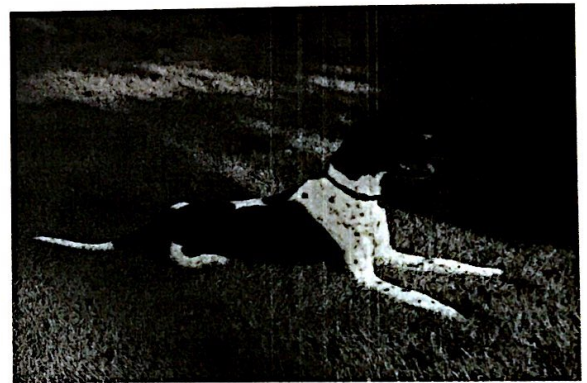
Starting in the 1800s, more people bred dogs. England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales were key spots.

Below are 20 dog breeds that are recognized by the American Kennel Club. They are organized by year. You can see where these dogs come from. Why do they look a certain way? Why do they act a certain way? Read on to find out.

Pointer (1878)

The pointer was one of the first dogs recognized by the American Kennel Club. That was in 1878. The pointer is sometimes known as the English pointer.

The English pointer finds prey animals. It does not kill them. Instead of hunting them, it stops and aims its nose at its prey. Then, a hunter can kill it.



Irish Setter (1878)

The Irish setter is a longer-haired, reddish dog. It also points at prey. There are references to "setters" in books from the 1500s.

Cocker Spaniel (1878)

The cocker spaniel might come from Spain. Not everyone agrees, though. The breed was meant to help hunt woodcocks. This is a small game bird. This is where the "cocker" part of its name comes from.

Basset Hound (1885)

The basset hound is short-legged and droopy. It has a very strong sense of smell.

Beagle (1885)

The cute modern beagle dates back to the 1830s. It comes from Essex, England. The beagle is a hunting dog. It is a fairly slow runner. Still, it is good for hunting rabbits and pheasants.

Bloodhound (1885)

The bloodhound has an excellent sense of smell. It was used to track deer and wild boar. The bloodhound is also very good at tracking humans. As a result, it is used by police and detectives. The dogs can help to solve crimes.

Bull Terrier (1885)

The bull terrier is a British breed. It has a darker history. By the mid-1800s, "blood sports" were popular in England. These included dogfighting. Placed in a ring, the bull terrier is a strong fighter.

Collie (1885)

There are many breeds in the collie family. The border collie is one. Collies probably come from northern England and Scotland. They are herding dogs. They have strong instincts to control populations of animals like sheep and ducks.

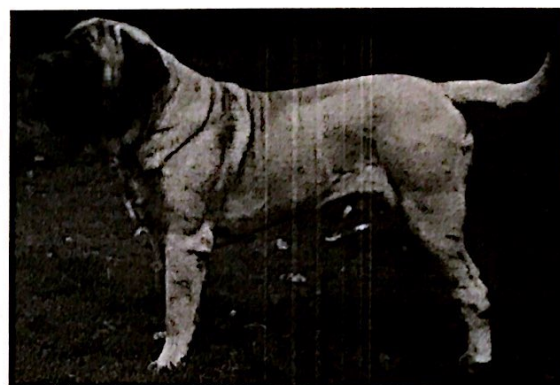


Dachshund (1885)

The dachshund is a mixture of a number of other hound breeds. It began in Germany. Deutschland means Germany in the German language. This dog was bred specifically for its skill at hunting badgers. It was often used for hunting other small animals.

Mastiff (1885)

Mastiffs are large, shaggy dogs. They all share a common ancestor called the Molossus. It is a dog from Greece and Rome that no longer exists. Mastiffs are guard dogs.



Pug (1885)

The pug is in the mastiff family. It is very tiny. This makes it a terrible guard dog. Pugs come from royal China. It is one of the very few breeds that was originally bred to be a pet.

St. Bernard (1885)

Another mastiff-type is the St. Bernard. They are huge. This slobbery dog comes from the Swiss Alps. Those are steep mountains in Europe. St. Bernards have strong bodies and thick fur. This makes them great search-and-rescue dogs in the snowy mountains of the Alps.

Greyhound (1885)

Dogs that look like greyhounds have shown up in images in Egypt. The images are in tombs. They are about 5,000 years old. So, the greyhound has been thought of as a very ancient breed. However, scientists found this is a coincidence. Greyhounds are newer. Dogs like them appeared in Medieval Europe.

Greyhounds are used as hunting dogs. They have excellent eyesight. They are also very fast.

Yorkshire Terrier (1885)

The Yorkshire terrier, or Yorkie, is a tiny dog. It comes from Yorkshire, in northern England. The Yorkie dates back to the mid-1800s. Yorkshire had many factories then. The city needed dogs to

hunt rats. The Yorkie is great for the task. It has a small body and short legs. It can chase small prey.

Bulldog (1886)

The bulldog was bred for use in blood sports.

Blood sports were very violent. They were outlawed in England in 1835. It stopped making sense to breed this dog. However, some people continued breeding the bulldog.



Great Dane (1887)

The Great Dane is in the mastiff family. The huge dog might or might not have come from Denmark. Stories of similar dogs can be found in Germany and France.

Great Danes are hunting dogs. They were trained to hold down deer, boar and other large game. This was after the animals were caught by another dog.

Poodle (1887)

The poodle came from Germany. It was called the pudelhund. It can swim. It has webbed toes to help it swim.

The poodle has a strong retrieval instinct. This means it is good at finding and bringing things back. So it is great for fetching waterfowl, like ducks and geese.

Dalmatian (1888)

The Dalmatian came from the country of Croatia. "Dalmatia" is a coastal region of Croatia. The first mentions of it date to the early 1600s.

Dalmatians are famous for being firehouse dogs. This started in the United States in the 1800s. Dalmatians could work well with horses. Fire engines at the time were horse-drawn. Dalmatians could trot alongside and in front of the engines to clear a path and find the way to a fire.

Pomeranian (1888)

The Pomeranian is a tiny fluffy dog. Queen Victoria of England is responsible for the Pomeranian. She continually bred smaller and smaller Pomeranians. This breed was always just a companion dog.



Golden Retriever (1925)

The golden retriever is originally from Scotland. It dates back to the mid-1800s. The golden retriever was bred for its instinct to go retrieve things.

Quiz

- 1 Where did domestic dogs spread from?
 - (A) Africa to Rome
 - (B) Rome to Egypt
 - (C) Egypt to Asia
 - (D) Asia to Africa

- 2 Which sentence from the article states a main idea of the entire article?
 - (A) A breed is a group of dogs with very similar physical and behavioral traits.
 - (B) A number of dogs have been claimed as "ancient breeds."
 - (C) DNA contains the instructions for how our bodies grow and develop.
 - (D) The pointer was one of the first dogs recognized by the American Kennel Club.

- 3 Why do people breed dogs?
 - (A) for the way they look
 - (B) for the way they behave
 - (C) for the way they look and behave
 - (D) for other features besides looks and behavior

- 4 What is the main idea of the section "Yorkshire Terrier (1885)"?
 - (A) Yorkshire terriers were needed to hunt for small prey.
 - (B) Yorkshire terriers are also called Yorkies.
 - (C) Yorkshire terriers got their name from the county of Yorkshire.
 - (D) Yorkshire terriers date back to the mid-1800s.

- 5 How do dogs serve people?
 - (A) Dogs eat people for dinner.
 - (B) Dogs help hunters find prey.
 - (C) Dogs lie down by people's fireplaces.
 - (D) Dogs jump into swimming pools.

- 6 According to the section "St. Bernard (1885)," why do St. Bernards do "search-and-rescues"?
 - (A) They have good instincts for hunting.
 - (B) They are good at tracking.
 - (C) They have strong bodies with thick fur.
 - (D) They are fast with good eyesight.

- 7 Which dog could BEST find your lost sister?
 - (A) a cocker spaniel
 - (B) a dalmation
 - (C) a bloodhound
 - (D) a greyhound

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