



Pit Bulls:

A Guide

Everything you need to know
about pit bulls, and more!

Getting to know the breeds:

The term "pit bull" applies to several different breeds of medium-sized fighting terriers originally created through experimental crosses with bulldogs and terriers, originating in the 18th and 19th century Europe and America. The aim of these crosses was to combine the strength and bite of a bulldog with the athleticism, gameness, and courage of a terrier to create an all-purpose farm dog that could catch and drive cattle and hogs, clear the barn of vermin, hunt, and just do miscellaneous frontier era ranching tasks while also being a great family companion and babysitter for the kids. Later, especially after the banning of bull baiting as a sport, the focus was taken off of them as all-purpose farm dogs and they were developed and standardized as the fighting dogs we know them as today. These breeds include:

The American Pit Bull Terrier:



The APBT is what one generally thinks of when they think "pit bull." They are a moderate, medium sized dog that should weigh between 20 and 55 pounds, though the preferred range is probably closer to 35-50 pounds. They are happy, cheerful, athletic, eager to please goofballs that love everyone but can work their asses off as incredibly game, efficient hunting dogs when called on to do so. Unlike the other 3 breeds, dudley (non-black) noses are allowed and this does tend to characterize them, though historically, black noses were preferred.

This breed is the original Bull and Terrier, the dog that started it all, created from crosses of old-school bulldogs and English White Terriers and standardized in 1898. The United Kennel Club was the first registry to recognize the American Pit Bull Terrier, and was actually created for the purpose.

The Staffordshire Bull Terrier:



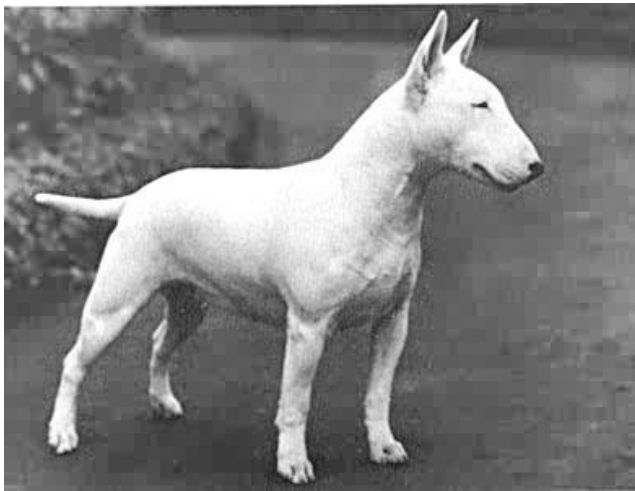
SBTs are the smallest version of the pit bull; and are basically the UK's APBTs. They are very popular and common in the UK, but until recently they were uncommon in the US. They can have a bit of a stubborn streak, unlike the APBT, which is about the only difference in temperament between the two. They were standardized in 1935 and a parent club was formed, and the first SBTs were brought to America in the 70's. They tend to average around 16 inches or so at the shoulder and weigh around 20-30 something pounds, and are just more compact dogs in general.

The American Staffordshire Terrier:



The Amstaff began with APBTs as foundation dogs, with some bulldog and mastiff added in to increase size. They were created in the 1930's almost exclusively for the ring, and are larger (up to 80 pounds) softer, less drivey, and less often used for work than APBTs. While they carry the same genes as the APBT, but as the generations pass there has been a trend showing. As the extreme drive is being bred out of the Amstaffs, so is the extreme dog aggression. It can, and will still happen, but it is watered down compared to the American Pit Bull Terrier.

The Bull Terrier:



The Bull Terrier is the 19th century version of the Amstaff, in that it was created for the bench and not the pit, though they were originally fought and used for ratting for a short period of time. Like the SBT they can be a bit more stubborn than APBTs, and are less drivey and less often worked than APBTs, like the Amstaff.

What about those big blue dogs that everyone calls pitbulls? What are Gotti and Razor's Edge? What about bluenose/rednose/nose color?

Those blue, big headed, low to the ground, wide chested dogs are not APBTs, they are mastiff/APBT/English bulldog mixes known as American Bullies. APBTs should be around 30-50 pounds, moderately sized, and as a general rule, most good breeders don't even touch blue dogs. Blue is an amstaff color, and was brought in when mastiffs were bred into Amstaffs, and then crossed those Amstaffs with APBTs to get RARE BLUE APBTs. None of the early APBTs were blue, and it's stigmatized to the point where blue dogs are pretty much automatically considered curs by anyone knowledgeable in the field.

THIS IS NOT A PIT BULL!



Gotti and Razor's edge are the two most notorious American Bully bloodlines that popularized the image of pitbulls as tough, badass, mean looking dogs. They are essentially destroying APBTs through being crossed into and mutting up good lines, as well as perpetuating the image of pitbulls are angry, bloodthirsty baby-killers.

"Bluenose" and "Rednose" dogs are simply dogs with blue or red noses. They are not a different "type" or "breed" of APBT, and nose color has absolutely no bearing on working ability, gameness, or fighting ability, and in no way affect the temperament or quality of the dog despite what gimmicky Back yard breeders would have you believe.

So what? Those blue hippo dogs look cool, why is it a problem?

The problem with this aside from health issues is that you are breeding a dog (pit bull) that should have extreme bite inhibition and tolerance towards humans with a breed (mastiff) that is used for human bite and protection work. They then call these dogs pit bulls, and in turn are one of the largest causes of breed specific legislation against pit bulls. The vast majority of cases where you see a pit bull mauling someone, it is one of these bully mastiff crosses.

To take a powerful strong and determined dog that is bred to never let go and keep on doing whatever it takes on until its finished and then breed it to a dog with low bite inhibition towards humans creates a dangerous and unsound animal.

It isn't a matter of us being snobs about what APBTs should look like, it isn't a matter of us thinking the dogs are "ugly" and that they should be put down because they don't meet the standard. The existence of American Bullies and the fact that they share a name with pit bulls is leading to the destruction of this breed through BSL, as well as the destruction of the gene pool as even very good lines are being mixed with and watered down by these dogs.

Well bred APBTs do not bite people and they do not maul children. American Bullies do, because the bite inhibition that APBTs have been bred for is thrown out the window as soon as the dog is crossed with a mastiff or a bulldog. The media and legislators do not see the difference between the two, so when they ban pit bulls, it extends to good, sound, healthy dogs as well as the mixes that are responsible for the attacks. To the people who decide whether or not the breed is allowed to exist, American Bullies and APBTs are one and the same.

Their existence isn't just something ugly and stupid to roll our eyes at; it's a real threat to this breed and It's not an exaggeration to say that at this rate, real American Pit Bull Terriers will cease to exist within the next 100 years, through a combination of BSL and the breeders of these dogs mutting up and destroying the few good lines (and there really are only a handful) left in existence.

So what's all this hype about pit bulls being vicious?

The American Pit Bull Terrier was selectively bred for bite inhibition towards humans. There are very, very few breeds of dogs that have that going for them when it comes to human aggression. Pit fighting dogs were bred to be highly dog aggressive, but spent most of their life as household pets that played with the kids, and just hung out most of the time. Several old school fighting books mention the number of fights a given dog was in, and even some of the most well-known dogs were only fought 3-5 times in their lives- and the rest of their 12+ years were spent at home, being good family pets. Human aggression was never, ever, EVER tolerated for these dogs.

In pit fighting, 2 human handlers and a referee or two are constantly in the pit with the dogs, handling them, pulling them apart to reposition bites, separating them and allowing them to scratch again, sticking their hands in their mouths to separate them...and all of this had to be done without getting bitten. Any dog that bit a handler, at any point, for any reason, even during the heat of a fight, was swiftly dealt with and usually shot on the spot. And so, those dogs were not bred- only the dogs with ENORMOUS control and bite inhibition passed on their genes. Pit bulls were never, ever used for human guard work because they were supposed to exhibit zero human aggression. A real, decently bred APBT is almost incapable of biting a human.

The problem we have now is that of idiots back yard breeding oversized dogs while having zero knowledge of the breed and what it stands for, breeding dogs of poor temperament, and breeding in mastiffs, american bulldogs, and other breeds that ARE used for human guard work, destroying a couple of hundred years of hard work to get this breed to the point where it never, ever bit humans. They're thugs that want the meanest, toughest, most vicious dog they can get, because THEY have fallen into the trap the media has set for pit bulls and bought into the "oh my god they eat babies" BS- and so perpetuate everything negative that has ever been said about this breed.

These same people then don't socialize their dogs, torment them to make them "mean," chain them to a 10 pound logging chain, and leave them in a backyard somewhere to half starve and suffer. APBTs are insanely people oriented, and are high energy dogs- and if you take an unneutered pit bull, chain it in a backyard, never talk to it, never play with it, never exercise it, and never feed it...you very quickly end up with a sexually frustrated, pissed off, miserable, neurotic dog that has basically gone insane from lack of stimulation, lack of food, and lack of exercise. You have a recipe for disaster that was entirely created by stupid breeders and stupid owners.

What most media articles fail to leave out is that most fatal dog bites involve the following: (This is ALL fatal dog bites, not just ones reported as pit bulls)

- Unneutered male dogs
- That are left chained for long periods of time
- Are usually malnourished, parasite ridden, and otherwise ill
- Are all but completely unsocialized
- Are poorly bred

AND:

- They usually involve an unsupervised child
- Left alone with said hungry, miserable, emotionally starved dog
- Dog finally escapes its chain
- Dog goes nuts from years of misery, confinement, probable beatings, and near starvation
- Dog bites kid whose negligent parents should go to jail for leaving it alone with said dog in the first place. (And, if they are owners of the dog, for treating their dog in such a manner.)
- Media flips out because some random abused short haired mutt bites a kid, calls it a pit bull, and the rest is history.

Okay, maybe they start out as nice dogs, but don't they have a tendency to just SNAP? They're really unpredictable, right?

A pit bull may suddenly decide it no longer likes other dogs, but other than that, no. What's more likely happening in these scenarios is that the owner of the dog is either not present at the time of the bite, or not adept enough at reading dog body language to see the warning signs the dog is giving off. Pit bulls are very stable, predictable, easy to read dogs and they do not just "lose it" for no reason, especially not on a human.

Wait, dog aggression? Prey drive? Isn't aggression just AGGRESSION?

Nope. Dogs can differentiate between species just fine. As stated above, pit bulls are bred to have exceptional bite inhibition with humans while maintaining a propensity towards aggression with other dogs and the desire to chase and catch prey animals. A dog suddenly becoming dog aggressive or overly prey driven is NOT an indicator that they will later develop human aggression. The three are not linked.

If pit bulls are dog aggressive and have strong prey drive, can I ever safely own one if I have other pets?

Yes. Most people with a dog aggressive dog crate and rotate, and NEVER leave their dogs alone together uncrated. A lot of people with pits in general do this by default, whether the dogs in question are dog aggressive or not. They can play together- but if you have to leave the house or cannot keep an eye on them, one of them needs to be crated or they need to be somehow separated- dog aggressive dogs must also never be fed together.

It is never safe to leave a highly prey driven dog alone with a prey animal, but they can be taught to tolerate and ignore prey animals indoors, with the owners around. It can be done, but it does take some vigilance to insure that the two are not left alone together. Some pit bulls never develop dog aggression or strong prey drive, but most have both to at least SOME degree.

The only really limiting thing is that dog parks are out of the question for pit bulls. Just don't do it; too many potential problems, too much room for error.

If you own a pit bull and another dog, you SHOULD learn how to break up a fight, as there is a good chance a scuffle of some sort will happen sooner or later.

Crate and Rotate- A measure to prevent fights in the first place:

Perhaps you acquired same-sex pit bulls that, upon maturation, no longer tolerate each other. Maybe you have a multi-dog household, and two or more of your dogs have recently been fighting. Or you recently added a pit bull to your home, and it just isn't working out with the other dogs. Whatever the reason, by employing the use of 'Crate and Rotate' in your home you will be able to safely manage your pets and maintain them in your home. A pet is a lifetime commitment; re-

homing should be a last resort. Dog aggression is common among Pit Bulls and other bully breed dogs, and it is important to recognize this behavior for what it really is, and accept the reality that this breed has selectively been bred to be aggressive towards other dogs.

How to Use Crate and Rotate:

Many dog owners crate and rotate their dogs in multiple dog homes, and this is especially common in fostering situations. If your dog is not currently crate trained, now is the time to get started – this can be done at any age and size, but the sooner, the better. When using crating, it is important that you get your dog accustomed to the crate and never use the crate for punishment. Crating is an excellent way for you to protect your dog's health and keep him/her safe, and it should never be used as a form of punishment for your dog. You should always view crating as part of positive, responsible ownership.

If you are crating, make sure you invest in durable crates, as well as tough toys and chew items that your dog can enjoy while he/she is being crated. Remember, you want the dog to view the crate as a positive place, and you also want the dog to easily follow your cue to be crated.

Dogs should not be crated for an overly lengthy period of time; 4-8 hours is generally recommended as a maximum for crating. Some owners who crate and rotate also find that it is beneficial to feed the dogs in their crates; feeding in crates not only helps the dogs to associate the crate with something positive (meal time), but it also helps reduce the possibility of a fight occurring over resources. "Trigger" items such as bones, stuffed Kongs, rawhides, etc. should be given only in the crates. Many dogs consider these to be high-value items and worth fighting for.

Depending on your household schedule and routine, you will need to come up with a system that fits your family's needs. It is important to make everyone in your household aware of this new crate and rotate schedule and get them to be involved as much as possible. Expect weeks or months to pass before finding a routine that works well with everyone. Once you establish that routine, be sure to stick to it. Dogs like routine, and will learn the new system faster if you are consistent. Developing a consistent routine can include: identifying which crates you will use for which dogs, identifying where the crates are, determining which rooms they have access to, having scheduled times when they are out, having scheduled feeding times, etc.

If you have more than two dogs, it will be helpful to determine if any of them can be grouped together appropriately. Knowing which dogs can be rotated with each other will also be an important part of the crate and rotate routine. You may find that your dogs need to be rotated separately for all activities including feeding, exercise, and time with you, or you might find that if you have multiple dogs that get along well together for feeding, exercise and spending time with the family.

It is important for all dogs part of a crate and rotate program to receive both obedience training and adequate exercise. Dogs who are trained in basic obedience will be easier to manage within the home, and exercise helps keep your dogs fit both mentally and physically. Canine exercise also burns off excess energy which can help reduce anxiety and tension, making their time in the crate more relaxed and pleasant for everyone involved.

A nice alternative to crate-and-rotate is using baby gates. If both dogs can respect the gate, then you can split your house into sections with the gates. That way, both dogs can be left out while you are home. **Do NOT leave them in their sections if you have to leave – they should always be crated when you are not home!**

Not all Pit Bulls are dog aggressive. There are many successful multiple bully and pit bull homes out there (I live in one), but a responsible owner should always watch out for signs of aggression and separate their dogs if the need arises.

If you are not scared off by now, I commend you! Now, why after all of that does anyone want to keep a pit bull?

The answer is simple. These dogs are amazing. These dogs will give their all to you – their heart, their soul. They will do anything you ask. Their never quit attitude is something that has no equal. These dogs will literally do whatever you command until you tell them to stop, or they physically cannot do it any longer. They have courage that is second to none. Because of that, these breeds excel in activities such as search and rescue. Hours after other dogs have given up, or stopped because of weather conditions, pit bulls won't stop until they find that person. They are gentle souls, and make awesome candidates for therapy or service work.

While human aggressive pit bulls were actively culled from bloodlines, traits such as gentleness, temperamental stability, and the desire to be handled by humans were emphasized. These qualities are the foundation of the "pit bull" breeds. It explains why footage of pit bulls being rescued from horrific circumstances usually features skinny, scarred-up dogs with wagging tails and happy tongues joyfully greeting law enforcement officers.

Their love for humans is so deeply driven into them, that it takes acts of such horrible cruelty to make them fear people. The dogs from the Michael Vick case are perfect examples – many of them passed temperament tests and became perfectly stable pets. Many of them became service or therapy dogs. If you want a dog who thinks you are their everything, who is sad when you are sad, who knows your every mood and changes their behavior to try to make everything better – then these dogs are for you.

What is a responsible pit bull owner? How can I be one?

A responsible Pit bull owner:

- 1.) Spays or neuters their dog.
- 2.) Understands dog aggression and prey drive in relation to the breed and what it means for their dog and how it must be handled.
- 3.) Understands dog body language and is prepared for and knows how to break up a dog fight.
- 4.) Obtains their dog from a rescue or a responsible breeder.
- 5.) Does not take their pit bull to dog parks.
- 6.) Does not leave their dog alone with prey animals or other dogs.
- 7.) Always leashes their dog in public.
- 8.) Obedience trains their dog and teaches it good manners for interacting with people and other animals out in public using positive training methods.
- 9.) Educates others, when possible, about the truth about pit bulls and what is happening to the breed.

How to introduce your pit bull to another dog:

Parallel leash-walking, on neutral territory with two handlers, is a great way to introduce dogs of any breed! Neutral territory means an area where neither dog has been or where neither dog resides. An unfamiliar, neutral territory is best to avoid territorial behavior in either dog. Both dogs should be wearing properly fitted collars and be on nylon or leather leashes. Prong collars, choke

chains, and Flexi-leads should not be used when introducing pit bulls. While taking a short walk, allow the dogs to curve around in a natural manner. Avoid face-face, head-on introductions between dogs. Instead, walk parallel to each other, a few feet apart, and alternate which dog is ahead of the other.

Also, do not allow a dog to greet another dog if he/she is dragging you towards the other dog or is misbehaving in any way (pulling, jumping, or lunging). Doing so will result in training the dog to misbehave to gain access to other dogs! The dog does not make the decision as to whom he will meet and when. You do! If the dogs appear to be friendly to each other, allow brief sniffing with one dog perpendicular or "T-shaped" to the other, and then each dog should be called away by the handlers. If either dog stiffens, stands up on its toes, or shows any aggressive posturing, call the dogs away immediately and interrupt the interaction. It is important to interrupt before things go wrong so that you can preserve the possibility of a successful interaction at a later time. It might be necessary to take several walks, in different locations, over time. Multiple introductions in this manner give you a better read for how the dogs will do. Do not rush this process if the introductions seem 'iffy' in any way. Stop the introduction if either dog is showing signs of fear or aggression. Body language that indicates fear or aggression can include: raised hackles, stiff posturing, lip curling, growling, air snapping, tail tucked between legs, one dog avoiding the other or wanting to hide behind the handler, lunging, or freezing.

If the leash walking is successful, it may then be appropriate to go to a fenced area and have one dog on leash, and one off. One handler might work obedience with the leashed dog, while letting the other dog roam around, allowing them to get used to each other's presence and scent. Usually in this scenario, the resident dog is loose, and the new dog is leashed. This gives one dog the ability to safely check things out and move away as needed while you maintain control of the other dog. Make sure the yard or fenced area is free of items that may possibly trigger a fight such as high-value toys, bones, rawhides, etc. When introducing dogs on leash, make sure that the leashes do not become tangled. Entangled leashes can increase tension and result in a conflict between dogs.

Additional Tips:

Make sure you know different types of canine behaviors: resource guarding, barrier frustration, same-sex aggression, territorial aggression, etc. Any of these behaviors in either dog can complicate an introduction. Brief, repeated introductions over time that end on a positive note are far more beneficial than a long, drawn-out introduction that may become problematic. Once you are off on the wrong paw with a bully introduction, it's hard to 'undo' it. Better to go slow and be successful! Remember, it's always easier to prevent a fight than to break one up! Never trust a pit bull not to fight. Always supervise and remain relaxed but vigilant.

In conclusion:

I thank you for wanting to help a pit bull by bringing one into your home. I hope that this packet can help ease the transition for both you and your new dog. Please do not hesitate to reach out with any questions or concerns you have!

Other resources I urge you to read are:

The Pit Bull Placebo (available online for free!)

Fight!: A Practical Guide to the Treatment of Dog-dog Aggression by Jean Donaldson.

www.badrap.com

<http://www.workingpitbull.com/>