

The Dashing Dachshund

Breed Spotlight



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It's hard not to smile when taking in the sight of a Dachshund. One of the most familiar, instantly recognizable canine breeds, it's noted for having a long, narrow, muscular body that's supported by short legs. Its elongated head, with ears hanging down to its cheeks, makes it seem even longer than it is. Because of its unusual, almost comical dimensions, Dachshunds have long been a favorite subject of cartoonists, toy makers, and writers, such as H.L. Mencken, who described these canines as being "a half-dog high and a dog-and-a-half long."

The unique body shape of the dachshund has earned it a score of nicknames such as 'long dog.' Highlighting its resemblance to certain food items, the breed is typically referred to as a 'weenie,' 'wiener,' or 'sausage dog,' as well as a 'hotdog' in the United States. Among enthusiasts of the breed, the adorable doggies may be affectionately called a 'Doxie' or 'Dashie.' In modern Germany—the breed's contemporary country of origin—they are commonly known as a 'Teckel' or, among hunters, 'Dackel.'

Their appearance, however, points to its origins as a breed developed for a specific objective: hunting badgers. This purpose is also reflected in the name 'Dachshund,' which literally translates from German as "badger dog." Their smaller legs allow them to dig and maneuver through tunnels so they can corner their prey, while having a larger chest gives them greater endurance and energy. In fact, the dachshund is the only breed certified for hunting both above and below ground by the Fédération Cynologique Internationale (FCI), Europe's World Canine Organization which is based in Belgium.

Ranked as the 9th most popular breed by the American Kennel Club (AKC), it's clear the dachshund is a canine with considerable appeal. The AKC recognizes two different sizes: the standard, with a height of 8 to 9 inches and a weight ranging from 16 to 32 pounds, and the miniature, which averages between 5 to 6 inches tall and typically weighs in at 11 pounds or less. The European kennel groups add a third category, the toy variety called a kaninchen, the German word for 'rabbit,' which can be as tall as 12 inches and is generally about 8 pounds by its first birthday.

Additionally, three different coat varieties enhance the breed's already considerable charm. Longhaired dachshunds have sleek, slightly wavy hair that should be brushed every day to prevent mats from forming, especially around their elbows and ears. The most popular type in the U.S., the smooth, or short-haired, Doxie typically has a shiny, sleek coat that requires little grooming. As the name would suggest, wirehaired dachshunds have short, thick, rough coats that will necessitate regular brushing to keep mats from forming.

Dachshunds have a wide color variety that spans from solid to multiple colors, plus numerous patterns. Solid shades include black, blue, chocolate, cream, fawn, and red. The breed's two-color combinations often involve a base color of either black, blue, chocolate, or fawn accented with cream or tan markings on the face or points. Another type, sable, features a red base coat with a black overlay. Wirehaired dachshunds can also exhibit an interesting coloration called wild boar in which the hair shaft itself is both red and black. A brindle pattern consists of striping that extends over the entire body, and it may manifest itself with any color of coat. Dappling, or patches of lighter color against a darker primary shade, can result in a tri-color combination, such as cream, chocolate and black. With a piebald pattern, the dog will have a white body with patches of one or two solid colors, such as red on white, or black and tan on white, covering either a few spots or up to 50 percent of its body.

Lovable, playful companions, the Dachshund can be an ideal pet for many people, including families with children or other pets, especially when introduced to them as puppies. With their smaller size, they adapt well to most living environments, including apartments. Given their curiosity and energetic nature, they do require moderate exercise, including daily walks.

With these wonderful characteristics, it's no wonder that Queen Victoria once recommended the breed, saying, "Nothing will turn a man's home into a castle more quickly and effectively than a dachshund." Get to know this fantastic, floppy-eared friend, and you may say the same!

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