

A Labrador : The Right Dog For You?

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Labradors make great family companions. They are intelligent, energetic, fun-loving, friendly, versatile and generally healthy dogs. But is a Labrador the right dog for every family? The best time to consider and answer this question is before you commit to owning one.

Take some time to go through each of the points below with your whole family, and make sure that you are all happy to welcome this beautiful but sometimes challenging new member of the clan into your home.

How Much Exercise Do Labradors Need?

An adult Labrador needs regular exercise. Just like people, dogs need to keep their cardiovascular system and muscles healthy through regular use. For minimum fitness, every adult Labrador that has regular access to a garden should also have a minimum daily walk of at least half an hour each day. If you don't have at least this much time to spend outdoors with your dog, a Labrador is not the right dog for you.

How Much Training Do Labradors Need?

Training your Labrador and teaching him some basic manners is vital. Big dogs must **learn not to jump on people**, barge them over, snatch food, bite or nip at fingers, or generally behave unacceptably. And like all dogs they must be trained to come when they are called. Especially when your puppy is young, it is important to teach him the basic commands which will help you to live happily together as he grows. There are many excellent training schools and your breeder will point you in the right direction.

How Much Attention Do Labradors Need?

Labradors love company. They are not solitary animals, and will want to be together for as much of the day as you are able. They will want to follow you around the house as you clean, or flop down by your feet whilst you do some work at the computer. Not only do Labs need to let out regularly to relieve themselves, but they need to have something to occupy their minds. Chew toys and activity toys are a great way to keep your Labs brain busy whilst you are otherwise occupied. Filling a kong with treats to distract them is a big favourite in our house.

Can A Labrador Be Left Alone All Day?

Labradors cannot be left completely alone all day whilst you are at work. If you work full time and cannot bring your Labrador with you, you will need to carefully plan how you will keep him happy whilst you are gone. If you are bringing home a small puppy, you will need to work from home or take some time off work while they settle in and potty training begins in earnest. The maximum amount of time a

dog should be regularly left is 3 to 4 hours, so if you work full time you will need to make arrangements for doggy day care. Labradors can become destructive, noisy and very upset when left alone for too long.

Do Labradors Chew a Lot?

Labradors who are left for long periods of time can become destructive, and the most common method of destroying things is by chewing. But it's not just lonely Labs who chew. Labrador puppies chew a lot, especially when they are teething. Being born and bred retrievers, into adulthood Labradors love to pick things up and carry them around.

If you have a lot of precious, fragile furniture or are very sentimental about the state of your home, a Labrador puppy may cause you a lot of stress in those first chewy months. Fortunately, there are ways you can reduce your Labrador's chewing and deal with the situation. If this is a concern, [make sure you read up on how to stop your Labrador chewing](#) and decide whether this is something you are prepared to do and think about how you will feel when inevitably something slips through the net and is damaged by your lovely Labrador friend.

Do Labradors Damage Gardens?

A part of your garden will be used for Labrador toilet purposes and you will need to pick up, and dispose of his faeces on a daily basis. Puppies, bitches and even some dogs will wee on your grass too. This can often kill the grass, leaving brown circular patches on your lawn. There is no method we have ever come across, be in pills, sprays, or food supplements which actually works to stop this happening. You will need to accept the lawn won't be perfect, and have a bag of grass seed handy to chuck in the gaps.

Some young Labradors are also extremely fond of digging and are quite capable of constructing a sizable crater in your flower beds if left unattended outdoors. These things need to be considered if you are a keen gardener, or like to keep a tidy backyard. [There are some ways to reduce digging](#), but short of confining the dog to a paved area you will probably find that some dogs will never stop doing it entirely.

Do Labradors Smell?

Labrador coats have a natural 'doggy' smell which is stronger when they are damp. Some of us are quite partial to this smell. Others are not. Dog shampoo can help, but bathing only temporarily reduces the Labrador odour and it also removes the coat's natural waterproofing. Labradors are attracted to water and mud, and preventing a Labrador from swimming may be difficult for you.

Do Labradors Shed A Lot?

Labradors have a very dense undercoat which they deposit on your carpets about twice a year. Usually in spring and autumn. You can hasten the shedding process a little through grooming, but it cannot be avoided entirely. If dog hair bothers you, or a family member has allergies, this will be something you need to seriously consider before you bring your Labrador home.

How Much Do Labradors Cost?

The cost of your Labrador will not be the price you pay to bring him home. All dogs cost money on an ongoing basis. Feeding is a weekly expenditure for example. There is no doubt that it costs more to feed a seventy pound Labrador, than it does to feed a fifteen pound terrier, and in this respect a bigger dog will have more feeding costs. There are cheap brands of dog food available, but if you want to give your dog the best dog food, high in protein and low in carbohydrates, this does not come cheaply.

Veterinary costs these days can be steep and for any dog, you will need to budget for veterinary insurance. Again cheap policies are available, but make sure that you read the small print. Ongoing medical issues are very expensive, and some policies won't renew if your dog suffers from a continuing issue like [hip dysplasia](#) or epilepsy, both of which occur in Labradors.

The cost of certain dog accessories, leads, beds etc, are all usually higher for larger breeds of dog too. [The best dog beds for Labradors can look great and be very comfortable](#), but they also can have quite a price tag.

Are Labradors Good Family Dogs?

Labradors are well known for their friendly and loyal natures, and for their intelligence and trainability. But does this make them good family dogs? Labradors lack guarding tendencies in general, so they will welcome friends into your home with open arms. Although they will also probably welcome burglars with the same generosity – so don't get a Lab if what you want is a watch dog.

They love exercise and companionship, and will happily accompany the family wherever they are going.

Are Labradors Good With Children?

Most Labradors love children as much as they love adults, but they are very enthusiastic in their greeting and playing. A strong adult can cope with a happy barrelling along Labrador charging into their legs. A child or frail elderly person can be sent flying, and potentially be injured.

Labrador puppies can also be quite mouthy, and [this nipping and biting phase](#) can upset some children as although the biting is not aggressive on the pup's part it still can be quite painful. Especially for little fingers.

This doesn't mean you shouldn't get a Labrador when you have young kids, but you will need to manage their interactions and keep them separated at all times when unsupervised, particularly during the puppy phase.

Does The Whole Family Want A Labrador?

It only takes one member of a family that is really unhappy with any aspect of these facts of labrador life, to cause real stress and disruption. Are all your family in agreement that they are happy to live with a labrador for the next ten to fifteen years? If not, you may want to reconsider.