

Living with THE FRENCH BULLDOG

By Sharon Dykes



The breed standard of the French Bulldog is a great resource, and not only for the conformation ring. It can be of benefit, whether you are a Judge, a breeder, a person who competes in companion sports, or if you are considering adding a new pup to your family.

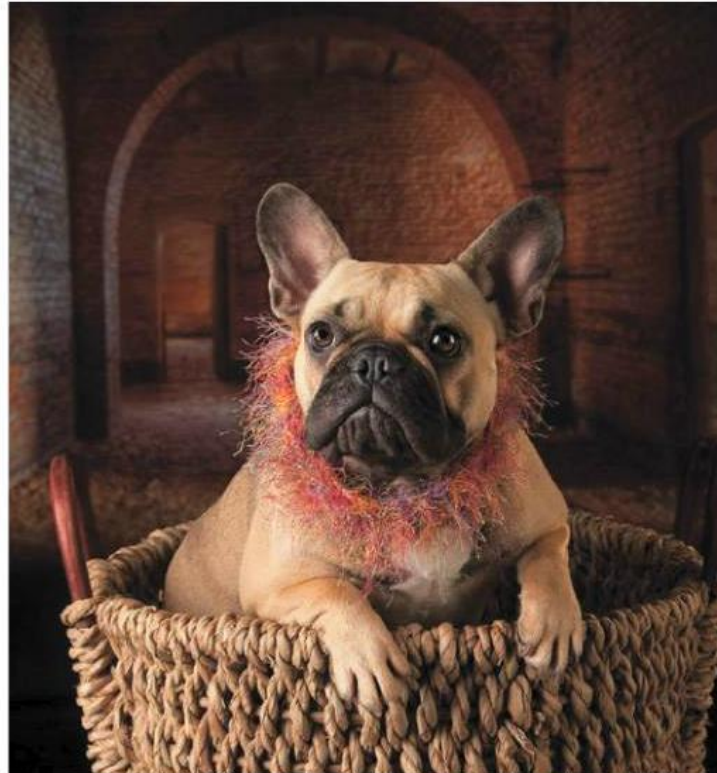
Most people know that a breed standard describes the physical attributes of a dog. French Bulldogs, like all other breeds,

are to be judged by the breed standard in a show ring. But; if you are not showing the dog; do you still need to take the time to read it? Yes! There is a lot more than physical characteristics explained in the standard of the French Bulldog!

In addition to the body type of the breed; our breed standard also speaks to the temperament, attitude, and general demeanor of the French Bulldog. Whether you are a Judge or a puppy buyer, it is important to understand the physical,

behavioral, and temperamental attributes that should be in the dog or puppy you are looking at.

The standard describes the French Bulldog's attitude and behavior specifically. He/she is to have the "appearance of an active, intelligent" dog. "The expression should be alert, curious, and interested". The French Bulldog is supposed to be "Well behaved, adaptable and comfortable companions with an affectionate nature and even disposition"; "generally active,



alert, and playful, but not unduly boisterous” (Quotes from the FBDCA Standard of the breed.)

Whether the dog is to be a pet, to compete in canine companion sports or to be shown in conformation; these characteristics are very important. Let’s look at them individually.

- Appearance of an active, intelligent (dog). These dogs are smart! And active! They have muscular little bodies, and to maintain them, they do require some exercise. While they are not a breed to jog long distances with you in the summer heat, they are also not lazy. They make good apartment dogs as long as their family is diligent in providing short walks in a park, or around the neighborhood. The opportunity to get out and meet people and see new sights also provides necessary mental stimulus. Though they can and should be crated at times, their need for both exercise and mental stimulation would make crating all day and night terribly boring and physically unhealthy. They consider themselves family members and require that type of social interaction.
- The expression should be alert, curious, and interested. They are very aware of their surroundings, are quick to investigate, inquisitive. They are also very attentive or focused. They can often be

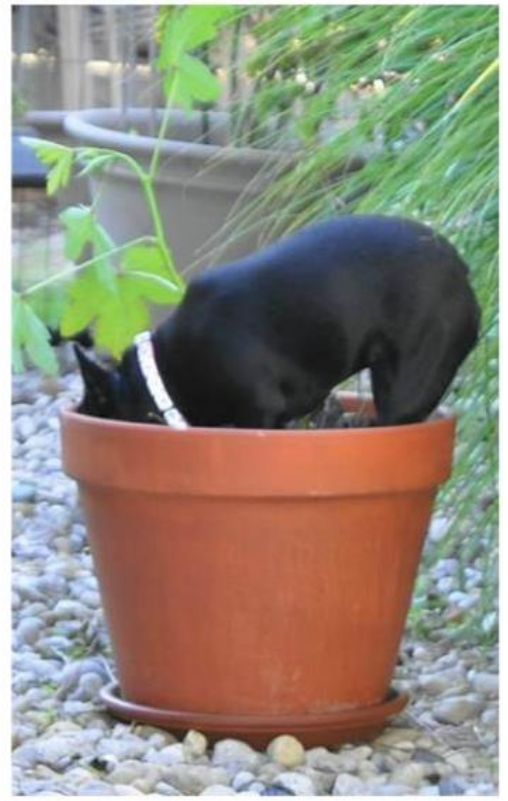
found sitting on the back of a sofa, raptly watching outside their home’s windows. Many are known to watch TV! I have one who will watch TV silently for long periods (her favorite show is Animal Planet), but she does not like or trust cartoons! She will bark to warn us if an animated show or commercial comes on her TV set!

- Well behaved, adaptable and comfortable companions. They should be easy going, fitting in and adjusting to the needs of a family, a couple, or single home. They seem to grasp the needs of each member of a family...snuggling with one, playing fetch with another, willing to be dressed up by children (or adults). They will happily learn tricks; especially if there is a treat involved.
- An affectionate nature. Affection is demonstrated differently depending on training and personality of the specific dog. Our French Bulldogs love kisses. We often tell new puppy parents to remember to kiss them on their little black lips! However we allow (encourage) that behavior. If that does not work for you maybe snuggling, lap sitting, or playing does. The point is they are affectionate and do require your attention to be happy.
- Even disposition. Not too wild... not too stoic... not too anything! They are

tolerant but not pushovers, affectionate but not needy, playful but not frenzied. The French Bulldog is often described as a “balanced dog” ...that description also applies to their temperament!

- Generally active, alert, and playful... This may not be the couch potato that has been described to you by some breeders! Though they thoroughly enjoy a nice snuggle and nap; they also need mental and physical stimulation. They are more playful than the average couch potato and will often invent games to amuse themselves if you are busy. You will see them bow and bounce and even playfully nip to encourage chase games. They love to be chased and to chase. They may try this with the family cat or other pets so proper introductions are very important, as well as an astute evaluation of other pets you currently own. An older pet or a sickly pet may not appreciate their playfulness.
- But not unduly boisterous. While playful; the French Bulldog is not to be “Hyper”. They should be spirited but not unruly.

The French Bulldog is often noted to be “A philosopher in the cloak of a clown”. It is a very apt description! You can often see their little brains working, while their charming antics will keep you smiling!



They have big hearts and are generous in their affection, but need an investment of time, love and commitment on the parts of their “People”. They are a smart breed, always thinking. Don’t let them outthink you while using their cuteness to pull the wool over your eyes! They need training to focus them in positive directions.

The qualities listed in the standard depict a smart, happy, healthy, playful and well-adjusted dog. Bad temperament, and/or shy, nervous, fearful or withdrawn behavior is not indicative of the breed. Whether judging a French Bulldog in a show ring, evaluating a dog for breeding, or trying to determine if a puppy is right for your home... use the standard and take your time.

Any dog can be nervous in new surroundings or with new people...

but negative temperament traits can also demonstrate poor socialization or poor breeding. In assessing older dogs, realize that in addition to genetics; some dogs have had experiences and training (or lack thereof) that has helped to form their attitude, temperament and behavior. By taking a little time to allow them to settle and by having an understanding of what the breed is supposed to demonstrate; you may be better able to gauge if the French Bulldog you are considering is the right dog for you.

There can also be many reasons a French Bulldog does not demonstrate an active playful nature. It can be something as simple as being tired at the moment, or something much more worrisome, such as structural issues that cause pain.

Bottom line... it is important to read the standard of the breed. It is important to know what the breed is supposed to be like. The standard describes how the dog should look; it also tells you how it should behave. If you are considering the French bulldog as an addition to your home; get the facts. The French Bulldog Club of America (FBDCA) has the breed standard, breeder referral services and other educational information available on line at: www.frenchbulldogclub.org ■

BIO

Sharon Dykes lives in Oregon with her husband Calvin. Together they breed, own and show French Bulldogs. She also currently serves as the chairperson for the FBDCA Public and Member Education committee.

