

## Best Dog Breeds for Older People

It is my personal opinion that any one of any age can truly benefit from becoming a pet parent. Animal companions greatly enhance and deeply enrich our lives. Dogs have taught me so many life lessons, brought me such fun and laughter, and have been such a healing force in my own life that I can't imagine life without one. I currently have twenty-two rescue dogs of varying breeds and ages. I have senior dogs, adolescents and puppies. Each has a story to share and a unique personality.

I have six animal assisted therapy dogs that have been certified and who, with their extraordinary ability to heal and unconditionally love humans, are able to visit and improve the quality of life for many patients in hospitals, and those living in assisted living centers, nursing homes and hospice care facilities. I have personally observed the healing power of pets time after time.

If it is an option and desire of a senior citizen to have a pet, I say, by all means, do so. First conduct research regarding the breed that best suits your personality, temperament, lifestyle, activity level, budget and overall quality of life. Of course, you must possess a certain degree of health and well being in to be able to provide the animal with the proper care and exercise a dog requires. You must realistically assess your ability to take on the responsibility of feeding, grooming, exercising and interacting with a pet. If you have any concerns about being able to care for a pet, do you have friends, relatives, neighbors or caregivers who are willing and able to assist you with his care? When researching the kind of dog you feel would best fit into your life, you may also want to consider adopting an older dog rather than a puppy as puppies can be very active, mischievous, rambunctious and require extensive obedience and socialization training. There are certain breeds of dogs that are very well suited to be companions to the elderly. Here are a few of my recommendations.

Miniature or toy poodles are highly intelligent animals that love to be loved. They thoroughly enjoy and appreciate human attention and companionship. They require only a moderate amount of exercise and minimal grooming if there their hair is clipped short. They do not shed and are a great choice for people who suffer from allergies. They are lightweight and easy to lift or transport to the vet, and so on.

Chihuahuas are also great "lap" dogs who truly bond with their guardians and aim to please. They, too, are small and easily lifted and transportable and love being held or sitting in one's lap. They are also good watchdogs.

Pugs are natural “clowns” who love to entertain and amuse as well as please their owners. They do tend to shed, but, of course, this can be controlled with regular grooming. They are very affectionate.

Malteses tend to be very sweet, loving and docile. They love to be pampered and are easily trained. Although they don't shed, they do require regular brushing to keep their coats from becoming matted. They are also a good choice for those who have allergies.

Yorkshire Terriers are feisty, fun-loving, highly intelligent dogs that are very affectionate. Like the Maltese, they require brushing and grooming, but they do not shed and are good low-allergy dogs.

Boston terriers are gentle, friendly, playful dogs who have natural guardian instincts. They generally get along well with strangers as well as other pets. They are affectionate and love to be loved.

Pomeranians are very intelligent and resourceful. They are spunky and have a low need for exercise.

Schnauzers are very smart, energetic and feisty. They get along well with people of all ages including children and have happy and outgoing personalities. They require daily brushing and walking.

Shih-Tzu's are sweet-tempered and extremely friendly. They make wonderful indoor dogs, require very little exercise. A daily walk will usually suffice. They have long hair that must be groomed regularly unless their hair is cut short.

There are many wonderful dogs that would make excellent companions for seniors. Those that I have described are small breeds that because of their size, weight, grooming and exercise needs, make them perfect pets for the elderly. However, having researched the breed of dog you feel is best suited to your personality and lifestyle, follow your heart. You will find the joyful and rich friendship and companionship you desire. Your life will be truly blessed and enriched by adopting the right dog for you!