

Easy to Train and Eager to Please, This Is One of the Best Dog Breeds for a Family

They have a wonderful temperament and are good with children. But they'll slobber their love everywhere, so probably not a good choice for a guard dog. Yet they're highly intelligent - No. 4 among all dogs. Many stick with this breed their whole life, despite some shortcomings.

Analysis by Dr. Karen Shaw Becker

STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- The Golden Retriever is consistently ranked as one of the top five most popular dogs in the US, and with good reason
- Goldens have wonderful temperaments. They are easy to train and gentle with children
- Goldens are also reliable, hard workers, in demand as both assistance and search and rescue dogs
- Despite the well-established medical issues of the breed, many Golden Retriever owners "go Golden for life"
- If you're thinking about adding one of these wonderful dogs to your family, please check Golden Retriever rescue groups and your local animal shelter first

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10 Fascinating Facts About Golden Retrievers

- **Golden Retrievers originated in Scotland**



The Golden Retriever was born in the Scottish Highlands, developed by a man named Dudley Marjoribanks, later known as Lord Tweedmouth. In 1865, Marjoribanks purchased Nous, the only yellow puppy in a litter of black wavy-coated retrievers.

Within a few years, Nous was bred to Belle, a Tweed Water Spaniel (a breed that is now extinct), and several of their yellow puppies became the foundation for a line of yellow retrievers.

The American Kennel Club (AKC) officially recognized Golden Retrievers in the mid-1920s.

- **The breed's coat color varies widely within the "golden" range**



The Golden coat can range from white to cream to very light golden to dark red. As the dog ages, the coat may grow darker or lighter, and there is usually a noticeable whitening of fur around the muzzle and often around the eyes as well.

Golden puppies typically have lighter coats than they will have as adults. A pup's ear tips may hint at the color the adult dog will be.

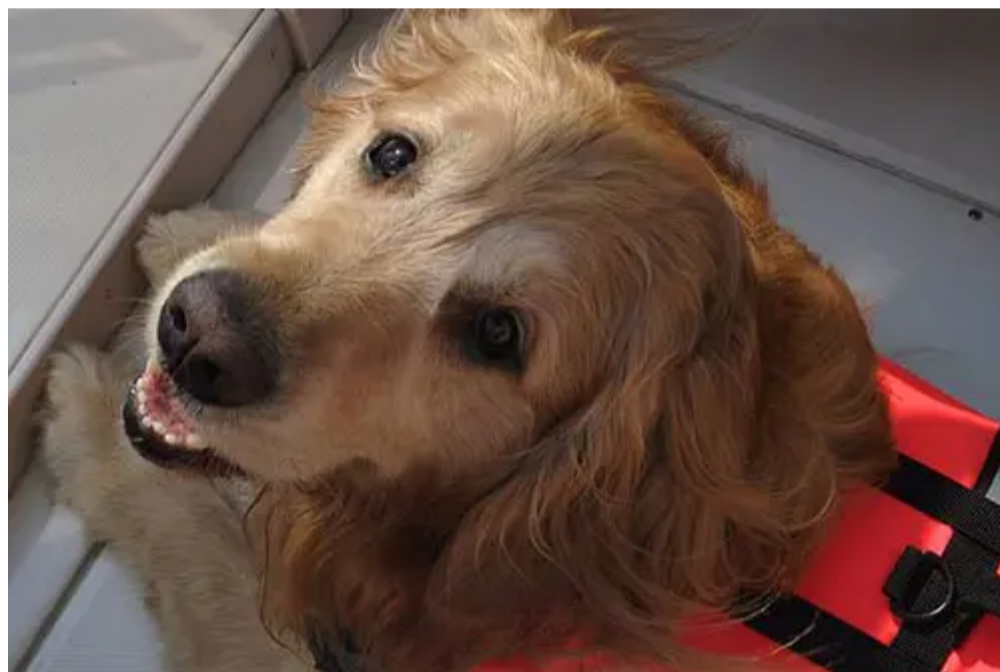
The topcoat is slightly wavy, repels water, and sheds year-round. The undercoat is soft to the touch, lies flat against the belly, and keeps the dog cool in summer and warm in winter. It sheds in the spring and again in the fall. There is mild feathering on the backs of the legs, with heavier feathering at the neck, the backs of the thighs, and the tail.

- **Goldens have an extraordinary work ethic**



Originally bred to be biddable (easy to train and eager to please), calm, and sensible for use as hunting dogs, the Golden Retriever's physical and mental traits also lend themselves to more modern activities. The breed excels as obedience competitors, tracking dogs, show dogs, guide and assistance dogs, and search and rescue dogs.

- **Goldens are exceptionally eager to please**



There's probably no better proof of this than that the first three AKC obedience champions were Golden Retrievers. This breed is extremely easy to train, and comes in fourth in *The Intelligence of Dogs* by Stanley Coren, as one of the brightest dogs ranked by obedience-command trainability.

- **The breed is in high demand as assistance dogs**



A combination of intelligence, biddability, and physical skill make Goldens one of the go-to breeds for service

work. Organizations like Assistance Dog International, Canine Companions for Independence, and Paws With a Cause train Golden Retrievers, Labrador Retrievers and Lab-Golden crosses almost exclusively.

- **Golden Retrievers are great family dogs**



Thanks to their pleasing, patient nature, Goldens make wonderful family dogs. They're good with children and spread their love around to every member of the family. In fact, Goldens are friendly with everyone, so they're not your best bet as a guard dog!

- **Goldens require plenty of exercise**



To avoid boredom and weight gain, and to maintain their large, heavy frames in good condition, Goldens need at least one brisk long walk, jog, or run each day. Games of fetch (retrieving) can be great exercise, as can swimming.

Given the opportunity, this breed is sure-footed on hiking trails and loves the opportunity to explore nature.

- **The breed is sometimes referred to as the "Cancer Retriever" or the "Golden Tumor Dog"**



Sadly, Goldens get cancer at a higher rate than most other breeds — just slightly less than double the rate of cancer in all dogs. Approximately 60% of all Goldens will die from the disease (57% of females and 66% of males). The two most common types of cancers in Goldens are hemangiosarcoma and lymphoma.

To address the issue of cancer in the breed, the Golden Retriever Lifetime Study is currently underway and is "the most important observational study ever undertaken for canine health" according to Morris Animal Foundation. The researchers hope to identify genetic, environmental and nutritional risk factors for cancer and other major health problems in dogs by following the lives and deaths of the 3,000 Goldens now enrolled in the study.

- **Adult Goldens weigh between about 50 and 80 pounds**



Adult female Goldens average between 50 and 60 pounds and 21.5 to 22.5 inches in height; males range from 65 to 80 pounds and 23 to 24 inches in height.

The average Golden Retriever lives 10 to 13 years. In addition to cancer, the breed is also known to develop hypothyroidism, subaortic stenosis, eye disorders, elbow and hip dysplasia, mast cell tumors, and seizures.

- **Not every Golden Retriever is a born retriever**



If you want to exercise your Golden with games of fetch, it's a good idea to introduce him to the sport at a young age. It's possible he'll know instinctively what to do as soon as you throw the ball the first time, but some dogs need to learn through repetition and lots of praise each time they return the ball or other toy. Most quickly learn that in order for the game to continue, they must bring the ball back and drop it.

Keep in mind, though, that once your Golden gets the whole retrieving thing down, it can quickly become an obsession!

Sources and References

[Golden Retriever Club of America](#)

[Morris Animal Foundation](#)

[Mom.me](#)

[PetMD](#)
