

Introducing the New Addition to the Top 10 Dog Breeds

This is the first time since being recognized by the AKC this breed has made the top 10 most popular breeds. They're agile, loyal, intelligent and stunningly handsome, but is your household the right home for one?

Reviewed by Dr. Becker

STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- For the first time since being recognized by the AKC, in 2018 the German Shorthaired Pointer broke into the top 10 list of most popular purebred dogs in the U.S.
- Prospective owners of GSPs should thoroughly research the breed and understand that these dogs need much more daily exercise and mental stimulation than other breeds
- If you want to add a German Shorthaired to your family, be sure to check local shelters and rescues first to see if there's an adoptable dog in need of a home

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Fifteen years ago (2009), the top 10 most popular dog breeds in the U.S., according to the American Kennel Club (AKC) were:¹

1. Labrador retriever
2. German Shepherd
3. Yorkshire Terrier
4. Golden retriever
5. Beagle
6. Boxer
7. Bulldog
8. Dachshund
9. Poodle
10. Shih Tzu

The most recent top 10 list for 2023 shows the French Bulldog in the No.1 spot for the 2nd year in a row!²

1. French Bulldog
2. Labrador Retriever
3. Golden Retriever

4. German Shepherd Dog
5. Poodle
6. Dachshund
7. Bulldog
8. Beagle
9. Rottweiler
10. German Shorthaired Pointer

In 2018, the German Shorthaired Pointer broke into the top 10. According to the Associated Press (AP), this was the breed's highest ranking since its AKC recognition almost 90 years ago. "I think people are learning about how fun the breed is," an AKC spokeswoman told the AP.

The 411 on the German Shorthaired Pointer

- **History and appearance** — This handsome dog was bred to be a versatile hunter. "Versatile" in hunting dogs means they have the ability to point, retrieve and trail on land and in the water. It's thought early breeders achieved this feat by purposely blending other breeds with each of the three qualities. At some point, the English Pointer was introduced to give the dog "a more stylish look and nose-up hunting mode."³

The breed was recognized in Germany in the late 1800s. The first German Shorthaired arrived in the U.S. in the 1920s, gained AKC recognition in 1930, and was soon regarded as the ideal hunting dog who could do it all.

Today's German Shorthaired is agile and powerful, with exceptional endurance. His body is typically longer than it is tall, with a short back, sleek head, strong quarters and the look of an athlete. His coat is short and coarse. He stands 21 to 25 inches at the shoulder, weighs from 45 to 70 pounds and his average lifespan is 12 to 14 years.

- **Temperament and personality** — With the right socialization and training, the German Shorthaired Pointer (GSP) is a wonderful family dog. One of the most important keys to success with this breed is meeting their considerable exercise needs. A GSP who is well-exercised makes for a calm house dog who isn't a constant attention seeker.

These dogs are highly intelligent, loyal and fearless. Because GSPs have been bred to hunt, the instinct can kick in if a squirrel, bird or cat happens by, so it's important to keep this in mind at all times if you have smaller animals in or around your home. Since the GSP is wired to be active, it's extremely important that he receives enough daily mental and physical exercise. Without it, frustration can set in, and he'll find other outlets for his pent-up energy. Some also have a tendency to whine or bark.

- **Training** — GSPs are sensitive dogs who thrive with gentle positive reinforcement behavior training. It's a good idea to begin training a puppy the day she arrives home. Even at 8 weeks, she'll be eager and able to learn. The longer you wait to train her, the more headstrong she's apt to become. If possible, also enroll her in puppy kindergarten at 10 to 12 weeks and be sure to socialize her as well.

Any dog can develop undesirable behaviors like constant barking, digging, countersurfing, etc. if she's bored, unsupervised, untrained or unsocialized. In addition, many adolescent dogs are a handful regardless, and the German Shorthaired's terrible teens can start as early as 6 months and continue to 2 years of age.

GSPs can excel at agility, dock diving, obedience and service dog work. They also work in law enforcement as sniffer and tracking dogs.

- **Grooming** — The German Shorthaired's thick, short coat is water-repellent and designed to protect her body from brush and insulate her from the cold. The coat requires minimal care — weekly brushing and baths as needed. These dogs do shed and tend to “blow” their coats seasonally.

GSPs have long, floppy ears that may not get good air flow. To prevent bacteria and yeast from accumulating and causing infections, it's very important to check the ears frequently and keep them clean and dry. As with all dogs, it's also important to do nail trims as necessary, and daily tooth brushing.

- **Health concerns** — The German Shorthaired is a relatively healthy breed, but like all purebred dogs, is predisposed to certain conditions, including lymphedema (swelling of the body due to poor lymphatic drainage) and gastric dilatation volvulus (bloat).

If you're considering adding a German Shorthaired Pointer to your family, research the breed thoroughly to ensure it is a good fit for your lifestyle and activity level. You should also check with your local shelters and rescue organizations as well as **[Petfinder](#)** first to see if you can find an adoptable dog looking for a new forever home.

If you have your heart set on purchasing a purebred pup, try to buy from a preferably local, reputable breeder. Make sure to check his or her background and references, and review the sales contract closely.

A reputable breeder will want to meet and interview anyone interested in buying a puppy, as well as be proud to show you the parents, their living environment and their medical records. That's why you won't find responsible breeders selling to pet stores.

Always visit a breeder's facility in person. You want to see for yourself the conditions in which your puppy was born and raised. Also insist on meeting the parents (the mother dog, at a minimum, and ask for health records and genetic testing for the sire, even if you are unable to meet him personally). If the breeder won't show you the living conditions in a separate barn, building or part of the house, be suspicious.

Sources and References

[VetStreet June, 25, 2011](#)

¹ [dvm360, February 3, 2010](#)

² [AP News, March 20, 2019](#)

³ [Petfinder](#)
