

# The Shih Tzu

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### Background

In Mandarin Chinese, "Shih Tzu" means "lion dog." But the Shih Tzu couldn't be more different than a large, meat eating cat!

Actually, the Shih Tzu earned its name because of its association with Buddhism. Its origins are ancient, and the breed probably came from Tibet, where bones of the dog have been dated to almost 10,000 years. According to scientists, the Shih Tzu shares a close genetic relationship to wolves! In Tibet, the Shih Tzu was bred to be a tiny, holy replica of a lion, a powerful figure in Buddhist mythology.

As early as 624 A.D, Tibetan lamas – or Buddhist holy men— presented Shih Tzu as gifts to the Chinese ruling class. A favorite house pet with the Ming Dynasty among other Chinese ruling families, the breed eventually made it into European society and was favored among the upper classes.

Today the Shih Tzu is one of the most popular toy breeds in the United States.

### Sizing Up

Tiny and silky, physical characteristics of the Shih Tzu are very distinct:

- Weight: 9-16 lbs.
- Height: 8-11 inches
- Coat: long and silky, fast-growing
- Color: gold, brown, white, black, black and white, brindle
- Lifespan: 10-16 years

### What are they like?

The Shih Tzu is an energetic, vibrant little dog with a surprisingly low-maintenance and easygoing temperament. The only thing they love more than following their humans around their house is being petted and pampered! They'll happily sit in your lap for

hours, and can even be prone to laziness.

They do well around kids, but generally older kids, and they are ideal in most living situations. In fact, their long, silky coats could be perfect for the creative hairstylist! They do well around other dogs, but don't always love to be around cats. The Shih Tzu also doesn't shed much, making it an ideal breed for people with allergies.

The Shih Tzu is a pretty healthy breed, but there are some common health problems to be aware of:

- [Hypothyroidism](#)
- Respiratory problems, such as [tracheal collapse](#) and other problems related to [brachycephalic syndrome](#)
- [Kidney stones](#)
- Portosystemic shunt
- [Hip dysplasia](#)
- Eye problems, such as [cataracts](#)
- [Luxating patella](#) (dislocation of the kneecap)

### Right for you?

Shih Tzu can be great dogs for the right person or family, but there are always things to consider when thinking about welcoming a new dog into your home.

- **The Shih Tzu doesn't like the heat.** They are very heat sensitive, so it is important to be careful in the summer. Air-conditioning is very important, and it's best to exercise the dog in the morning or evening when it is cooler.
- **Not an easily trainable breed,** the Shih Tzu can take some time and patience to housebreak.
- **The Shih Tzu isn't great with very young children.** When Shih Tzu are handled roughly, they can snap and become irritable. They do much better around older kids.
- **Grooming takes time and dedication.** The Shih Tzu coat is long and demands daily brushing and regular haircuts to avoid tangles. The good news: they don't shed a ton and are good for people with allergies.

*If you have any questions or concerns, you should always visit or call your veterinarian – they are your best resource to ensure the health and well-being of*

*your pets.*