

## Jack Russell Terrier - American Kennel Club

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Russell Terrier, Parson Terrier, Jack Russell...there's so much confusion about what is or is not a Jack Russell. Some background will clarify that. The original Jack Russell Terrier was developed by his namesake in the 1800's. He was bred to hunt fox: agile and intelligent enough to outsmart the fox and tenacious enough to dig and follow his prey down into the hole.

The distinctions among the various breeds are relatively minor and have more to do with humans than with the dogs themselves. The Jack Russell Terrier Club of America has its own registry and strict breed standards, and they opposed recognition by the American Kennel Club. Another group, the Parson Russell Terrier Association of the United States, felt differently and is the parent club of the breed recognized by the AKC. Although there are so many variants of 'fox terrier,' the original working dog is the 200-year-old Jack Russell Terrier.

### Appearance

Jack Russells are bred more for temperament and the physical traits that make him such a fine fox hunter than for coloring or coat. They all have a double coat with coarse texture and the coats can be smooth, broken or rough. They can be white, tricolor or white with tan or back markings. Some are taller than others, but the average dog is 10-15 inches tall. They weigh between 14-18 pounds. With their alert expression, they may seem to be following every word you say.

### The Jack Russell Personality

Given his long history as an energetic, smart and tenacious hunter, today's Jack Russell Terrier is a lot of spirited dog in that compact body. He can be a cheerful, playful and affectionate companion. But he's a working dog most of all— independent, extremely active and highly intelligent. He needs a job to do. If you don't hunt, consider sports like agility, earthdog trials, terrier races or flyball. At the least he needs lots of daily exercise and active playtime. If you find ways to channel that remarkable energy, you'll have an extremely loyal and loving dog. Without enough mental and physical stimulation, he can become destructive as he tears through house and yard looking for something interesting to do. His strong hunting instinct can lead to aggression with other dogs and small animals. He's born for the chase, so keep him on the lead or in a safe, fenced area.

### Training Your Jack Russell

Don't let his size and friendly demeanor fool you; the Jack Russell is a determined and strong-willed little fellow. He needs an experienced owner (or trainer) and firm, consistent training. Start early, as soon as you bring your puppy home. Even a pup can absorb basic lessons, boundaries of good canine behavior and his place in your 'pack.' He'll thrive on routine and structure if you keep training sessions short and fun. Socialization is equally important and should start early. With inexperienced owners and inadequate training the Jack Russell can be aggressive with other dogs and develop behavior problems like separation anxiety, over-protectiveness, obsessive barking and general mayhem. But channel all that energy, instinct and intelligence into positive physical and mental stimulation and he'll be a joy to live with.

### Health

These are generally healthy dogs, with a life expectancy of 10-15 years. But there are several health concerns to be aware of. Jack Russells may be prone to glaucoma; progressive retinal atrophy; problems with their kneecaps (patellar luxation) and, in dogs with white coats, congenital deafness. Your breeder should be able to show you documentation from both the Canine Eye Registration Foundation and the Orthopedic Foundation for Animals. In fact, you should insist on such documentation.

If it sounds like Jack Russells are a handful, they do pack a lot of spirit into their sturdy little bodies. With training, socialization, lots of exercise and play, this is a breed with great heart and character. You couldn't ask for a more athletic, versatile and affectionate companion.