



Your new Terrier

This document is designed to give you a little more information on Terrier types and in particular rescue Terriers.

The word 'Terrier' is derived from the Latin word 'Terra' meaning 'earth'. Terriers were bred as working dogs. For example, the Jack Russell Terrier was required to run with a foxhunt and specifically cause the fox to bolt from the den or, to hold it at bay whilst the men dug down to it. The West Highland White Terrier and the Cairn Terrier would hunt otters, rabbits, rats and foxes in their native Scotland, whilst the Yorkshire Terrier was a hunter of smaller vermin.

Terriers are alert, versatile, plucky, adaptable, tenacious and can be fiery. They are highly energetic and inquisitive as well as being extremely intelligent and big-hearted. Terriers are often relatively small in size and this can cause prospective owners to overlook the amount of effort that is involved in keeping them occupied and happy.

Here at Battersea Dogs Home, we have seen a dramatic increase in the numbers of Terriers and Terrier crosses coming into the Home.

Raising a happy Terrier

Rather like a precocious child, a Terrier needs to know who is in charge. Good, clear ground rules should be decided upon before your dog comes home. These should be maintained consistently by everyone in the household; as a Terrier will continue to test the boundaries throughout his life.

Due to their levels of intelligence and energy requirements, your average Terrier will require good levels of stimulation to keep him happy. Playing constructive games such as fetch and retrieve will help to affirm your relationship whilst at the same time giving your dog an opportunity to use his active brain. Terriers are usually very keen on squeaky toys, the noise of which stimulates the hunting instinct. These do need to be controlled. It is important to teach your dog a solid retrieve to help prevent any possession issues arising.

Using different methods to feed your dog e.g. the use of Kongs, scattering the food on the lawn or using an activity ball will all serve to use up some mental energy. Terriers like to be occupied and the provision of chew toys and rawhide chews can be useful to prevent unwanted chewing that could occur through teething or periods of boredom and stress.

Your Terrier will always be alert and ready to go on a 10-mile hike, regardless of the weather or the time of day. One of the joys of a Terrier is that they are ready to accompany you on any activity you may choose. The more the merrier and the more varied the better. You will need to be able to provide very good levels of physical activity to tire out your Terrier.

Handling and grooming

Handling your Terrier from an early age and on a regular basis will help to strengthen the bond between you as well as ensuring that a trip to the vets will not end in tears.

Begin your handling when your dog is relaxed, preferably after exercise. Have some treats to hand – you can use these to reward the dog for good behaviour. Initially begin with less sensitive areas such as the back or the chest, a simple process of touch and treat will usually work. Keep the sessions short and sweet, and gently encourage the dog to stand still. It is imperative that you remain calm. When your dog is comfortable with this degree of handling you can slowly progress to the more sensitive areas.

Small in size but BIG in spirit

Many of the common problems we see at the Home are a result of owners treating their Terriers like babies when they are young.

Given their level of intelligence, Terriers are quick to grab an opportunity to increase their status within the human pack if allowed. Don't allow your dog too many human privileges within his day-to-day care or he will simply take advantage.

If you rehome a puppy, encourage him to behave like the adult dog you want to own. Regardless of whether you rehome a puppy or an adult, you will need to establish those ground rules from the first day. Your Terrier will initially be less confident and will be sitting back a little to ascertain who ranks where in the household and how he will fit into the pack structure.

You would be wise to make your Terrier earn rewards: even requesting a 'sit' before you give him attention will go a long way towards keeping him in his place. Terriers are usually very inventive when it comes to techniques that will get them noticed, try your hardest not to let him to see that you find his antics cute and amusing. Jumping up and barking, pawing, nudging are all popular techniques that will be unwittingly respond to. If that response is a look, a few words or even pushing the dog away, then his efforts have been rewarded and he will be more likely to persist in future.

Attention, toys and food are all tools we can use to encourage dogs to perform appropriate behaviours. Use them constructively and your dog will be so much more responsive to you. However, do remember that praising good behaviour is a far more effective way of training your dog than punishing the bad.



Terriers and children

Ideally any child should be capable of understanding and following the ground rules that you want to set before you consider rehoming a Terrier.

You should also create a safe haven that your dog can retire to when he wants space, your children must be taught never to approach the dog when in this 'haven'.

Another issue that often arises with young children is that the terrier refuses to acknowledge that the child has a higher rank within the pack structure. It is relatively easy for a quick intelligent terrier to outwit young children and increase his sense of status. Older children, however, who can gain the respect of the dog can have the most fantastic relationship with a pal who is always ready for a game, some mischief and adventure.

Terriers and other dogs

Before your terrier is let off lead in open spaces, it is imperative that you have a solid recall command in place. Practice this in the house and garden where there are fewer distractions before moving on to enclosed areas outside. Reward a good response with treats and praise, and try to be exciting and fun. Remember that any Terrier may well have a strong desire to hunt for small prey such as rats, rabbits and squirrels. If exercising in rural areas then be aware of rabbit warrens, fox holes etc that your dog may disappear into. If you are unsure of the area, keep your dog on a long lead until you know it is safe to let him off and that he will respond to you when called.

Like all dogs, Terriers need to learn appropriate social behaviour as they grow up. This is achieved by allowing your dog to mix with a range of dogs, both adult and youngsters who can provide positive experiences for them.

Terriers can sometimes be vocal on the lead when they see another dog. Dogs can get frustrated if never allowed to meet other dogs and may even come to regard them as a threat if their owners become anxious and pull them away on the sight of a dog approaching. When introducing your dog to others whilst on lead, stay relaxed, if your dog behaves well, call him on and praise him, let him know that you are pleased with him.

If you pick up smaller dogs when they see other dogs, it can encourage your dog to view them as a threat. Add this to the dog's height advantage now he's in your arms, and the fact that you are now a combined force – and your little Terrier may end up doing a fine impression of an enormous guard dog protecting the most valuable possession on earth.

If you want a dog, full of character and energy, that is mischievous and fun then a Terrier may be for you, but first think hard about whether you can supply all that a Terrier needs to keep him happy.

Useful contacts

Battersea's Behaviour Advice Line
0905 020 0222 (calls cost 25p per minute)

Battersea Dogs & Cats Home
4 Battersea Park Road
London
SW8 4AA

Telephone 020 7622 3626
Fax 020 7622 6451

Old Windsor
Priest Hill
Old Windsor
Berkshire
SL4 2JN

Telephone 01784 432929
Fax 01784 471538

Brands Hatch
Crowhurst Lane
Ash
Kent
TN15 7HH

Telephone 01474 874994
Fax 01474 872855

www.dogshome.org