

IS A GERMAN SHORTHAIRED POINTER RIGHT FOR YOU?



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German Shorthaired Pointers (GSP) are not the breed for everyone. They certainly are not for the faint of heart or weak of spirit! They are a special breed with specific needs. GSPs were originally bred with several definite goals in mind: A versatile, tireless hunting dog capable of hunting feathered and furred game, pointing or treeing as necessary, retrieving to hand over land or water, and tracking wounded game. A dog capable of dispatching predators. A dog who is a loving, loyal family companion and hearth-warmer. A vigilant watchdog capable of guarding his home and family. All of these goals and more have been realized in the German Shorthaired Pointer. These same goals highlight many issues that should be considered prior to choosing a GSP as your companion.

GSPs retain a puppy level of energy throughout their lives. They require physical and mental stimuli to help keep this energy at a manageable level. A family with an active lifestyle geared toward activities that would include the dog is ideal. Access to areas with plenty of room for running, such as the home property, the park, the woods, etc., is beneficial. Devoting necessary time to fulfill a GSP's drive to "work" and learn through training and play and to satisfy its need for human companionship is essential. A sense of humor should be a prerequisite for any future GSP owner. A GSP can be quite mischievous and its pranks often not appreciated by humans.

GSPs can be protective of their home and their humans. As a very social and human friendly breed, the GSP loves to be around people and activity, and handles this well, assuming it has been properly socialized. While GSPs are generally great with kids, care must be exercised around small children. A GSP's eagerness and playfulness could at times lead to unintentional injuries.

GSPs are hunters. *This does not mean they would be unhappy in a non-hunting home. It does, however, mean that other avenues to direct their energies may have to be found.* GSPs get bored very easily if not kept busy. They are very inquisitive and can be quite inventive when entertaining themselves. Unfortunately, many things they consider fun (such as playing with all the neat toys in the kitchen garbage can, unspooling toilet paper, digging in the flowerbed, jumping or climbing fences, shredding pillows or furniture, and the list goes on) we consider destructive.

GSPs are very people oriented, sometimes to the point of being clingy (following your every step around the house, for example). They thrive upon human interaction and need it to be truly happy. They do best, whether hunting, competing, or just kept as companions, if allowed to live as a part of the family unit as a housedog rather than a yard or kennel dog.

GSPs are, by nature, often not very amicable with cats and other small furry or feathery pets. They can be trained to leave them alone and share home space, but their hunting instinct may interfere at times. When raised with such creatures, GSPs often do well. However, caution should always be used with any other small pet companions such as cats, rabbits, gerbils, birds, and some toy breed dogs.

The GSP and its owner will both benefit from obedience and other types of training. A GSP's intelligence and independent-mindedness can often lead to pitfalls if not planned for. Many GSPs can be counted on to ignore commands if it doesn't feel that obeying the command is the proper thing to do at that point in time. Training shapes the GSP, teaching it both control and confidence in obeying commands. They thrive upon structure and leadership, instinctively realizing the need for this. GSPs tend to be easily trained, as they are a very biddable breed. As a working breed, they literally love and need to work.

None of the breed's characteristics are insurmountable obstacles. The key to success lies in realizing that these characteristics can exist and being prepared to deal with them. GSPs are very keen and will learn a variety of tasks presented to them. They are not only known as great hunting companions and accomplished Field Trial and Hunt Test Competitors, but have done well in the show ring, obedience and agility trials, Search and Rescue (SAR), bomb and drug detection, sledding, and as human patient therapy dogs.

To many GSP owners the most revered attribute of this breed certainly is the unwavering devotion and loyalty they bestow upon their human companions. *They truly are a man's best friend.* (Written by Ute Wullkotte, GSP Rescue National Chair)