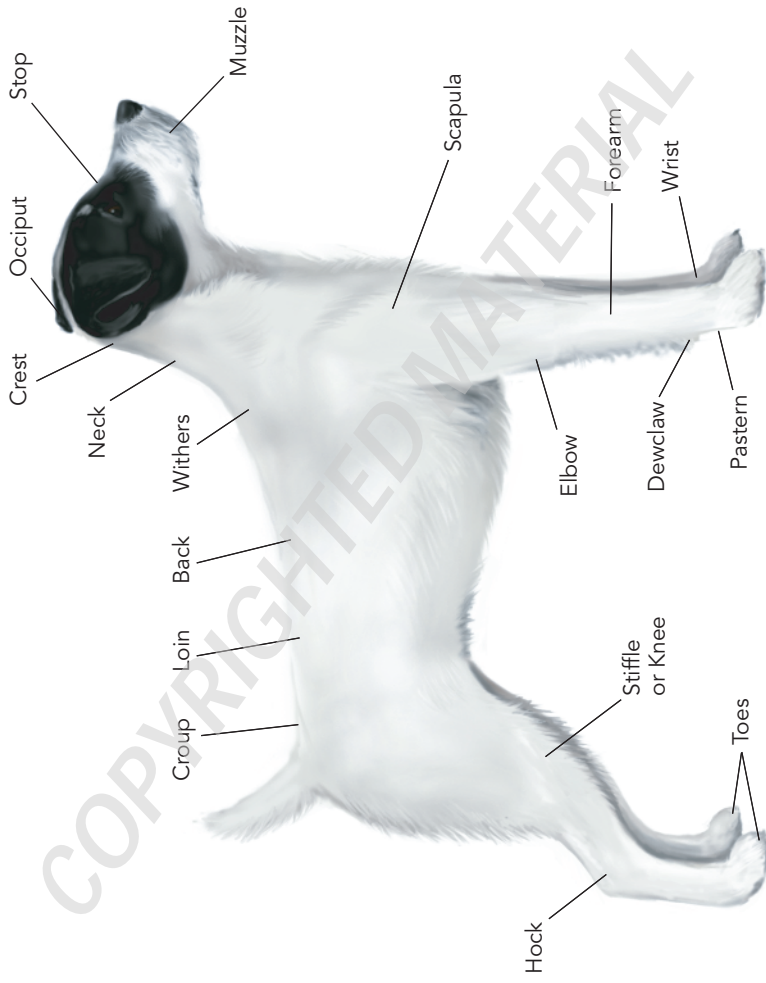


# The Jack Russell Terrier





## Chapter 1

# What Is a Jack Russell Terrier?



**T**he Jack Russell Terrier is small in size but big in attitude. This dog is highly intelligent and expressive, brave to the point of abandon, ever ready for action and mayhem. They are also loving dogs with a great sense of humor who treasure their contact with humans. Although adaptable, this breed demands an enormous amount of physical and mental activity. Those who discover they are the pet humans of these dogs always have funny stories to exchange.

The Jack Russell comes in many sizes. They may be as small as ten inches at the top of the shoulder (called the withers) or as much as fifteen inches. The range in size ensures each dog will be the size needed for the work or the terrain he hunts in. JRTs come mostly white with brown or black markings. Whatever the size and shape, they have captured the hearts of all those charmed by their in-your-face attitude.

## A Hunting Dog

The Jack Russell Terrier was developed to meet a formidable opponent below ground, the red fox (although JRTs also hunt other quarry). He was blended from now extinct strains of white-bodied terriers in Great Britain. With a dash of this working breed and a dash of that one, a hearty, healthy, keen, earth-working dog was shaped to the job of hunting.

The Latin word *terra* means earth, and that is the origin of the word “terrier”—earth dog. First and foremost, the Jack Russell Terrier is a hunting dog who works below ground. The dog’s job is to keep the fox in check while the

handler digs to both the fox and the dog. The dog has to possess a good voice to address the quarry below ground when located, to help keep the prey at bay, and to help the handler locate the dog by sound.

Everything about the dog reflects his job as hunter. It is said about the Jack Russell Terrier that where the fox can go, so must the terrier. This terrier's structure is modeled after that of the vixen (female fox). Like the fox, the Jack Russell must be well angulated and possess a small, compressible chest that enables him to maneuver in narrow earthen tunnels, often deeply below ground. The predominantly white coat is to help distinguish the dog from the fox when the hunter digs to where the dog holds his quarry at bay.

The intense character is all part of the hunting package, as well. Without a doubt, the Jack Russell is a courageous companion with the grit to hunt. The intelligence of the dog adds to the package, because the dog must independently solve problems below ground and hold himself back from taking on the quarry; a dog too eager to do battle below ground is apt to be lost.

The breed was not meant to harm the quarry he encounters. Still, JRTs do have different styles of work. Some are "hard" and engage their quarry with intent to inflict harm, while some are "soft" and bay at or dislodge their quarry with their intense presence. All JRTs, however, should have the attitude, grit, and tenacity to confront larger and more formidable animals below ground. A very intelligent and cooperative Jack Russell may sometimes be called out of the den by the handler, but don't count on it!



*The Jack Russell Terrier is first and foremost a hunting dog, developed to hunt quarry underground.*

## He's Not the Dog on TV

The Jack Russell Terrier is seen often on television and in the movies. Because they are expressive and exceptionally intelligent, they are often used in commercials, which gives the (incorrect) impression that this is a very mannerly dog. The dog you see in a commercial or on a television show is a very good actor and has a trainer who possesses a great deal of time and patience in teaching the dog a series of actions with hand signals or commands. The dog has spent a lot of time working—engaging his body and mind—to learn these moves. And when he is off camera, he is just as active as ever.

People get the idea all Jack Russells are like the television dogs, and then find the dog they have is locked in the “on” position, a rocket in motion. This is not the breed for the faint of heart or those who want a relaxed dog. The Jack Russell is ready for action and a lot of it!

The courage of the Jack Russell Terrier must be understood and accepted, whether you hunt with your dog or not. The dog's behavior may be described as total abandon. The instincts of the dog may make him act with single-mindedness in both work and play. You must be prepared to protect the dog from himself and always expect the unexpected.

## Active, Determined Companions

Jack Russells relish close contact with the humans they love. They are very adaptable in many ways, but they do demand enormous amounts of physical and mental activity that are meaningful and satisfying to the dog. It is not easy to wear one out.

Jack Russells also have an assertive nature and require discipline and acceptance of their pluck and courage. They pack a big-dog attitude. They can sometimes be bullies to the biggest dogs they encounter, but they can also curl up for a nap next to a beloved companion.

There are many ways to provide fun outlets for the dog's energy. If you spend time tossing a ball or Frisbee at a set time each day, the dog will anticipate this quality activity time. It is wise not to encourage too much tug of war, because these dogs can develop an attitude of always wanting to be the winner, which may encourage behavior that is too assertive. Arrange the game of tug or toss so you and the dog take turns winning. The Jack Russell Terrier needs to know that the humans in his family, including the children, hold a rank in the family pack that is higher than his. This is not the dog to lend your car keys or credit cards to.

## JRTs and Children

One of the most charming qualities of Jack Russells is their gentle and kindly nature toward children. The dog may be capable of being unusually friendly with small children provided the child understands how to handle the terrier.



*JRTs do adore their children, but they will not tolerate teasing or abuse.*

The intelligence of the dog and the strength of his presence mean he will not tolerate abuse from children. This is not a dog who takes well to punishment. He may defend himself if pushed too far, even from accidental abuse. Adult supervision is always suggested. JRTs fare better with children over 6 years of age. Some, however, adore their children and will allow themselves to be put in baby carriages and dressed in doll clothes.

## Not a Latchkey Dog

This is a very adaptable dog who craves an interesting lifestyle. For example, a Jack Russell is a good candidate to go to work with you every day—if you are lucky enough to

have a job that permits this. Many will be happy to sleep near you for most of the day. But you can't park this dog silently all day while you work someplace far away

from your Jack Russell. If you must leave a dog alone for nine or more hours a day unattended, this may not be the dog for you.

Jack Russells need a job and thrive when they are given a routine and have something to do. They are worse than little children when they're bored. A bored dog may bark to fill his days—which may also fill your neighbors with annoyance. The protests can be very vocal; this is a dog bred to use his voice when hunting to work quarry.

You will need reliable containment if you leave your Jack Russell for even half a second. They can escape most containment that is not a maximum-security setup. Your Jack Russell can dig under fences that lack proper turned-under safe wire buried under the edges of a pen or dog run. They can climb human style up and over chain-link fences. They can jump four feet up effortlessly from a standstill.

It is unthinkable to keep any dog tied out on a rope, chain, or cable, especially the active Jack Russell. It is also cruel to leave such an active dog in a crate for long hours. This active dog does not fare well with such treatment. Expect this dog to require a great deal more of your time and attention than you ever imagined.

Learn about and meet the breed before selecting a Jack Russell Terrier. Be prepared for the dog and what he will need. Many people can make adjustments and work out what both they and the dog require to be happy. The need to surrender a dog can be prevented with some adjustments by both dog and owner. But I cannot stress too strongly that this is not the dog for everyone.

## The Jack Russell Terrier Standard

As stated by the Jack Russell Terrier Club of America (JRTCA), the largest breed club devoted to this breed, “Jack Russell Terriers are a type, or strain, of working terrier. They are not considered purebred in the sense that they have a broad genetic make-up, a broad standard, and do not breed true to type. This is a result of having been bred strictly for hunting since their beginning in the early 1800’s, and their preservation as a working terrier since. The broad standard, varied genetic background based on years of restricted inbreeding and wide outcrossing, and great variety of size and type are the major characteristics that make this strain of terrier known as a Jack Russell such a unique, versatile working terrier.”

Still, there are physical characteristics every Jack Russell should have

The Jack Russell Terrier Club of America has more than 6,500 members and more than 18,000 dogs in its registry.

## What Is a Breed Standard?

A breed standard is a detailed description of the perfect dog of that breed. Breeders use the standard as a guide in their breeding programs, and judges use it to evaluate the dogs in conformation classes. The standard for the Jack Russell Terrier is written by the national breed club, The Jack Russell Terrier Club of America, using guidelines established by the registry. You can read the entire Jack Russell Terrier standard at [www.terrier.com](http://www.terrier.com).

The Parson Russell Terrier is a variant of the Jack Russell Terrier. It has a standard recognized by the AKC and the UKC. (See chapter 2 for how this variation came about.) You can read the AKC breed standard for the Parson Russell Terrier at [www.akc.org](http://www.akc.org).

in common, and these are described in the breed standard. The Jack Russell must be compact and in totally balanced proportions. The shoulders should be clean, the legs straight, and the chest easily spanned by average-sized hands at the widest part of the dog behind the shoulders. The chest must be compressible. This required conformation allows the terrier success below ground, where he must be able to maneuver underground in narrow dark tunnels to get to the very flexible fox.

In the following section, the words in quotes are taken from the breed standard written by the JRTCA. It begins by saying the Jack Russell “should impress with its fearless and happy disposition.” The Jack Russell Terrier is “a sturdy, tough dog, very much on its toes all the time. . . . The body length must be in proportion to the height, and it should present a compact, balanced image, always being solid and in hard condition.”

The dog should not be slack of muscle or overweight. Nothing should be exaggerated about the dog’s appearance. A dog with a long back and stubby, crooked little legs is not acceptable. The dog should be a nice-looking, harmonious package, with everything in proportion.

He should move effortlessly, with both pull from the front end and drive from the back end. The topline of the dog (that is, the line of the back) should move smoothly when viewed from the side. The legs should be straight, without turned-in hocks or turned-out front feet.



The Jack Russell's head "should be well balanced and in proportion to the body. The skull should be flat, of moderate width at the ears, narrowing to the eyes." There should be a defined but not overly pronounced stop—the area where the muzzle meets the skull. "The length of the muzzle from the nose to the stop should be slightly shorter than the distance from the stop to the occiput," which is the back of the skull. "The nose should be black. The jaw should be powerful and well boned with strongly muscled cheeks."

The dog's eyes should be almond-shaped, dark, and "full of life and intelligence." The ears are "small, V-shaped drop ears carried forward close to the head." The ears should not stand up straight nor be thick and large like hound's ears.

The mouth of the Jack Russell Terrier has strong teeth and a scissors bite, which means the top teeth overlap the lower ones. A level bite, where the upper and lower teeth meet, is also acceptable. The neck of the Jack Russell is "clean and muscular, of good length, gradually widening at the shoulders." The good neck allows the dog to spar with quarry below ground and adds to his athleticism while at work.

"The chest of the Jack Russell Terrier should be shallow and narrow and the front legs not set too widely apart, giving an athletic rather than heavily chested appearance." The chest needs to be flexible and compressible to enhance the dog's ability to work up close to the quarry in bending and winding narrow tunnels below ground. A large-chested dog is limited in hunting below ground because he cannot fit in a narrow earthen den.

"The back should be strong, straight and, in proportion to the height of the terrier, giving a balanced image. The loin should be slightly arched." In other words, the entire structure of the dog is designed for strength, to be able to hold up under hard work and move efficiently.

The feet of the Jack Russell Terrier need to be "round, hard padded, of cat-like appearance, neither turning in or out." The dog needs strong feet for digging and crossing varied terrain.



*Effortless movement and great athleticism are hallmarks of the breed.*





*A JRT's coat provides protection against thorns and burrs as well as dampness.*

The tail “should be set rather high, carried gaily and in proportion to body length, usually about four inches long, providing a good hand-hold.” The tail is cropped at about three days old so it does not break while backing out of earth, and the dewclaws are removed. The tail is sometimes used as a handle of sorts to extricate the dog from the earth. It usually requires holding the dog's tail and hind legs to dislodge him from work below ground.

The coat is “smooth, without being so sparse as not to provide a certain amount of protection from the elements and undergrowth.” The coat is so very important as the dog's protection. Sometimes JRTs are in the damp ground working long hours. The coat makes an enormous difference to the protection of the dog at work. The coat seems to resist thorns and burrs, and the dog can easily shake out loose dirt. The Jack Russell Terrier may wear a rough or a smooth coat, or it could be a combination of both, known as a broken coat. A broken-coated dog may have some tail or face furnishings (longer hairs).

As for color, the dog must be more than 51 percent white, with solid tan, black, or brown markings. White is handy to see when working in dirt with a dog who is face to face with a critter who is earth-colored. Brindle markings, made up of several different colors of hair, are not allowed because they indicate the blood of another breed.