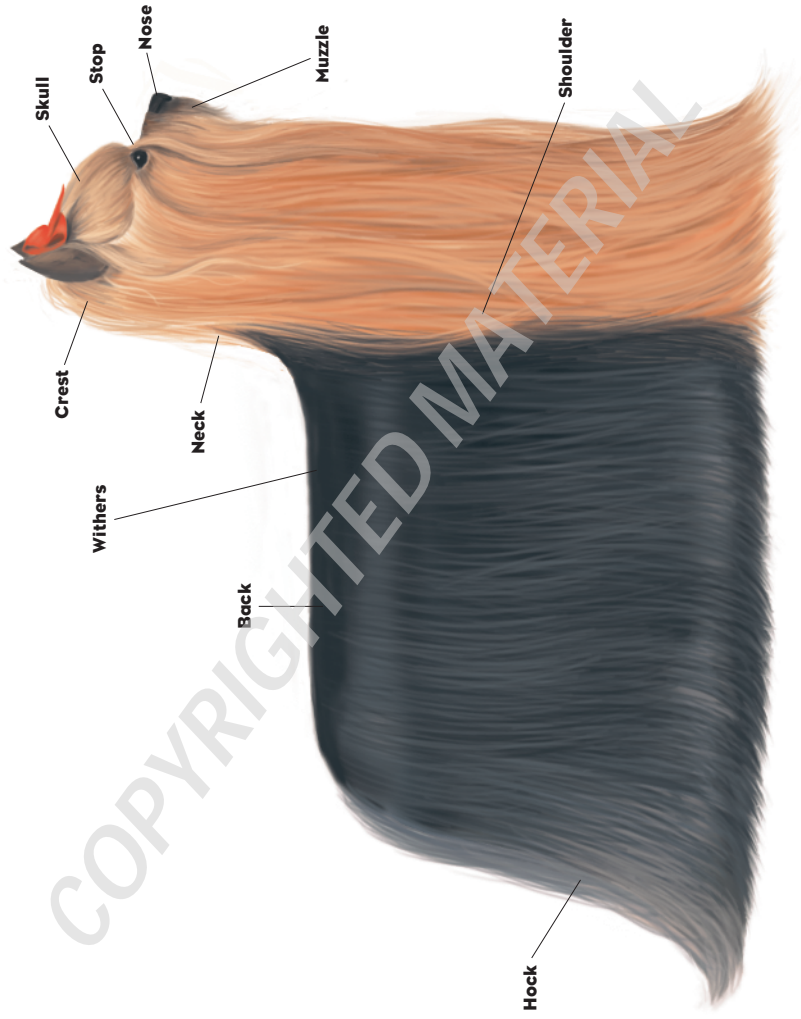


# The Yorkshire Terrier





## Chapter 1

# What Is a Yorkshire Terrier?



**T**he first time I thought about Yorkshire Terriers was in 1978 when my boyfriend, Bill, decided a Yorkie was what he wanted to give me for my birthday. Fortunately, Bill knew that no one should surprise anyone with a dog, and he wisely wanted me to pick out my own puppy. In my heart, of course, I knew that Bill wanted this puppy as much for himself as for me, but I didn't mind. I happily threw myself into the project of researching the Yorkshire Terrier.

The first thing I did was buy two Yorkshire Terrier breed books. The first was more of an illustrated booklet, and I honestly don't know if I did much more than drool over the pictures. It was only later, when I saw my first Yorkie in the flesh, that I realized the glamorous pictures had given me a false impression of this energetic little dog.

The second book was a substantial but slow-going study of the breed, more suited to Yorkie historians, breeders, and serious fanciers than to first-time pet owners. Only after I'd lived with a Yorkie for several years did I go back and take another look at those two books. Neither one had prepared me for either the challenges or the special joys of living with this breed. That's why every word of this book was written with that memory in mind.

## The Yorkie Standard

Yorkie! The very name suggests something tiny, cute, and perky, and the Yorkshire Terrier is certainly all of these things. As a well-established purebred

## 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 shows. The standard is written by the national breed club, using guidelines established by the registry that recognizes the breed (such as the AKC or UKC).

The first section of the breed standard gives a brief overview of the breed's history. Then it describes the dog's general appearance and size as an adult. Next is a detailed description of the head and neck, then the back and body, and the front and rear legs. The standard then describes the ideal coat and how the dog should be presented in the show ring. It also lists all acceptable colors, patterns, and markings. Then there's a section on how the dog moves, called *gait*. Finally, there's a general description of the dog's temperament.

Each section also lists characteristics that are considered to be faults or disqualifications in the conformation ring. Superficial faults in appearance are often what distinguish a pet-quality dog from a show or competition-quality dog. However, some faults affect the way a dog moves or his overall health. And faults in temperament are serious business.

You can read all the AKC breed standards at [www.akc.org](http://www.akc.org).

dog, the Yorkie's unique physical aspects (known collectively as "type"), as well as his character traits, are spelled out in a document called the breed standard.

If you're anything like I was when I got my Yorkie, you probably think show dogs and dog shows are weird, and you don't have a clue what this standard has to do with the dog you're about to get for a companion. As it turns out, quite a lot!

The official Yorkshire Terrier standard is a kind of blueprint for breeders and judges. The standard ensures that none of the historically important features that characterize the Yorkie will be lost in future generations. A puppy doesn't have to meet the standard in every way to make a suitable pet. On the other



*The Yorkshire Terrier is a regal, solid little dog.*

hand, since the standard spells out all those things that make a Yorkie different from any other dog, it stands to reason that you'd want a puppy whose breeder had that in mind when they set out to create the magical creature who's coming to live at your house.

So how does the standard describe a Yorkshire Terrier? If the human eye is pleased by balance and symmetry, the Yorkie is a sight for sore eyes indeed. The small head is in proportion with the compact body; the little prick ears on one end complement the docked tail on the other. With the whole package draped in steel-blue silk, the Yorkie looks like he belongs on the knee of a monarch.

Looks can be deceiving, though, and the term "toy" should not be taken literally. The Yorkie is a for-real dog. If you treat your Duke of York like a toy, you may end up with a spoiled, even snappy, seven-pound tyrant (sometimes called the "Yorkshire Terrorist"). You will also deprive yourself of the joy of experiencing firsthand the Duke's legendary charm and cheek.



*The Yorkie's tough spirit balances his small size.*

In other words, while the Yorkie's coat, size, and color surely are his most unique physical characteristics, it's the terrier in the Yorkie that gives him his "hey you!" attitude. Those of us who love Yorkies love the complete package: tiny size, glossy good looks, keen intelligence, and big-dog outlook on life.

The standard states that the Yorkie is compact and well proportioned. Underneath his very long coat, his crowning glory, the Yorkie's body is athletic and sturdy, designed for a long, active life. Important physical features are his short, level back (hips and shoulders are the same height) and his straight legs with moderately bent stifles (knees). The Yorkie also has a moderately long neck (important for carrying the head high) and enough forechest (the part that sticks out in front of the legs when viewed from the side) to house a good set of lungs for stamina. When trotting along on a loose leash, the Yorkie has a free, jaunty gait, with both head and tail held high. In the Yorkie, small does not mean frail or fragile.

It's important for all Yorkies, whether show dogs or simply companions, to have these basic physical features. Along with health and conditioning, it's a dog's underlying structure that determines the kinds of activities, or lifestyle, he can engage in. In the Yorkie's case, this includes, at the very least, long walks (preferably where there are squirrels to chase), brisk games of catch in the backyard or the park, and spirited sessions of tug in the living room. Many people think rigorous activities are dangerous for small dogs. This is nonsense. A well-built Yorkie is able to do just about anything that a larger dog can do—just on a shorter scale.

In perfect balance with the Yorkie's rugged little frame is his tough little spirit. The confident manner mentioned in the standard is as much a part of the Yorkshire Terrier as are his size and coat. The Yorkie's bearing must clearly convey that this is a vigorous small dog of considerable importance. But when you're ankle high on the leg of the average human, how do you get that message across? With a look. And the physical features that do the most to make up the typical look of the Yorkie are his eyes and ears.

Yorkie eyes are dark, and they sparkle with intelligence. His small, erect, mobile ears are like radar dishes that telegraph the Yorkie's lively interest in everything around him. Although the ears are tipped over in very young puppies, they should stand erect by the time the dog is about 3 months old; a Yorkie without fully erect ears will never have the typical Yorkie expression. Overall, the expression of the breed is alert, inquisitive, and self-confident.

The Yorkie breed standard is very particular when it comes to coat color. It says, "Puppies are born black and tan and are normally darker in body color, showing an intermingling of black hair in the tan until they are matured. Color of hair on body and richness of tan on head and legs are of prime importance in adult dogs, to which the following color requirements apply:

**"BLUE:** Is a dark steel-blue, not a silver-blue and not mingled with fawn, bronzy or black hairs.

## What Is a Breed Club?

A breed club is an association of dog breeders, fanciers, and ordinary pet owners who gather together for the purpose of promoting the interests of a specific breed. In accordance with the requirements of the American Kennel Club (AKC), breed clubs must offer speciality (one-breed) dog shows every year, sanctioned matches (informal dog shows), and educational events that are intended to educate the general public about purebred dogs in general and their breed in particular.

Breed clubs are either national or local. A national club has no address. Its officers come from across the country, and its primary activity is to stage one national specialty show a year. If a national club is a member of the AKC, it is called the parent club for the breed. Among a parent club's most important obligations is maintaining the breed standard. No changes can be made to the official breed standard except through the parent club. Changes are rarely made; the Yorkshire Terrier breed standard was last amended in 1966.

For information on the Yorkshire Terrier Club of America and local Yorkshire Terrier clubs, see the appendix.

“TAN: All tan hair is darker at the roots than in the middle, shading to still lighter tan at the tips. There should be no sooty or black hair intermingled with any of the tan.”

Coat texture is also described in some detail. The standard says, “Quality, texture and quantity of coat are of prime importance. Hair is glossy, fine and silky in texture. Coat on the body is moderately long and perfectly straight (not wavy). It may be trimmed to floor length to give ease of movement and a neater appearance, if desired. . . .”

When I first read this, I had not yet seen a real, live Yorkie. I wondered how anyone could get so worked up over a few dark hairs mixed in with the tan ones, or care so much whether the blue looked like steel rather than silver. It all seemed rather extreme. Clearly a Yorkie whose coat color, length, or texture was not quite up to the standard was no less desirable as a pet!



*The Yorkie's beautiful look and lively spirit are timeless.*

Then a long-time Yorkie fancier pointed out that the standard has changed very little since it was written in 1912. He asked me this: “How many car models, hair styles, hem lengths, dance steps, and music crazes have come and gone in the same eighty-odd years?” The point is that if breeders didn’t hold to an exacting standard with regard to coat, it wouldn’t be long before the Yorkie lost his distinctive look. And isn’t that what drew me (and you) to Yorkies in the first place?

## Companion or Show Quality?

I bought my Yorkie from an Englishwoman named Joan who worked for the United Nations. The puppy was one of a litter of two females. I chose the puppy who was most daring and outgoing. Joan had named her Mary, but I had already decided to call her Lilli. Then Bill began to call her The Wee, and that stuck.

In my pride and prejudice, I thought The Wee would turn out to be a show dog. It was clear she was not bred from show lines, and my Yorkie breed book (the serious one) stated flatly that no silk purses will come from sow’s ears where Yorkshire Terriers are concerned. Still, by the time she was 6 months old, the change in The Wee’s appearance was so dramatic that I just knew she was going to be the exception to the rule.



*A pet-quality dog may not have the same long, flowing coat as a show dog, but he should have the same take-charge attitude.*

Then, in February 1979, I went to the Westminster Kennel Club dog show at Madison Square Garden in New York. It took only one good look to see that there was no way The Wee was ever going to grow the color, texture, or amount of coat that show Yorkies have. In time I was able to see that she had just as many faults in other areas. Nonetheless, she was unmistakably a Yorkie and unmistakably a toy terrier. In terms of confidence, vigor, and self-importance, she not only met but exceeded the breed standard.

In simplest terms, the difference between show-quality and companion-quality Yorkies is the extent to which they meet the standard. Still, the range of companion- or pet-quality Yorkies is extremely broad. It covers everything from a well-bred puppy with just a few too many dark hairs intermingled with the tan to the sentimental litter out of Aunt Sally's Freddy and her next-door neighbor's Maxine. But since it is the official standard that describes the ideal Yorkshire Terrier, and it is only *because* of the standard that the Yorkshire Terrier type has survived to this day, I believe that breeding Yorkies should be left to those who follow the standard. That means only a small percentage of the roughly 38,000 Yorkies registered by the AKC each year are suitable to be show (and breeding) stock. But, happily, every single one of them is suitable to be the world's best companion to you or me!