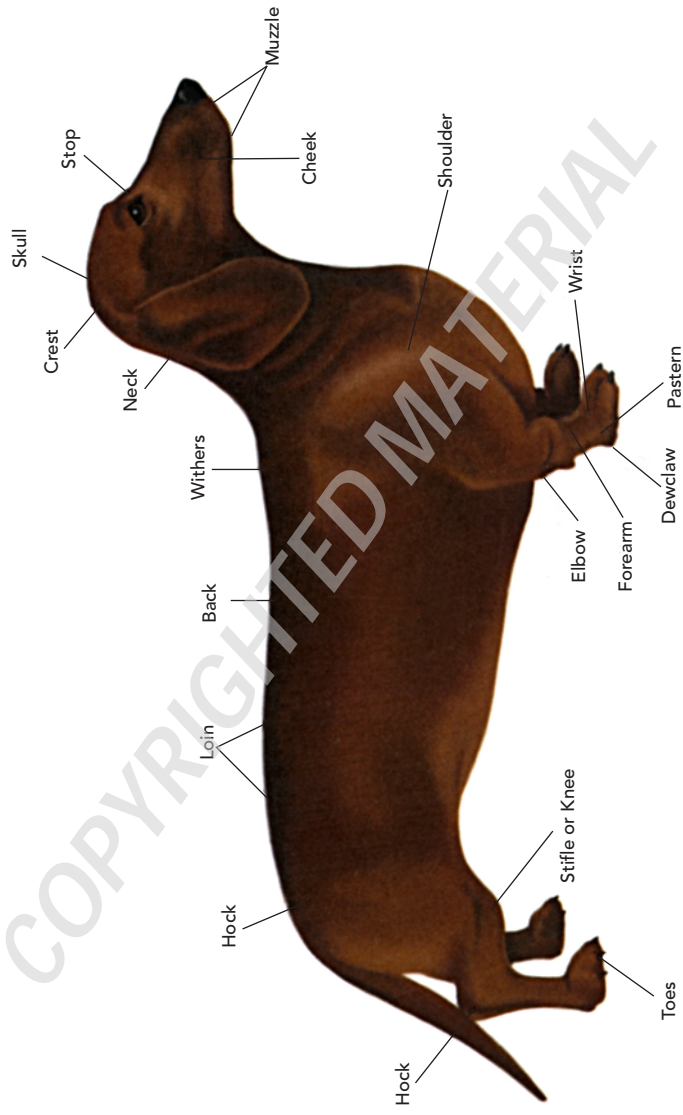


# The Dachshund





## Chapter 1

# What Is a Dachshund?



**T**hroughout the world there are more than 300 breeds of dogs, but few are more distinctive or more easily recognized than the Dachshund. Anyone who has once seen a Dachshund is unlikely to confuse him with any other breed. In addition to the Dachshund's unusual physical appearance, his character, temperament, and behavior are as unique as the shape of his body.

The Dachshund has been in the top ten most popular breeds in American Kennel Club (AKC) registration for many years and is a popular breed in many countries the world over. What is it that makes the Dachshund a favorite choice of so many, and why has his popularity endured? A dozen Dachshund owners would probably give a dozen different answers to these questions. And therein lies the Dachshund's appeal. In comparison to most other breeds, this is one of the most diverse, versatile, and adaptable.

What are the special characteristics of the Dachshund that make him a Dachshund? The official breed standard of the Dachshund spells these out in great detail. The first breed standard for the Dachshund was written in Germany in 1879 and was adopted, with certain modifications, by the Dachshund Club of America (DCA), which came into being in 1895. The first official standard written by the DCA was written and approved by the American Kennel Club in July of 1935. Since the first Dachshund standard was adopted by the DCA, it has undergone two revisions.

## 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 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).

## Built for Hunting

Before looking at the details of the breed standard, let's look at what the Dachshund was bred to do. First and foremost, the Dachshund is a hunting dog. The breed was originally developed to hunt badger, a formidable adversary. His unique body type was designed specifically to hunt badgers in their underground burrows, but his powerful hunting instincts make him an excellent trailing dog as well. Courage and determination are essential in the dogs performing this task.

The Dachshund should always exhibit the structure and temperament traits that are necessary for him to perform effectively below and above ground, and



*The Dachshund was bred to hunt.*

the modern descendant of the old badger hunter still does. The Dachshund of today has lost none of the determination, fire, and pluck of his ancestors. To put it bluntly, in spite of his relatively small size, the Dachshund is not a wimp.

The Dachshund standard begins with a section called General Appearance, and the first sentence in that section is, “Low to ground, long in body and short of leg with robust muscular development, the skin is elastic and pliable without excessive wrinkling.” Although the body of the Dachshund is longer than the body of most breeds and is a key physical characteristic that gives the Dachshund his distinctive appearance, it must present a look of sturdiness and strength. If the body is too long and/or too slender, the impression is that of weakness and ineffectiveness.

To work effectively underground, the standard says the Dachshund must have “well-sprung ribs ample enough and oval enough to allow complete development of heart and lungs, with the keel merging gradually into the line of the abdomen and extending well beyond the front legs.” In other words, the dog must have the capacity to breathe underground and the muscular agility that enables him to maneuver when he pursues his quarry into an underground burrow (called “going to ground”). He needs to be low enough to slide into a burrow and yet have enough leg under him to prevent injury to himself. His hindquarters must be strong enough to propel him forward and to keep his keel (the rounded part of the lower chest) and powerful forechest from scraping the ground. It is the

balance of his forequarters and hindquarters working together, along with the elasticity of his muscles, that enables this hound to move with ease through a maze of underground tunnels.

He must be muscular, with no skin loose enough to enable his prey to grab hold, which is why the standard states that there should be no wrinkles or dewlap (loose, hanging skin on the chin, throat, and neck). The skin of the Dachshund is comparable to a good piece of knit clothing: It should fit close to the body and yet stretch to allow him to move and bend as necessary.

In the hunting Dachshund we need stamina over speed. Short-legged hounds hunt with endurance. Therefore, the structure of the forequarters and the hindquarters of this hunting hound must be strong, powerful, and correct. If these aspects of the Dachshund are not correct, it hampers his performance and his stamina, and thus may cause him injury when he is working.

Many people poke fun at this short-legged, long little dog. However, it is important to remember that while most Dachshund owners may never use their dog to hunt, he was bred to hunt! He is powerful, muscular, and athletic. In the field, he must “give tongue.” This means that there are times when he is working in the field that he must bark. It also means he will bark at home.

The Dachshund follows his prey by scent, not sight, and when he hunts he is single-minded. The Dachshund’s nose, with the help of his long ears (which funnel scent to his nose), picks up the scent and he is off on his mission to track



*Dachshunds hunt by scent, and bark when they find their prey.*

his prey, dig to the quarry, corner it, and bark to alert the above-ground hunter to exactly where in the myriad of underground dens the animals are. If he did not “give tongue” as he worked, the hunters would be hard pressed to follow, as the Dachshund does not travel in a straight line when tracking, and once he has gone to ground locating him would indeed be a challenge if not for the melodious alert of a dog who has cornered his prey. Then the hunter can either dig to the Dachshund or assist the dog in retreating from underground if he does not emerge on his own with his prey.

The Dachshund must have agility, freedom of movement, and endurance to do the work for which the breed was developed. When the Dachshund moves, the standard says his gait should be “fluid and smooth.” His forelegs should “reach well forward without much lift.” Simply put, he should not paddle the air or prance. Such movements are wasted energy for a dog bred for stamina.

Viewed from the front, the legs do not move in exact parallel planes but incline slightly inward. This has to happen due to the shortness of the legs and the width of the chest. When the moving dog is viewed from the rear, the standard says “the thrust of correct movement is seen when the pads [of the hind feet] are clearly exposed.” To keep the topline (the dog’s outline from just behind the top of the shoulders to the tail) level in motion, each vertebrae must be supported by ribs, tendons, pelvis, and muscles. This means, simply, that the length of ribs and topline must balance one another.

The Dachshund temperament is what makes him such a delightful and versatile breed. The standard states, “The Dachshund is clever, lively, and courageous to the point of rashness, persevering in above and below ground work, with all the senses well-developed. Any display of shyness is a serious fault.” A Dachshund who is shy or fearful could not carry out the work he was bred to do. If he doesn’t possess the temperament traits specified in the standard, all the other desirable structural qualities lose their significance.

What is the typical overall demeanor of this sturdy hound? The standard says he should be bold and confident in the carriage of his head and possess an “intelligent, alert facial expression.” How does this translate to your Dachshund? You will know what it means when you see those expressive eyes that grab you with their alert “I love the world” attitude and a head carriage that says, “The world is a challenge and I can tackle anything. Want to see?”

## That Elegant Head

Part of what gives the Dachshund his wonderful look is his clean, elegant head, set on a neck the standard describes as “long, muscular, clean-cut . . . slightly arched in the nape, flowing gracefully into the shoulders.”





*The head should be elegant and tapering, with a finely formed, slightly arched muzzle.*

The eyes are dark, of medium size, and almond-shaped, with what the standard calls “an energetic, pleasant expression.” The bridge bones over the eyes should be strongly prominent. The ears are set near the top of the head, not too far forward, are of moderate length, and rounded. When the dog is animated, the ears should come forward to frame his face.

The head should taper uniformly to the tip of the nose. The skull slopes gradually into the finely formed, slightly arched muzzle.

## Sizes

One aspect of the Dachshund’s diversity is that he comes in two sizes—Standard and Miniature.

While there is no absolute weight limit for the Standard, the Dachshund Club of America suggests that he range from sixteen to thirty-two pounds. The Miniature has specific weight guidelines: At 12 months of age he must be eleven pounds or under, and should remain so if he is to compete in dog shows.

Other than weight, there is no difference mentioned in the standard between the two sizes. Since the Dachshund is a dog of substance and stamina, both sizes should possess “robust muscular development.” The bone and substance of the Miniature should be appropriate for his size. The breed standard by which he is judged is the same as that for the Standard Dachshund.

## Coat Types

Another aspect of Dachshund diversity is that the breed comes in three coat varieties—smooth (shorthaired), longhaired, and wirehaired. The smooth coat is the short, shiny, flat coat that most people associate with Dachshunds, and is certainly the most common. In fact, many people are not aware that Dachshunds come any other way.

The longhair has the same body configuration as the smooth, but has a coat of medium length that lies close to the body, with longer hair on the ears, the back of the legs, the underside of the tail and body, and the front of the chest. This longer hair is called feathering. The overall appearance is much like that of an Irish Setter. This difference in the coat gives the longhair a softer, gentler appearance.

Like the longhair, the wirehair Dachshund has a body type comparable to that of the smooth, but it is covered with a coarse, wiry coat like that of a terrier, complete with a similar beard and bushy eyebrows. This tough coat gives the wirehair a sturdy, rugged look that seems to impart the message that this Dachshund is not afraid of anything.

Underneath all three coats, there is still a Dachshund. However, there are some small differences in each variety's outlook and demeanor, as well as the amount of care required to maintain each coat. (Care of each coat type will be addressed in chapter 7.)

In general, smooths can be independent little critters who often have a mind of their own to the point of, at times, being rather stubborn. While this trait can really try one's patience sometimes, in a way it adds to their charm. After all, a perpetual "yes man" can become rather boring. Since, historically, the smooth was most likely the original variety, it would seem to follow that smooths embody more of typical Dachshund traits. This unpredictable behavior does offer a challenge, though.



*The smooth, wirehaired, and longhaired varieties each have their own personalities.*



The longhair's demeanor seems to reflect his softer, gentler overall appearance. Longhairs seem to be the somewhat more laidback variety. But don't let this kinder, gentler manner fool you. They are often the most avid hunters and are quite effective in field work.

The wirehair is probably the least known of the three varieties. The rough, wiry, double coat definitely imparts the look of a terrier. Just as the longhair's appearance seems to characterize his deportment, the wirehair displays many traits usually attributed to terriers. Wirehairs can be characterized as brash, fiery, and bold. They seem to enjoy creating a conflict. Don't be put off by this bold, impertinent facade. Beneath all the bluster, there still lies a Dachshund with all his endearing charms.

## Colors and Patterns

If you are beginning to think Dachshunds are really a pretty diverse breed, there's more. Not only do Dachshunds come in different sizes and coat types, they also come in many coat colors and can have coat patterns. Since there is such a profusion of coat colors and patterns, this is an area that can be confusing and even, at times, controversial.

### Colors

The colors most common in Dachshunds are red and a combination of black and tan. Surprisingly, I have found many people who are not aware that Dachshunds can be black and tan.

The term "red" covers a wide variety of hues, ranging from a very light shade, more like a reddish blonde, to a deep, russet red. Many reds have black hairs interspersed among the red. Another single color is cream—an apt description for a very light color. Cream is not a common color, though, and thus is not one many people are aware of or have ever seen.

Black and tans are referred to as two-colored Dachshunds. A black and tan is a dog who is basically all black with tan markings on various parts of his body, most notably on the head, chest, and paws. These tan points, as they are often called, have the same range of shading as the reds. Other two-colored Dachshunds include chocolate, gray (which is usually referred to as "blue") and fawn (which is often called Isabella). All of these colors have the same distinguishing tan markings as the black and tans.

A color called wild boar mixes light hairs with black ones and many shades in between throughout the dog's coat. This gives the dog a salt-and-pepper look. Wild boar is most commonly found in wirehairs.



*This Miniature shows the controversial piebald coat.*

## Patterns

In addition to a variety of colors, Dachshund coats can also have patterns. The dapple pattern is characterized by lighter areas and markings over the dog's body that contrast with a darker base color. The double dapple pattern is one in which varying amounts of white occur over the body in addition to the dappling spots. Brindle is distinguished by dark stripes all over the dog's body.

Relatively recently, a pattern called piebald (which is not mentioned in the Dachshund breed standard), has appeared on the scene. A piebald dog has large areas of white on his body, which otherwise can be any one of the aforementioned colors. At present, there is ongoing controversy surrounding this pattern and its acceptability in the show ring. A final decision on the matter has not yet been made.