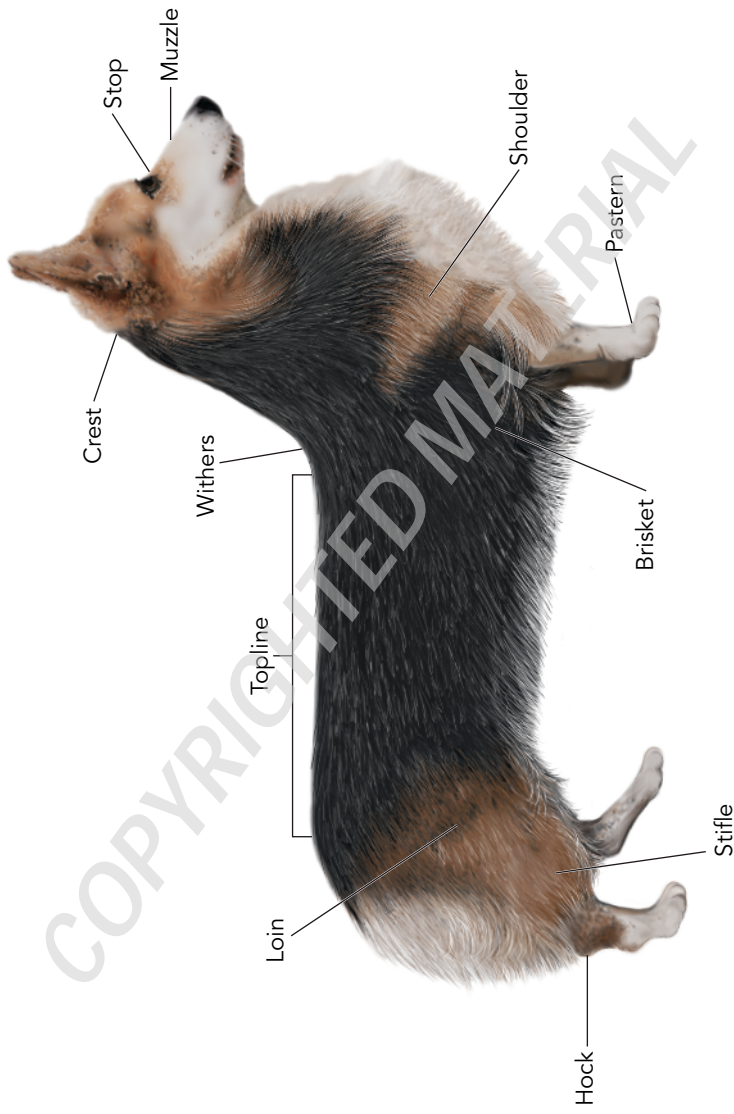


# The Pembroke Welsh Corgi





## Chapter 1

# What Is a Pembroke Welsh Corgi?



**T**he Pembroke Welsh Corgi is a small but tough little dog. He's surprisingly heavy for his size and has sturdy bones and strong muscles. Yet he can move with astonishing speed and great agility. In fact, these dogs are often referred to as "a big dog in a small package."

The Corgi's attributes came in handy on the Welsh farmland, where the breed was developed primarily to herd cattle by nipping at its heels. His job description has changed in modern times, though. He now applies his considerable talents to being a top-notch companion animal.

The American Kennel Club (AKC) places the Pembroke Welsh Corgi in the Herding Group, along with much larger breeds such as the Collie and the German Shepherd Dog. Alongside this company, he competes very successfully at AKC conformation shows and other events.

## The Breed Standard

The special characteristics of the Pembroke Welsh Corgi, a herding dog, are clearly described in the breed standard. A good way to learn the basics is to start with this blueprint of the breed. Serious exhibitors and dedicated breeders who strive to produce top-quality Corgis go back to the standard again and again.

## 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).

Usually, 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).

## General Appearance

The Pembroke Welsh Corgi is a keen, hardy dog. He possesses an amazing amount of stamina and energy. He is not really a small dog, but rather a short dog. He's got the body of a medium-size dog, but his legs are short. When you look at a Pembroke Welsh Corgi, you see a sturdy dog with enough length of leg to be very agile and fast if he needs to be.

Right away, you should also notice the bright, alert expression from his oval, dark eyes and the very upright ears on his foxy head. Pembroke Welsh Corgis are

very smart dogs, interested in the world around them, and of course, in their special humans.

While the average Pembroke Welsh Corgi is sturdy this does not mean blocky or heavy. As a herding dog, the Corgi needs to be fit in mind and body and be ready to take on the task at hand with enthusiasm and endurance. He was designed to be agile enough to avoid the kicks of cattle. His wise approach to life, coupled with a distinct sense of humor, are endearing characteristics.

## Size

Ideally, your Pembroke Welsh Corgi will be 10 to 12 inches tall when measured at the withers (the point on the back right at the top of the shoulders). Corgis should not be allowed to get overweight. Most will weigh between 23 and 30 pounds.

The ideal Corgi is longer than he is tall. If you measure from his withers to the base of his tail, he should be about 40 percent longer than his height at the withers.

The breed standard says “moderately long and low” is an essential characteristic of the Pembroke Welsh Corgi. A Corgi who is a good length but too low to the ground because of overly short legs might tire while working in the pasture. A dog with a square outline just doesn’t look like a Corgi. A dog who is too tall will lack the sturdiness that was essential for a Welsh herding dog.

In size, as in all Corgi attributes, balance is the key. The dog should be the right weight and size for his look, height, and purpose. No one feature should be exaggerated or emphasized above the others.

## Head

Although the Pembroke Corgi has a foxy head, he should not have the narrow, pointed nose and squinty eyes of a fox. A very round head is not desirable either.

The correct amount of stop (the space between the eyes where the skull meets the muzzle) is important.



*The Corgi's head can be described as “foxy,” but it shouldn't be pointy.*

Too abrupt a change, along with a heavy brow, give the dog a blocky look. Too flat a stop leaves the muzzle and forehead flowing together.

Part of the foxy look comes from the erect, medium-size ears, which have a slightly rounded point. The ears are placed on the top of the head and stand up. Corgis move their ears constantly and most expressively. They usually are carried pointing back if the dog is trotting or running, but up and ahead when they are interested in something—which is much of the time. The ears should not be so large that they overwhelm the head, but may appear that way in some young puppies.

The eyes, including the rims, are oval and medium in size. They can be various shades of brown. A dark brown eye, but not truly black, is preferred. Light-colored eyes are considered not as attractive. The eye rims should be black to match the lips and the nose. Sometimes a fine row of black hairs outlines the rims, like mascara.

It is important in dogs like the Pembroke Welsh Corgi with a working heritage that the teeth are correct. Dogs are not allowed to have braces or orthodontic work! In Corgis, the small incisors in front should just overlap, with the top teeth covering the bottom teeth but with no gap between. That way, all of the teeth should align properly and your Corgi can grab things and chew without any problems.

## Neck, Topline, and Body

A Pembroke Welsh Corgi should have a moderately long neck. A neck that is too short will make him look stuffy, while a very long neck looks weak.

The topline is the line along back of the dog. In a Corgi, the topline should be level. That is the ideal, though some Corgis may have a slight dip or a roach (upward curve at the rump) on their toplines. This straight back should stay level even when your Corgi is trotting across your yard. At a gallop, it will change as the dog's back flexes.

Pembroke Welsh Corgis have a solid body. Remember, these are medium dogs with short legs. They have a deep chest with plenty of room for their lungs to expand and provide that extra oxygen they need when working.

The loin area on a Corgi is from the end of the rib cage to the top of the hip. While the back may look long, this area should be fairly short, giving your Corgi agility and a short turning radius.

One of the most distinguishing features of the Pembroke Welsh Corgi is his lack of a tail—and thereby hangs a tale! In the early days of the breed, many Pembrokes were born tailless or with short stumps. The natural bobtail may range in length from “barely present” to a couple of inches long. This in no way



*The ideal Corgi has a level topline.*

hampered their activities. While taillessness is a genetic factor, it is not due to a defective gene.

Over the course of time, breeders selected their stock for other features to improve the breed, and the gene for taillessness ended up being swamped in the gene pool. Many of the puppies born today have long tails. According to the standard, they should be docked as short as possible without being indented. This is done a few days after birth. A tail up to two inches long is allowable if it doesn't spoil the contour of the topline.

In recent years, several countries, including Britain, have banned tail docking in all breeds. Breeders have been working with bloodlines that still carry the gene for a natural bobtail and have produced some fine Corgis without sacrificing other desirable breed qualities. In the United States, docking is still allowed. Nonetheless, a few natural bobtails appear in litters from time to time.

## Front Legs

The front legs of the Pembroke Welsh Corgi should not be perfectly straight from the elbows to the ground. Because they have short legs and a deep chest, the forearms (the bone between the wrist and the elbow) have a slight curve so that the wrists are closer together than the elbows. However, this curve should



not be exaggerated, and the pasterns (the same area as our wrists) and the feet should be parallel and face forward. Too much of a curve and/or feet that toe out are, unfortunately, common faults that indicate a weakness in the running gear.

The ideal Pembroke Corgi foot is oval, with the two center toes slightly longer than the outer toes. Strong, well-padded feet are a necessity, because they carry the entire weight of the dog and must be tough to cope with rough terrain. To avoid a mishap in the field, dewclaws (the extra toes on the inside of the legs) are usually removed at the time the tail is docked. The nails must be kept short to maintain the tightness of the foot.

## Back Legs

Good movement is the result of proper conformation. For the Corgi to move efficiently, his front legs and rear legs must have complementary angulation—the angles of the joints in the legs. The rear produces the driving action and the front legs reach forward. If the angles between the main bones of these two assemblies are widely different, there will be an imbalance. The hind legs have a greater range of flexibility and drive than the front legs, and any imbalance leads to inefficient action.



*Good movement is the result of good structure—especially in the rear, which drives a dog's forward motion.*

## Coat

One of the grandest attributes of the Pembroke Welsh Corgi is his coat. It sheds dirt, doesn't tangle, and protects the dog from temperature extremes. It's also a reasonable length, easy to care for, and water-resistant.

The Corgi has a medium-length double coat, meaning a harder top-coat lies on top of a softer under-coat. The thick undercoat is not noticeable, but adds to the luxurious feel overall. Areas of longer hair provide the attractive full ruff at the neck and fancy pants (also known as pantaloons) on the back legs, as well as the charming “fairy saddle” that is clearly visible at the withers and over the shoulders. The style of his tailless rear is also enhanced with plush furnishings. Most Corgi coats lie straight, but some will be a bit wavy.

The downside is that the Corgi sheds. During shedding season, your Corgi may lose much of the neck ruff and pantaloons. You will be surprised at how much hair can come out of a small dog!

Some Pembroke Welsh Corgis will be born with a longer, fluffier coat. These are appropriately called *fluffies*, and are simply Corgis with something extra. The fluffy coat is soft, silky, and without the usual hard outer guard hairs that repel burrs and snags. This type of coat may require a bit more daily grooming attention but does tend to shed less. This is a fault for the conformation show ring but does not affect the dog in any other way. Fluffy Corgis are eligible to compete in all the performance activities, such as obedience and agility. Some people with pet fluffy Corgis will trim them for easier care.

For Corgis in the show ring, no trimming is allowed, except the whiskers and the foot hair.



*The Corgi's plush coat sometimes comes in a longer variety known as fluffly.*

## Color

Pembroke Welsh Corgis come in a wide variety of colors and shades. Most include flashy areas of white. Reds range from a dark, foxy color to a pale fawn.



Sables are red dogs with black tips on the outer guard hairs, giving the coat a shading of black. Some sables are heavily shaded and some have only a smattering of black, mostly on the shoulders, head, and rump where the tail is set. Often sables show a distinctive cap-like marking over the eyes, giving them an elfish expression.

Tricolors (red or brown, white, and black) come in two basic versions—the red-headed tri and the black-headed tri. The black on a red-headed tri may be a saddle across the back or spread over most of the body. The margins between black and red have a tweedy appearance. The adult head is mostly red or fawn with just a touch of black here and there.

The black-headed tri has a distinct pattern. The skull is black, there is a black stripe on the bridge of the muzzle, the ear tips are black, a black crescent sweeps back on the cheeks, and there are noticeable brown dots over the eyes. Overall, this is a much blacker dog. If there were no white markings, the legs would be brown and there would even be black dots on top of the toes and brown under the tail.

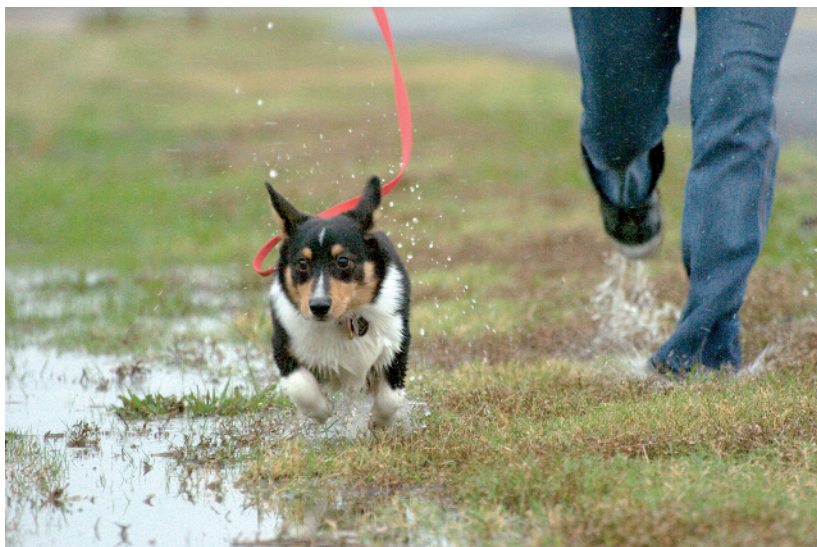
In Corgis, white usually breaks up the total pattern. The standard requires some red or tan, however pale, to be present, because pure black and white is not allowed.

Well-placed white markings dress up the basic coloring. Almost all Pembroke Welsh Corgis have white socks and at least a splash of white on the chest. Some shine with full white collars. On others, a blaze or snippet on the muzzle looks attractive. There is endless variation, and no two Corgis ever seem to be exactly the same. This is much more fun than the solid colors of many other breeds, and helps to identify individuals.

As with the coat texture, the wrong amount or incorrect placement of the white can be considered a fault for the show ring. *Mismarks* are dogs with any white on the back between the withers and tail, on the sides between the elbows and the back of the hindquarters, or above an imaginary horizontal line drawn from the elbow to the stifle, or on the ears. *Whitelies* have a white body with red or dark markings, sometimes big spots, and are rare. While Pembroke Welsh Corgis with color faults are not good show ring prospects, they are still wonderful family companions.

## Gait

*Gait* is the way a dog moves. A Corgi with correct skeletal proportions and firm muscles will achieve the breed's purposeful, ground-covering gait. Since Pembroke Welsh Corgis were originally bred as herding dogs, their movement must be free, easy, and agile, with stamina to work for long periods.



*Good movement is essential to a breed like the Corgi, which was developed to herd livestock all day.*

It is a joy to behold a well-balanced Corgi trotting purposefully along on a loose leash. The ears are laid back, the head is held fairly low, the topline is level, and those short legs work with strength and efficiency. Good movement looks effortless. He could go on all day without tiring.

## Temperament

Although the section on temperament in the breed standard is short, Corgi enthusiasts know how their dogs should act. Emotional stability, self-confidence, and enthusiasm for life are of prime importance. Curiosity, intelligence, inventiveness, humor, sensitivity, trainability, loyalty, and affection are all typical of a Corgi's wonderful mind.

As with the physical attributes of the dog, the key is balance. An ideal Pembroke Welsh Corgi has an all-encompassing, overall balance. He should be enthusiastic but controllable, able to make you laugh and cuddle on your lap, but at the same time guard his family with a sharp bark when needed. Chapter 3 will expand on the various aspects of the Corgi personality.