Chapter 1

Getting the Lowdown on Pugs

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Welcome to the curly tail-wagging world of Pugs! Life with a Pug is a fun-loving, big-eyed experience, that's for sure. The Pug is a dog that wants nothing more than to fill your life with hilarious hijinks, lots of snorty kisses, and oodles of good company. In this chapter, I help you decide whether this cheery little fellow is the right breed for you. I also discuss what it means to add a Pug to your household.

Defining Pugs

The largest member of the Toy family, the Pug is one of the most popular breeds around. It's hard to go anywhere without seeing a Pug because people are totally in love with this dog. Why all the hoopla about this short little fellow? Well, it's easy to see why he's so popular. Here's a dog with his own ready-made slogan, *multum in parvo,* which means, "a big dog in a little body." Basically, a Pug has a lot going on in a small space.

First comes his compact yet very sturdy frame that's built to last. There's nothing fragile about Puggy, who weighs around 20 pounds and stands between 10 and 12 inches tall. Next, there's his expression with its big-eyed appeal. Two bright, glistening black globes watch your every move. Add in his pushed-in nose, big grin, and curious pattern of wrinkles crossing his face, and you have a pugtacular-looking little dog.

Last, but certainly the frosting on the canine cake, is the Pug's easy-going manner. Silly, yet serious when he needs to be, the Pug oozes personality, and plenty of charm and character is packed into his frame. He can be a lap dog one minute and an eager playmate the next. Mostly he loves hanging around his owners and doesn't want to be left out of anything.

Pugs are definitely a breed apart from other kinds of dogs and aren't your typical kind of fussy little dog. They're interested in pleasing you and aren't very demanding. They're sometimes a little too big to cuddle like a very small dog, but they're sturdy enough to play a fast game of catch and chase the birds in the yard. See Chapter 2 for more about the whole Pug picture and Chapter 3 for an official description (also called the *breed standard*) of the Pug.

Deciding Whether a Pug Is Right for You

No doubt about it, getting a Pug, or any dog, is a big decision. That's because a dog is a 24/7 responsibility. What seems like a good idea now is really a 12- to 15-year investment of your time, money, and freedom. Think you're prepared to take on this duty? Read the next few sections to help you decide.

Evaluating your lifestyle

Sure, the idea of having a Pug may sound exciting. Maybe you've always wanted to have a dog, but this is the first time you're able to think about getting one of your own. Perhaps you've just gotten your first big job in a new city and can now afford to take care of a dog, have the room to keep one, and the time to enjoy one. Should you rush out and get one? Maybe yes and maybe no.

A Pug is definitely great company and makes the best listener when you've had a hard day at the office and want to spout off about your boss. Likewise, if you live alone, a dog can offer good protection by barking when a stranger comes to the door. Many people actually say they feel safer with a dog in the house.

Although these are all good reasons for you to get a dog, you need to consider a few more things before rushing out to buy kibble. If you're the only one Puggy lives with, remember that he's been alone all day and is just bursting with energy when you come home. He wants to do things even though all you may want to do is veg out on the sofa. That means you need to plan ahead to

spend some quality exercise time with Puggy if you want to have a happy dog when you come home. Maybe you want to check out some doggy activities that you can both do together, such as visiting hospital patients or taking obedience or agility classes. (See Chapter 15 for more specifics about visiting hospitals or taking classes with your Pug.)

In some cities, you can even find reputable doggy day-care facilities that provide activities for your pet while you're away. You may want to consider this option if you work long hours. These facilities range in price depending upon the services offered and the city — anywhere from ten to twenty-five dollars a day. Many facilities offer affordable packages that can be combined with overnight lodging, if you need to board your Pug.

Also, you can hire a dog walker to come in during the day and take your Pug for a walk while you're gone. Fees for these services range, and people aren't always available in every city, so you have to contact your veterinarian or ask other dog owners to locate reliable dog walkers.

Like to go away for the weekends? Unless you like to camp or go places that welcome dogs, you have to leave Puggy behind. You also need to get a pet sitter to take care of him, or you need to take him to a kennel. Besides the expense of dog care, you also have to look at your Pug's sad expression when you leave him. Doing so isn't easy, but just reassure him that you'll be back soon and that you'll miss him while you're away.

Sharing your space

Having a ranch or a large home with acres of safe grounds may be ideal for a Pug or any dog (or me!) to live in, but that's not everyone's living arrangement. Pugs don't need much room, but even small dogs need space to stretch their legs. If you live in an apartment, or a small condo or house without a fenced yard, Puggy can still feel right at home. Sometimes though, a small space can get pretty crowded with one Pug and a thousand toys!

And come rainy days, your small dog may get cabin fever when he doesn't get as much outdoor exercise as he'd really like. You can play fetch and keep Puggy entertained in a small hallway for only so long. Having a small house without a yard may also mean taking him out on a leash all the time to go to the bathroom, which may be more time-consuming than you first expected. Do you have the patience and the energy? If you do, by all means, get a Pug. If not, you may want to think twice about it.

For more information about how much room your Pug needs, see Chapter 8.

Accepting that your house isn't going to be spotless

If you like an immaculate home, a Pug or any other dog may not be for you. Sure, you can train Puggy to wipe his wet feet off on a mat before he comes into the house, but what happens when he has an upset tummy and regurgitates his breakfast on the new carpet? Your Pug will also have housetraining accidents, even after you think that he has figured out the bathroom routine. Are you going to be really upset, or can you clean the boo-boo up quickly and take it in stride? If you have a dog, count on picking up messes now and then. It happens.

Shedding — lots of it — is another inevitable fact of Pug ownership. Although most dogs shed to some extent, Pugs are major shedders. Accept the fact that you have tiny fawn or black hairs decorating your household. Besides, they add character to your décor! Although you can't stop Puggy from shedding completely, you can keep him clean and well-groomed, which cuts down on hair loss. See Chapter 9 for more Pug grooming basics.

When you think about it, cleaning up a few loose hairs around the house is a small price to pay for having such a loyal companion. Messes can always be cleaned up, but life with a Pug is special and meant to be magical.

Maintaining household harmony

Although you may think that a Pug is the only dog for you, other people who live in your home may have other ideas. How will they feel if you bring a Pug into the house without their approval? Sure, other family members can learn to love Puggy, but some people don't go with the flow. You don't want to have to continually stick up for your little guy. Plus, when you go away, you have to ask someone at home to pitch in and help out by feeding or walking your Pug. A happy dog household works best when everyone is on the same doggy page and likes your Pug.



Assuming that everyone agrees about the dog, plan on having a few group discussions about the training methods that everyone wants to use and can stick by. I talk about how to teach your Pug some good manners in Chapters 10 and 11.

Another point you want to clear up with your family members deals with food. If you think that Puggy shouldn't be given table scraps, it helps if the

whole household agrees. Everyone needs to agree on what your Pug eats on a regular basis so he doesn't get too heavy or eat something that doesn't agree with him. The last thing you want is to have a well-meaning member of the household inadvertently give him something that makes him sick. See Chapter 7 for more information about feeding your Pug properly.



Although Pugs do well with children, some children don't do well with small dogs. Youngsters can be afraid for no apparent reason. I remember a time when a lovely young family came over to our home for a visit with their 18-month-old son. We were looking forward to watching the child play with Boots, our black Pug. Well, the toddler took one look at Boots and began screaming. Boots never even went near him, but the child wouldn't stop yelling, despite our cajoling. I was never so glad to see guests leave.



One way to avoid this same kind of situation is to take your child with you when you're visiting Pug litters or contemplating adopting an older dog. This way, you can make sure that they can both get along before you bring the dog home.

Even if your Pug and your child get along famously, always keep an eye on both of them whenever they're together and never leave them unattended. Your child is learning how to play positively with your Pug and needs some guidance from you. For more information, see Chapter 6.

One last point to consider is other animals in the house (and I don't mean that pesky bird that sometimes gets into your attic!). If you already have an elderly dog or cat with health issues, he may not appreciate a young rambunctious puppy jumping all over him. Then again, a first dog in good health may like having a new Pug playmate. Pugs are eager to get along with any other dogs, cats, or small critters already in the home. I talk about this issue in more detail in Chapter 6.

Adding Up the Dollars and Cents: The Cost of Pug Ownership

Think about all the unconditional love that your Pug can give you. Can you really put a price on how much that's worth? Maybe, maybe not. But along with the joy comes financial responsibility. The companionship that a dog brings can sometimes be a luxury item if your budget is already stretched too thin.



If you're thinking about acquiring a new puppy or adopting an older Pug, make sure that your dog expenses can fit within your budget. Otherwise, you may end up resenting everything Puggy needs. Remember that when you take on a Pug, you're making a commitment to take care of him for the rest of his life.

If you're buying a puppy from a reputable breeder for several hundred dollars, you may think the purchase price is the most expensive part of owning a dog, but that's not the case. In fact, the purchase price is a drop in the bucket. Over the course of 12 to 15 years of a dog's lifetime, the average pet owner can easily spend $15,000 to $20,000.

A Pug comes with a long list of essentials, including the following:

- Baby gates
- Bedding and a pet carrier
- Bitter spray to deter chewing
- Bowls for water and food
- Carpet cleaner or stain remover
- Collars and leash
- Fencing and gates to secure the yard
- Food and, if necessary, food supplements
- Grooming products, such as ear- and wrinkle-cleaning products, shampoo, conditioner, brush, comb, toothbrush, toothpaste, and nail clippers or a nail grinder
- Grooming services
- Medications, such as flea control products and heartworm prevention
- Pet hair removers for furniture and clothing
- Pet insurance
- Pet sitter
- Registration and identification
- Toys
- Training classes for puppies and adults
- Travel harness
- Treats

- Veterinary expenses, including teeth cleaning and possible emergency care
- Waste scooper

Of course, you don't have to go overboard by supplying your dog with lots of expensive toys, fancy collars, and leashes, but you shouldn't skimp on his health. For example, make sure he has routine visits to the veterinarian for yearly checkups, teeth cleanings, and hopefully just minor problems, such as ear infections or a bad cough. See Chapter 13 for the lowdown on finding a good vet and ensuring that he or she keeps your dog in the best possible health.



Speaking of the best possible health, it helps to know what vaccines your Pug will need so you can plan ahead for it in your budget. I cover that topic in Chapter 13.

One more health-related recommendation is to feed your Pug the same quality dog food at each meal. Feeding your dog whatever food is on sale at the supermarket isn't a good choice because it most likely doesn't have all the nutrition that Puggy needs. Some low-cost food manufacturers don't always use the same ingredients each time they manufacture and package their meals, so it's not always the same recipe your dog is accustomed to eating. Unlike people, dogs need to eat the same meal every time. When you do make meal changes, you have to do those changes gradually with a little of the new food combined with the old. See Chapter 7 for more details about a proper Pug diet.

Committing to Socializing and Training

Gosh, having a dog just looked so (warning: pun alert) doggone easy when you visited your friend who has a Pug. When it was time for his Pug to relieve himself, he just went to the door by himself and patiently waited to be let out, or maybe he just hopped through the doggy door when the need arose. Your friend didn't have to do anything but scoop up the mess outside when he got around to it. Simple enough, right? The reality is that your friend probably spent several weeks or even months training his new Pug all about the bathroom basics.

And no doubt he had to contend with more than a few accidents along the way. So what you have to determine is whether you're up for the challenge. New

dog owners need plenty of patience — not to mention a sense of humor — when it comes to housetraining. Check out Chapter 10 for my tips to make the process as painless as possible.

And when it comes to overall training, you may think that Pugs don't need much because they look so well behaved on someone else's leash and seem so easygoing in public. However, this roly-poly, good-time-fellow appearance can be deceiving. Certainly, Pugs are easy to work with, yet they still need some measure of socialization and training, as do all dogs. Unfortunately, they weren't born knowing that a street is a dangerous place to run into and that the mail isn't just another thing to chew up.

So my advice is to plan on setting aside some time to take Puggy to puppy or adult obedience classes. You can also show your dog some behavior basics, such as Sit, Stay, Down, and Come at home, and I talk about this do-it-yourself training in Chapter 11.

You also need to introduce your Pug to the neighborhood and the overall world around him. You can do this by taking him with you when you go out for a walk or a jog near your home or even when you run errands. For example, maybe you have no intention of going to the outdoor shopping center, but if going there with your Pug gives him a chance to meet some new faces and therefore build his self-confidence, it's worth it. In fact, getting out and about not only helps your Pug become more socialized but also allows him to get some much-needed exercise (see Chapter 8 for more about exercising your dog).

Think about all that's involved in making your Pug the light of your life before you bring one home. That light will still need a connection to keep shining.

Signing Up for a Lifelong Tour of Pug Duty

When you make the decision to have a Pug, you're signing up for a lifelong responsibility. He's your dog whether you like what he's doing or you don't, but it's up to you to make the experience and time you have with him a positive one. The good news is that dog help is almost always available when you need it. By reading this book, you're already taking the first step to making your Pug's life with you a good one. Keep up the good work! Puggy deserves it.

Pugsters on the big screen

Pugs have been popular characters in both television and movies. You even see them in television commercials and print advertisements. And why shouldn't they be? Pugs are cute and personable, and they can have that serious actor look that all directors work hard to find. The following are a few famous movies in which Pugs appear. Some have larger roles than others, so don't blink during some of these movies, or you may miss the Pug's appearance:

- *The Adventures of Milo & Otis*
- *Best in Show*
- *Big Momma's House*
- *Cats & Dogs*
- *Dune*
- *The Gathering Storm*
- *The Great Gatsby*
- *The Great Race*
- *Heavenly Creatures*
- *Mansfield Park*
- *Men in Black* and *Men in Black II*
- *Men of Honor*
- *Monkey Bone*
- *Pie In The Sky: The Brigid Berlin Story*
- *Pocahontas*
- *Police Academy*
- *Pugsley, aka Manhattan Dog Story*
- *The Runaway Bride*
- *The Summer House*
- *Tom Jones*
- *The Truth About Charlie*