

Chapter 1

Bulldog: A Tough Name for a Big Softy

In This Chapter

- ▶ Getting to know your Bulldog
- ▶ Caring for and feeding your Bulldog
- ▶ Being active with your Bulldog

1ust the name “Bulldog” conjures up an image of a real tough guy, and when you put a picture of the dog with the name, you get an image of a real tough dog. Bulldogs are stocky, sturdy dogs with a solid, foursquare stance and a face that says, “Bring it on; I can take it.” All those wrinkles and that pushed-in nose give an impression of gruffness and a ready-to-fight attitude. No wonder the Bulldog is the mascot of the United States Marines!



The English Bulldog was unofficially adopted as the Marine Corps mascot during World War I, when the German army reportedly nicknamed the attacking Marines *Teufelhunden*, meaning “Devil Dogs.”

Yet in spite of that face and sturdy body, today’s Bulldog is a sweetie — a real softie with no hard feelings toward anyone.

Transitioning from the Bull Baiter to Loving Companion

Bulldogs weren't always big softies. Originally, the Bulldog was bred for the sport of bull-baiting in England. The fanciers of the sport molded a Bulldog to perform specifically for bull-baiting.

The Bulldog who fought a bull in the ring needed to be a certain build and to have fighting qualities. Breeders worked diligently to mold the fighter that became the bull baiter. The fanciers wanted a dog built low to the ground to make it harder for the bull to get his horns underneath the dog. If the bull lifted the Bulldog on his horns, the dog would be thrown across the stadium.

Plus the dog needed to be sturdy and well muscled to withstand the occasional toss. Many early Bulldogs were smaller and lighter than the Bullies of today. The nose needed to be set back from the front of the muzzle and needed to turn up, so that when the dog had a good grip on the bull's nose, the dog's nose wouldn't be buried in the bull's face. The dog would be able to breathe without ever letting go of the bull. The Bulldog's distinctive wrinkles were a sought-after feature because they channeled the bull's blood away from the dog's eyes and nose.

The breeders also wanted a dog who was determined and wouldn't quit. In bull-baiting, people placed bets on how long the dog would face the bull. Horrible stories circulated about handlers who maimed their dogs to show that the dogs, even on two or three legs, would keep going after the bull.

When bull-baiting was finally outlawed, the Bulldog's future looked grim. But fortunately, many people admired the Bulldog's temperament, and breeders set out to preserve and perfect the Bulldog by breeding out any viciousness but keeping the tenacious side of the dog's personality.

The result is today's Bulldog — fierce looking on the outside and a marshmallow on the inside. (See Figure 1-1.) But remember that your Bully's marshmallow interior can turn to granite if you ask him to do something he doesn't want to do. A Bulldog has retained his spirit of determination and steadfastness. You can't argue with a Bulldog. Read more about the transition of the Bulldog and bull-baiting in Chapter 2.

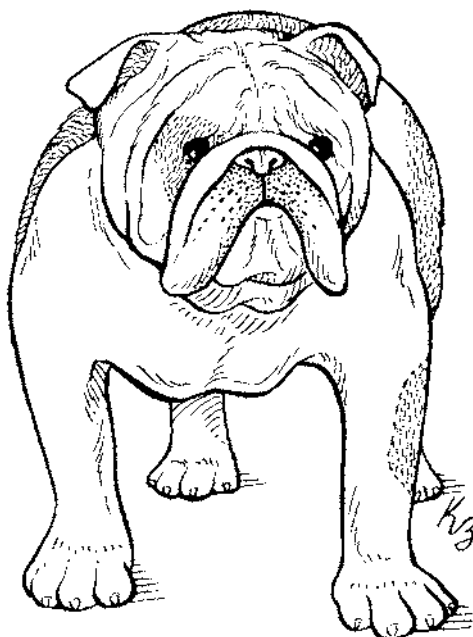


Figure 1-1: Recognizing the features of a typical adult Bulldog.

Getting to Know the Bulldog

The Bulldog is a member of the American Kennel Club's (AKC) Non-Sporting Group (see Chapter 2). The non-sporting group mostly includes dogs who may have had a specific job once upon a time but who are now considered great companion dogs. When you think about the Bully's role, that's not such a bad job description. Being a friend may be the most important job a dog can have.

So your Bully is a companion. Although plenty of Bulldogs compete in performance events (see Chapter 11), just as many are content to be low-maintenance buddies. Bullies are good with children and enjoy a walk with the family or a game of tag or hide-and-seek. They're not enthusiastic about playing fetch, but they certainly don't mind watching you get the ball.



Be aware of the fact that your Bulldog can't be your jogging companion. He isn't built for that, and his breathing (see Chapter 14) doesn't allow for wind sprints. The Bulldog is also highly susceptible to heat stroke, so beware of hot summer days.

Why non-sporting?

The Bulldog is too large for the toy group, and he definitely isn't a terrier — he'd never fit down the burrow of any small animal. The Bully isn't a sight or scent hound and doesn't have the endurance for chasing game, even if he wanted to. The Bulldog doesn't herd sheep or cattle, so that eliminates the herding group. He's not a sporting dog. He doesn't flush or point birds, and he can never retrieve a duck from a pond. He doesn't fill the bill as a dog to pull a cart or guard a flock or help fight crime as a policeman's pal. The non-sporting group categorizes all dogs that don't fit in any other class.

You can't force a Bulldog to do anything. He's bred to be single-minded and unyielding to rough handling. Also, fighting with your Bully can aggravate breathing problems, if they exist, and can lead to a serious emergency. Coax your Bully with kind words and tasty treats.

Caring for and Feeding Your Bulldog

A Bulldog isn't high maintenance, but she does need more care than you may think. The Bully doesn't have a lot of thick, fluffy undercoat to worry about, but Bulldogs do need care (see Chapter 8). Pay attention to particular parts of your Bully's body:

- ✔ **Hair:** Those tiny, short hairs shed, but the coat isn't the biggest concern with Bulldogs.
- ✔ **Wrinkles:** Wrinkles are the biggest issue concerning the Bulldog. Make sure your daily routine includes cleaning the wrinkles and drying them thoroughly to prevent rash, infection, or other skin problems.
- ✔ **Skin:** Bulldogs are prone to skin ailments and allergies. Check for hot spots and bald patches (see Chapter 14 for more information on Bully ailments).
- ✔ **Feet:** Trim your Bully's foot fur, and check between those toes for any sign of interdigital cysts. *Interdigital cysts* are pus-filled growths between the toes and are frequently caused by ingrown hairs. Check out Chapter 14 for information on dealing with these cysts.

- ✓ **Ears:** Keep the ears clean and dry.
- ✓ **Tail:** Don't forget your dog's tail. The base of some Bulldog tails fits into a sort of pocket of flesh, and that needs to be kept as clean and dry as the wrinkles. A dab of petroleum jelly in the pocket helps prevent irritation.

Bulldog care includes other functions, besides keeping the body groomed, that you need to perform to ensure a healthy pet:

- ✓ **Regularly visit your veterinarian.** Keep your vaccinations up to date, and consult your veterinarian if your dog is sick. Even if the sickness turns out to be something minor, it's always better to be safe than sorry. (See Chapter 13 for more on your vet.)
- ✓ **Make sure that your dog has identification.** Attach her license and rabies tags to a buckle collar. You may also want to include a tag with your name and phone number. Consider getting your Bully microchipped as another form of ID. (See Chapter 5 for more information on identifying your Bully.)
- ✓ **Watch what you feed your Bulldog.** Control her weight, and don't let her get too heavy. An overweight dog has even more trouble breathing and may develop hip problems and arthritis. Extra weight puts extra stress on her heart and lungs, too. Extra pounds can aggravate any existing problems and may cause others (see Chapter 7).

No matter what you feed your Bulldog, keep her fit and trim and healthy.

Keeping a Bulldog healthy can cost more than other dogs' health care. Surgery can be expensive because of certain procedures that are protocol for the Bulldog. Bullies may have small tracheas and elongated palates. When your dog has any kind of surgery, she may be in danger during the recovery period. At that time, she isn't fully awake, and the soft palate can fall over the opening of the trachea, cutting off the air supply. You pay extra for someone to sit with your dog, making sure that she can breathe.

Figure out your budget. Make sure that you can afford a Bulldog. The purchase price of the dog is just the beginning. Even if you don't include crates, beds, toys, baby gates, and fencing for the yard, you still have to buy food and pay for regular trips to the veterinarian, corrective surgeries, and emergencies.



Know that your Bulldog comes with a price tag. Don't be scared off by the costs; one dog costs a family roughly \$6,000 over the lifetime of the dog.

Showing Your Bulldog

No matter what you do together, remember that your Bully is a member of your family for life. The love and companionship make owning a Bully worth your time and money. Your Bulldog may be your child's best friend, your special cuddle buddy, or the family trophy winner — or even all three!

If you decide that you want to experience the excitement of showing your dog, you can choose among some of the following activities:

✓ **Conformation:** You may want to show your dog in *conformation*, which some people describe as a beauty contest for dogs. The Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show is an example of a conformation show.

✓ **Obedience:** You can try obedience. In *obedience*, at the basic level, your dog is judged on how well he walks by your side (heels), sits, downs, and comes when called. At advanced levels, your dog must also retrieve and jump high and broad jumps.



No matter what you decide to try with your dog, teach him some basic commands. Even if you never go beyond Sit, Down, and Stay, these commands can help make daily living more enjoyable. Chapter 10 tells you how to train and work with your Bulldog to help him become a perfect gentleman.

✓ **Rally:** The relatively new sport of rally may attract you. *Rally* judges the same behaviors as obedience, but in rally (see Chapter 11) you perform the behavior posted on each sign on the course, not the commands of a judge.

✓ **Agility:** If your Bully is athletic, agility may be just the activity you're looking for. An *agility* course consists of several jumps, a teeter-totter, a tunnel, an elevated dog walk, and an A-frame, and your dog must run the course in a specific amount of time.

✓ **Tracking:** Last, you can compete in *tracking* — it's just what it sounds like. Your dog follows a track with a specified number of turns and must find one or more specific articles on the track.

For more information on showing your Bully, see Chapters 2 and 11.