

10- Shih Tzus



The shih tzu is an excellent choice for the elderly or families with children.

Breed Profile

The shih tzu is a small sturdy dog with a big heart. With a name meaning "lion," the shih tzu is an ancient breed and a popular family pet. Recognized as part of the [toy group](#) by the AKC in 1969, the breed is an excellent choice for families with children or for the elderly.

The shih tzu has racked up a number of honors recently. The breed won the Eukanuba Tournament of Champions in October 2001, and was one of the top 10 breeds for the year 2007. Click here for the complete story on [Top Dog Breeds of 2007](#).

History and Origin

Based on their presence in various Chinese paintings and tapestries, it is thought that the shih tzu has been in existence since 624 AD. Despite many theories about the origin of the breed, it is not disputed that the shih tzu was part of the ancient Chinese court. The dogs were bred and selected with great care. From this foundation, along with the help of Russian refugee Madame de Breuil, the dogs of today were developed.

In the 1930s the interest in the breed had spread to England. During World War II, U.S. military personnel stationed in England fell in love with the breed. When returning home, the shih tzu accompanied them, thus introducing the breed to the United States.

Appearance

The shih tzu has a short nose and slightly pushed in face. The hair coat is naturally long and dense and requires daily care. The hair of the face is typically tied on top of the head as a topknot. To reduce the need for [daily brushing](#), some people have the coats trimmed in a short [terrier](#)-like trim. Shih tzus can be any color or combination of colors.

Size

Standing only 8 to 11 inches at the shoulder and weighing 9 to 16 pounds, the shih tzu is a small but tough little dog.

Personality

The shih tzu is bred to be a pet and nothing else. The breed is strong and sturdy, the least delicate of the [toy breeds](#). They have the appearance of being proud and arrogant but are actually gentle and very playful.

Home & Family Relations

The shih tzu is a friendly dog that adapts to any family situation but is definitely an indoor dog. They can easily withstand the rough treatment, and even the occasional dress-up of [children](#) and make excellent children's companions. The breed is also loyal and gentle enough to be a great choice for a companion for the elderly.

Training

Basic obedience is recommended to help develop a content and pleasant member of the family. The shih tzu is not typically trained for specific jobs and does best as just a loving pet.

Special Concerns

With a long hair coat, the shih tzu needs [grooming](#) to prevent [mats](#).

Breed Profile

Health Concerns

- [Proptosis](#) is displacement of the eyeball out of the eye socket that can occur in some dogs.
 - [Cataracts](#) cause a loss of the normal transparency of the lens of the eye. The problem can occur in one or both eyes and can lead to blindness.
 - [Atopy](#) is an itchy skin disease of animals that is caused by an allergy to substances in the environment.
 - [Urolithiasis](#) is a urinary tract disorder characterized by the development of bladder stones.
 - [Corneal ulcers](#) are common in the shih tzu due to the protrusion of the eyes.
 - [Intervertebral disk disease](#) (IVDD) is a disorder that affects the spinal disks resulting in pain, difficulty walking and possibly paralysis.
 - [Tracheal collapse](#) is a weakening of the rings of the windpipe. This leads to irritation and coughing.
 - Kidney disease - is associated with a lack of development of the kidney has been found to be inherited in the shih tzu.
 - [Chronic valvular heart disease](#) (VHD) is a condition characterized by degeneration and thickening of the heart valves.
 - Ventricular septal defect (VSD) - a congenital defect of the ventricular septum of the heart.
 - Drug reactions to "glucocorticoids" can occur. Subcutaneous injections may cause local hair loss in this breed.
 - Perianal gland adenomas - are tumors that can occur of the anal glands.
 - [Entropion](#) is a problem with the eyelid that causes inward rolling. Lashes on the edge of the eyelid irritate the surface of the eyeball and may lead to more serious problems.
 - [Distichiasis](#) is a condition in which there is growth of extra eyelashes from the glands of the
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upper or lower eyelid.

Life Span

The life span of the shih tzu is 14 to 16 years.
