

How do I find the right dog for the sport?

Every new handler is faced with questions about which partner to choose.

- Which dog is a good candidate for Schutzhund?
- Which breeds do best in the sport?
- How do I find a good dog for competition?

Characteristics of a Schutzhund Dog

There is no perfect dog! Every dog has its strengths, weaknesses, unique character, and temperament

We consider these universal characteristics regardless of the breed:

- Good nerves, sound temperament, stable character
- High trainability, a biddable dog
- Social, with a desire to work and please the handler
- Some level of natural prey drive and protective instinct
- Easy to motivate with an interest in food or chasing toys

The best dogs will have a strong "fighting instinct" directed at their adversary.

The dog should demonstrate courage, a resilient character, and the ability to cope with stress.

Which Breed is best

Schutzhund was created for the German Shepherd Dog to be utilized as a breeding tool. Many other breeds have adopted the test and demonstrate a good aptitude for the work. Selecting a breed is a matter of personal preference, lifestyle, and goals.

These breeds are familiar on the sport field: Airedale Terrier, American Bulldog, American Staffordshire Terrier, Australian Cattle dog, Cane Corso, Beauceron, Belgian Malinois, Belgian Tervueren, Bouvier de Flandres, Border Collies, Boxers, Briards, Dobermans, Dutch Shepherds, Giant Schnauzers, Hovawart, Italiano, Pit Bull Terriers, Rottweiler, and some mixed breeds

Investigate the breed that interests you. Research their characteristics, talk with individuals who own and compete with that breed. Ask what it's like to train this breed and to live with it. Try to spend time around these dogs to determine if the breed is right for you.

The working representatives of any breed will differ from those found within the pet home. Working dogs have athletic conformation/structure, strong temperament with natural aggression, high energy and enthusiasm for the work. Dogs that excel in schutzhund typically come from bloodlines with a history of performance, and are descendants of dogs bred according to the German standards. This is true for dogs bred according to United Schutzhund Clubs of America standards, in the United States.

These standards require that specific criteria is met before the dogs are able to be bred

- Conformation/Show rating
- Hip/Elbow certification
- Endurance Test (AD)
- Working/Performance title (SchH/IPO)
- Breed Suitability Test (KK)

"Courage is probably the single most important characteristic of a Schutzhund dog."

-Dietmar Schellenberg, [TOP Working Dogs](#)

The GSD continues to be the most popular breed for the sport. German Shepherds are intelligent, trainable, athletic, and versatile, with a stable temperament, they make good companions, are resilient, and their body type and hair allows the dog to work in a variety of weather conditions. Common health problems include:

- Hip or Elbow Dysplasia
- Transitional Vertebrae
- Degenerative Myelopathy
- Cauda Equina
- Skin or allergy problems
- Exocrine Pancreatic Insufficiency, poor assimilation and Bloat

The second most popular breed is the Belgian Malinois. The Mal is intelligent and highly trainable, very energetic, athletic, and versatile, eager to work, with good stamina, fast with extreme endurance with a very high bite satisfaction i.e. receiving a "bite" is a tremendously strong reward. Common health problems include:

- Hip or Elbow Dysplasia
- Skin and allergy problems

The next most popular breed is the Rottweiler. Rotties are strong, powerful dogs, that are slow to mature and sometimes willful and stubborn. They are very affectionate with their owner and families, intelligent and generally good-natured with natural aggression and protective instincts. Repetition typically bores them. They have long memories for any negative stimulus, which makes them less forgiving of handler mistakes. Their endurance is lower than the other breeds, and their body type puts them at risk for heat stroke. Common health problems include:

- Cancer
- Hip or Elbow dysplasia
- Cardiac problems
- Bloat
- Eye problems
- Cranial Cruciate Ligament tears and ruptures

Finally, the Doberman, a very intelligent dog, they are known as 'thinkers', very biddable to their handler, sensitive, with a high level of trainability. They are affectionate with a natural sharpness. They are known for long memories for negative stimuli and are less forgiving to handler mistakes, they are disturbed easily in stressful situations, and not well adapted for cold weather conditions. Common health problems are:

- Cardiac problems
- Eye problems
- Thyroid problems
- Cancer
- Bleeding disorders
- Allergies