

The German Shepherd Dog

The German Shepherd is a strong, agile, well muscled dog, alert and full of life. It is extremely intelligent and makes a wonderful companion, show or obedience dog. The German Shepherd is exceptionally trainable and works well as a police, guide, or search and rescue dog.



History of the German Shepherd Dog

The breed appeared late at the end of the 19th century in Germany and they were first exhibited at a show in Hanover in 1882. They were rough coated and short tailed, not like German Shepherds as we know them today. The German Shepherd Dog (GSD) as we now know it didn't really appear until after the Second World War.

The breed was created by the cross breeding of working sheep dogs from rural Germany by an ex cavalry officer called Max von Stephanitz. His aim was to create a working dog for herding that could trot for long periods. A breed standard was drawn up and the first breed show took place in 1899 following which the GSD became firmly established across Germany. In 1906 the first dogs were exported to the USA.

Since then, the breed has grown enormously in popularity and is now one of the most popular pedigree breeds in the UK as a pet as well as being the favourite working breed for many forces, especially the police. They are widely used for security purposes because of their strong protective instincts.

Many people in the UK still call these dogs Alsatians. This may partly be due to the fact that when they were first bred, these dogs were very popular in the German-speaking Alsace region of France. In part, it may also be due to the First and Second World Wars that the name Alsatian stuck as the word 'German' had a negative connotation.

These dogs are highly intelligent and will show undying devotion to their master but they are dogs that need company and stimulation to be at their best. It is however, important to remember that this is a working breed and does have certain characteristics that some people might find difficult to live with. The German Shepherd should be steady loyal self assured courageous and willing and should not be nervous over aggressive or shy. Nervous aggression is something that we are now seeing more often as a result of bad breeding. It is sad but there has always been indiscriminate breeding of German Shepherds right from the start, which has led to problems with temperament and health.

Adapted from information at www.germanshepherdrescue.co.uk/about-german-shepherds.html

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- Read through the text and then answer the questions.
- If there are any words you don't understand, look them up in your dictionary.

1. How was the German Shepherd breed created and by whom?

2. In the last paragraph there is a line beginning, 'The German Shepherd should be', and there are some commas missing. Write out the sentence inserting the commas.

3. What does 'indiscriminate breeding' mean?

4. What has it led to problems with?

5. What caused the use of the name 'Alsatian'?

6. Why would the breed be a popular dog for the police to use?

Give a thoughtful and properly structured answer using correct grammar and spelling:
