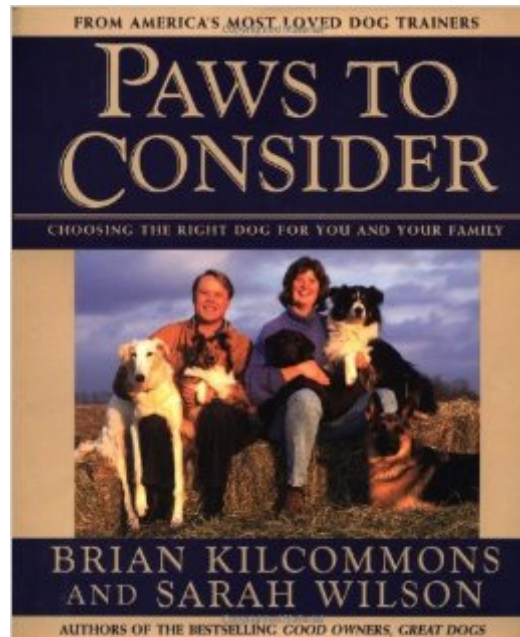


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Paws To Consider: Choosing The Right Dog For You And Your Family



Synopsis

The authors of "Good Owners, Great Dogs" provide the straight scoop on selecting the perfect dog for one's lifestyle and personality. Photos.

Book Information

Hardcover: 272 pages

Publisher: Grand Central Publishing; First Edition edition (September 1, 1999)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0446521515

ISBN-13: 978-0446521512

Product Dimensions: 8 x 1 x 9.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.6 pounds

Average Customer Review: 4.2 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (54 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #895,270 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #83 in [Books > Crafts, Hobbies & Home > Pets & Animal Care > Dogs > Care & Health](#)

Customer Reviews

I've read a few of these "breed choosing" books lately, and Paws to Consider stands out as being easily the best written of the lot. When I read most other dog books, I hear the ponderous narrator's voice from the Westminster Dog Show. This book is written in the real voices of the two authors, and it reads in that simple, direct way. I keep coming back to this one. The breed descriptions in this book are just great. They aren't as long as some of the wordier books' encyclopedia-style listings, and somehow they seem to include much more information. (Partly it's just writing style; I wish technical writers were this good.) Comparing these descriptions to the lengthy temperament tables in "The Right Dog for You" by Daniel Tortora, "Paws to Consider" comes across as being a measure less objective but more genuine and intuitive and accessible. Temperament isn't described in 16 or 18 separate scales, but these are solid writers and they have a way of hitting the right note. Three different people I've shown the book to have looked for 'their' breed and immediately said something like "This is right, my basset DOES hate to have his nails clipped more than my other dog." It's also nice to see a dog book that doesn't group breeds by their official (usually AKC) categories. Instead of (cue the Westminster guy's voice again) "The Hounds" and "The Working Dogs" this book has categories like "The High Input, High Output Dog" and "The Low-Shedding Breeds." There's a category of dogs you can leave home alone for a working day. Geez, that should be in EVERY dog book. Okay, so finding a specific breed is a little harder this way, and some dogs really belong in

more than one category, but it's a breath of fresh air to have a new way to think about this stuff. Again, too, each breed starts with separate categories for the usual pluses and minuses you'll see in that type of dog. In just a few spare lines, they get across an awful lot: Newfoundlands are gentle giants who dream of doing everything with you and whose hearts would break if they were left in the yard alone, but they shed and drool and they're enormous. Some of my other books are surprisingly bad at getting those basic tradeoffs across. This one's well thought out and well laid out. As an aside, I also love the way this book emphasizes positive reinforcement in training. They do it by using positive reinforcement... on the reader. Makes a person smile. The thing this book lacks is a really thorough description of the process of buying a puppy from a good breeder. It gives you the usual mantra about reputable breeders and not puppy mills, but it doesn't tell you how to act on the advice. Personally I'm pretty impressed with *Your Purebred Puppy*, by Michelle Welton, for that stuff. It gives you detailed interview questions to ask, for example, and tells you specifically which health certifications you'd want to see for each breed. Its breed pages aren't as well-thought-through as those here, though.

If you're thinking about getting a dog, this book is NECESSARY. The literature out there that's breed-specific usually emphasizes only the good points of any particular dog. Also, a lot of those books use "code": "Protective" really means aggressive; "active" means "hyper." Unless you have a lot of experience with dogs, you might underestimate what you're getting yourself into. But this book lists assets and drawbacks objectively, so the potential owner can make an informed decision. The authors have decades of experience with dogs, and their training approach is humane and effective. They know what they're talking about. With my limited experience, a lot of what they say rings true. (I've had an Irish setter, a lab/terrier mix, and currently a golden retriever and a longhaired dachs.) This book is also cross-referenced, so you can see if the family dog is also a good watchdog. The only problem with this book is that it doesn't list every breed. That may make a future edition as big as the Chicago yellow pages, but I did find that to be a little limiting. Some of the super-popular breeds are suffering because of irresponsible overbreeding (goldens, for example) and I know a lot of people who are attracted to the less-popular types for that reason. It would be good to have profiles of some of those dogs in here, too. Best of all, this book is FUN--I found myself chuckling at descriptions of dogs my friends and I have had ("If there is a God, there is surely a dachshund at His feet..."). It should be on the shelf of anyone who owns, works with, or just gets a kick out of dogs.

This is a wonderful and badly needed book. Most (though not all) of the more popular breeds are represented here, categorized not by the AKC group, but by where they would fit in with human life-styles. You will see what breeds need lots and lots of daily exercise, which breeds have high grooming needs, shedding problems (or not) temperament, and something most other books skip over, which genetic diseases are common in which breed. Input for this book comes not only from the authors, but also from professional dog trainers and vets so the opinions (or judgements if you prefer) are not just those of the authors. Your experience with a given breed may be different than the authors would lead you to believe, (mine has been in two cases) but any one thinking about a canine addition to their family needs to read this book. BUT don't forget the best dog for you may not be a "breed" at all but a common, loveable mutt you can adopt from the animal shelter or the humane society....(a statement I believe the authors of this book would agree wholeheartedly with....)

The thing that sets this book apart from similar ones is that the authors are working dog trainers, not freelance writers who get all of their information from other books. Kilcommons and Wilson have decades of real experience with the dogs they're talking about, and have seen the way that different dogs blend in (or don't!) with all sorts of families. Their view of each breed comes from their encounters with real dogs, and they know that many dogs from the more popular breeds will not resemble the ideal dog described in the breed standard. My favorite aspects of "Paws to Consider" are the clear, concise list of common health problems each purebred has, and the way the dogs are broken down into categories. Instead of sticking to the AKC groupings, they divide breeds into city dogs, family dogs, "not for everyone" dogs, and so on. Important information is easy to find. I'm a dog trainer, and I constantly flip through this book to refresh my memory on the different breeds. If you're considering a new dog, please buy this book! It will make choosing your new companion, whether single-breed or mixed, a lot easier.

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