

*Chapter 3*  
**IS the GREAT DANE the RIGHT DOG FOR YOU?**



**The Long and Short of It**

Many people have only seen the smaller-than-average, poorly bred Great Dane that is commonly sold in pet stores. Frequently, these dogs, which may weigh less than 100 pounds, look more like weedy Labrador Retrievers.

Therefore, the wise individual who obtains a puppy from a reputable breeder is often surprised at how big a well-bred Great Dane is. It is important to visit breeders to see what to expect a Great Dane to look like as an adult. Until they are two years old, Great Danes should not be subjected to forced exercise such as jogging with a person. This is because the joints of this giant breed are still forming and excessive stress or strain may cause permanent injury.

**As A House Dog**



The sociable, friendly Great Dane is not a breed that does well living outside in a doghouse, isolated from human contact and affection. And no dog does well being tied to a tree or dog house to live out his life.

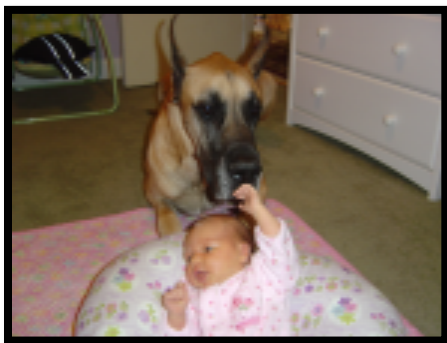
## Activity Levels and Exercise



Although the Great Dane may prefer to lounge inside on a comfy bed, your Dane still requires regular exercise to stay fit. It should also be kept in mind that Great Danes were bred as sporting dogs and will go where their noses lead them. A Great Dane should be allowed to run free only in an enclosed, fenced area. While Danes may enjoy and benefit from swimming, families with swimming pools need to “Dane proof” this area by fencing it in to prevent a dog from falling in and possibly drowning when no family member is present.

Although the Great Dane will eventually make a good companion for the avid jogger or cyclist, it is important to wait until he is over two years old to make sure the growth plates have closed and no damage is being done to growing joints.

## A Companion To Children



The calm, even disposition of the Great Dane makes him a loving companion for children—but always under adult supervision. A baby or young child should not be left alone with a dog. Children should never lift a Great Dane puppy. Adults should do this by providing support for both front and rear end. Children should never be allowed to tease, pull a Great Dane’s ear, or ride him like a pony.

Children need to understand that dogs will follow their noses and will roam away from home if allowed. They should be reminded to close gates and doors which, if left open, may allow their pets to escape into a neighborhood of heavy traffic and possibly be hit and killed by an automobile. Even in rural areas, care must be taken that a Great Dane does not become lost. In more than one instance, the regal look of a Dane has made him an appealing kidnap victim! Tattooing and/or microchipping for identification purposes is the best way to make sure your canine friend can “phone home” if he gets loose by accident and to make him undesirable to people who might steal him.

### **Other Pets and the Great Dane**

While the original purpose of the breed was to hunt in packs, over the years, the Great Dane has been bred to do other jobs, including as a watch dog for large estates and other “working functions.” In general, the Great Dane gets along well with other dogs, but he is no longer considered a “pack” dog. Intact (un-neutered) Great Dane males should not be kept together. Females usually do better in a group than males, but remember that sometimes personalities do not “mesh.” Great Danes who fight are dangerous to all around them.

A Great Dane is a playful dog, but his style of playing, using the body and paws, can be dangerous to dogs and humans. It is essential to establish patterns of acceptable behavior when the dog is small so that no one gets hurt when he is full grown.



### **As A Guard Dog**

Great Dane breeders prefer that our breed be considered as watch dogs and not guard dogs. Watch dogs sound an alarm and will defend their home and their people, but are not trained as guards. The Great Dane is a giant breed, far too large to be trained to bite. Leave any guard dog training to other breeds and law enforcement professionals.

#### **❖ Note: Can Great Danes be aggressive?**

*The Great Dane should not be an aggressive dog. The Standard calls for a dog that is “spirited and courageous, always friendly and dependable, and never timid or aggressive.” However, a variety of factors, including poor breeding by backyard breeders or puppy mills, seems to be contributing to poor temperaments. Across breed lines, fearful or aggressive dogs are becoming more common. We must guard against this, both by breeding correct temperament and through proper management.*

With regard to barking, the Great Dane is neither excessively noisy nor quiet. He will alarm bark, but most Danes don’t bark just for the fun of hearing themselves talk. Those that display this tendency should be trained not to do so.

## A Dog and His Food

Great Danes are large-boned dogs that grow extremely quickly. In addition to inappropriate exercise, inappropriate or excessive amounts of food can pack on the pounds and lead to skeletal deformities. Great Danes should never be allowed to get fat. If you can easily feel their ribs, they are in good weight. Exercise is critical for health, and pups should be allowed to run all they want in a fenced environment. They can play with other dogs their own size, but should never be forced to jog or run next to a bicycle until they are two years old or more.



*Danes are able to reach places you don't expect. This dog is sneaking the family dinner. It happens in real life more often than we'd like to admit.*

## A Few Special Needs

Great Dane ears may be cropped or uncropped. Each choice comes with its own special requirements for care. Taping cropped ears to stand is necessary and sometimes it's needed in uncropped dogs to maintain the proper fold.

## Is the Great Dane the right dog for your family?

Before making a final decision on purchasing a Great Dane, ask yourself the following questions?

1. **The Great Dane grows into a giant dog. Are you prepared to deal with ALL the ramifications of this fact from cost of care to size of car or crate and other equipment required?**
2. Great Danes make good jogging companions, but you **must** wait until they are full grown. You must spend two years of your dog's life doing other activities until they are capable of joining you on long hikes or jogs.
3. Because of their giant size, Great Danes need early and consistent training. Will you enjoy meeting their needs?
4. Because they possess a hunting instinct, Great Danes tend to roam and should be kept in an enclosed area. Are you able to provide this type of environment for your Dane?
5. Danes do not do well when left alone for long periods. Will you have the time to give your dog a great deal of attention and affection?

***If you have answered yes to the above questions then a Great Dane may be the right dog for you!***



A Few Reasons People Don't Keep Their Great Danes:	
He chews stuff.	He drools too much.
He jumps on the kids.	He needs too much attention.
He needs surgery and we can't afford it.	We bought him for the kids but they aren't interested anymore.
He's too old.	He's too hard to housebreak.
He's just too much trouble.	He barks all the time.

## Chapter 4 BEFORE YOU BUY a GREAT DANE

Once you have decided that the Great Dane is the type of dog that will fit your needs, a number of questions need to be addressed in helping you select the right dog.

**Remember when you get a dog, you are acquiring a “child” who will never grow up and leave home. He will be your friend for life, but you will be the one who provides a lifetime of food, shelter, care and emotional well-being.**

**If you take the time and trouble to learn about the Great Dane, you will be one of the *responsible* pet owners.**

### How to Find a “Great” Dane



The best place to obtain a well-bred Great Dane is from a reputable breeder. The key here is “reputable.” Established breeders who have a reputation for producing quality Danes are one of the best sources to check when looking for a puppy or adult dog. Due to the popularity of the Great Dane, it may take a long time to find a nice quality puppy or adult. Be prepared to be

patient before bringing this new family member into your home. This new puppy will be a family member for many years, and it is well worth taking the time to find a reputable breeder to work with. Many reputable breeders will have a waiting list, or will let you know when they expect to have a dog available.

At all costs, avoid backyard breeders and puppy mills. Many so-called “backyard” breeders are people whose main concern is making money on a litter rather than working to improve the breed. Often they are working with stock of lesser quality which may be genetically prone to health problems. Backyard breeders and puppy mills are only interested in making a quick buck, frequently advertising in local newspapers or the Internet or selling entire litters to pet stores for resale. A pretty website is no indicator of the quality of the breeder or the dogs.

The AKC does not register or certify breeders or kennels. Simply because a puppy is registered or registerable with the AKC is no guarantee of the puppy’s quality, or the conditions under which he was bred or whelped. By buying a puppy from a puppy mill or backyard breeder, you are taking not only a risk with your money, but you risk breaking your heart.

One way to make sure that you are buying a nice puppy from a reputable breeder is to know what you are looking for. That is, you should familiarize yourself with the Great Dane Club of America’s Official Standard for the Great Dane. If you know what the Great Dane should look like, you will be better equipped to spot a poor one while you are searching for your new family member.

*Choosing a Dane puppy should be the end of a long, careful search and the beginning of an interesting, exciting, and successful time for you and your new friend!*

HOW TO DISTINGUISH REPUTABLE BREEDERS FROM BACKYARD BREEDERS	
Reputable Great Dane Breeders:	
1.	Are usually members of the Great Dane Club of America or a regional breed club like the Great Dane Club of New England and believe in working towards improving the conformation and performance of the Great Dane. These members are guided by a Code of Ethical Conduct.
2.	May advertise in various types of dog publications, including the <i>AKC Gazette</i> , or Great Dane magazines.
3.	Will ask many questions of prospective owners in order to insure their puppy is going to a good home.
4.	Unless other arrangements are made, will almost always require a spay/neuter agreement and/or limited AKC registration for pets.
5.	Are usually involved in showing their dogs in conformation competition. Others may be involved in obedience, agility, tracking or other performance events.
6.	Depending on the area of the country, reputable breeders generally sell puppies for \$1,000-\$2,000 or more. Show marked harlequins may be more expensive.
7.	Do several health tests before breeding to confirm healthy breeding stock.

8.	Wish to be contacted if for any reason a puppy they bred must be placed in a new home.
9.	Are happy to help you if you have any questions regarding the health of your puppy and want to know if you have any problems.
10.	Are happy to help you if you have any questions regarding the training of your puppy.
11.	Will rarely sell a puppy before the age of eight weeks, and many not until their puppies are twelve weeks or older. If they are cropping their puppies, this is usually done before the sale, and the ears are healed before they go to their new homes.

### **Backyard Breeders:**

1.	Often advertise in the newspaper or advertise specific litters on the internet.
2.	May sell puppies for less than reputable breeders (depending on the part of the country, anywhere from \$500 on up) or may charge a premium price for a “rare” color that is, in reality, not acceptable under the breed standard and cannot be shown in breed competition.
3.	Rarely ask the buyer questions about how the puppy will be cared for, mainly because they don’t really care.
4.	Almost never require spay/neuter agreements.
5.	Have no interest in showing their Danes in conformation competition.
6.	Will sometimes sell entire litters to pet shops.
7.	Never health test the parents.
8.	Don’t wish to be contacted if you must give the puppy up.
9.	Don’t wish to be contacted if you have a health update on a problem with your puppy.
10.	Don’t wish to be contacted if you have questions regarding the training or your puppy.
11.	Will often sell their puppies at an early age, less than eight weeks of age.

## **HOW CAN I FIND A REPUTABLE BREEDER?**

Sources to contact to find a Great Dane include (Refer to “Useful Addresses” for additional contact information):

- Contact the Great Dane Club of America, Inc. <http://gdca.org> . By clicking on “Organization” and then on either “Officers” or “Chairpersons”, you can find contacts for breeder referral or rescue), , the American Kennel Club, local Great Dane breed club, and request names of breeders in your area.
- Attend dog shows and talk to breeders, handlers and other owners who may be able to give you referrals on obtaining a puppy. You can get information on dog shows in your area by contacting the American Kennel Club or visiting their website located at [www.akc.org](http://www.akc.org) in the dog events section or by going to [www.infodog.com](http://www.infodog.com).

- Refer to Great Dane breed publications like Dane World.
- Ask your veterinarian or people in your local dog club or training center if they know of reputable AKC Great Dane breeders in your area.

## ***NEVER BUY A GREAT DANE FROM A PET STORE***

*Pet store Great Danes come from backyard breeders and puppy mills. Most likely, you will not know who bred your dog or have anyone to contact if you have questions or a problem.*

*The health of pet store Danes is always at risk because they were not bred by knowledgeable breeders devoted to improving the health and appearance of the Great Dane. Pet store puppies are separated from their mothers at too early an age and usually do not have the chance to develop healthy bodies and temperaments. In fact, pet store Danes often become seriously ill and end up costing their owners hundreds and even thousands of dollars in veterinary expenses. Pet stores do not guarantee the long-term health of a puppy.*

*Most pet store Great Danes may be smaller than those from reputable kennels and often lack the majestic head and expression that define the breed. In fact, they may look more like Greyhound or Labrador Retriever mixes.*

*Despite the inferiority of the dogs they sell, pet stores usually charge as much, if not more, than reputable breeders of quality Great Danes.*

***No matter how impatient you or your children are for a Great Dane, it is always better to wait, even a few months or longer, and get one from a good breeder!!***

## **QUESTIONS TO ASK A BREEDER**

1. **How long have you been breeding AKC Great Danes?**  
Good breeders have usually been involved with Great Danes and showing their dogs for a **minimum** of three or four years.
2. **Do you belong to the Great Dane Club of America or a regional Great Dane Club?**  
Membership in these clubs involves working within a code of ethics that gives greater credibility to a breeder. Unethical breeders sometimes claim membership in these clubs, so verify membership by getting in touch with those clubs if you have doubts.
3. **What type of activities do your dogs participate in?**  
A majority of breeders are involved in conformation or “breed” competition. This would indicate that their Danes are probably good physical representations of the breed. Other breeders may participate in obedience, tracking or other performance competitions.
4. **What type of health problems do you see in your Great Danes?**  
Virtually every breeder who has been involved with any breed will encounter some health problems from time to time, so beware the breeder who says he/she has never seen any

problems. Refer to the section on Health to familiarize yourself with some of the common health problems in the Great Dane.

5. **Do you have any puppies available, and if not, when do you plan another litter?** In some parts of the country there is frequently a shortage of Great Dane puppies. Some breeders receive up to eight or nine calls a week for pet puppies with no litters being anticipated for perhaps another six months. The majority of breeders will put your name on a waiting list. Other breeders whose lists are full are usually more than willing to refer you to other reputable breeders in the area.
6. **What kind of warranty does the breeder offer?**  
Guarantees vary among breeders and are sometimes connected to your agreement to raise your puppy according to the individual contract agreed upon.
7. **What is the price of the dog?**  
Pet puppies might be less expensive than show prospects, but many breeders feel they have put equal love, effort, time and money into a litter and charge the same for pet and show puppies. What separates a show potential dog from a companion only may be trivial; therefore, don't expect to get a "cheap" puppy from a breeder and never request the one who has "something wrong" with it.
8. **What type of paperwork will the breeder provide?**  
Reputable breeders will provide a Bill of Sale, a pedigree and a contract detailing the conditions of the sale. AKC registration papers will be included unless they simply have not yet arrived back from AKC in the mail. Most reputable breeders will also give you information in writing in the form of articles, pamphlets or even books to help you raise your puppy. All health and diet information will be spelled out in detail here and in conversations with your breeder.

## **SOME QUESTIONS BREEDERS MAY ASK BUYERS**

1. **Have you ever owned dogs before and, specifically, a Great Dane?**  
Familiarity with dogs insures a higher success rate in placing a puppy in a new home. It is a particular "plus" if a perspective buyer has had the experience of owning a unique breed like the Great Dane.
2. **Why do you want a Great Dane?**  
It is important to determine if a giant dog like the Great Dane will be the right choice for a new buyer. This is a breed which matures slowly, but will be very large at maturity. It's important for the buyer to be fully aware of this, since "he got too big" is one of the "reasons" Great Danes end up in Rescue.
3. **Do you have an enclosed or fenced in backyard?**  
The dominant sense of all dogs is his nose, which gives him the tendency to roam. He may become injured or lost. The large size of the breed makes some people over-react to a dog this size. Chaining a Dane (or any breed) to an outdoor doghouse or tree is inhumane.

4. **Where will your new puppy live?**

The friendly, affectionate nature of the Dane and the fact that this breed craves the companionship of other animals and people, means that he will be happiest in the house where he can be cared for by a loving family.

5. **How long will the puppy be alone during the day?**

Breeders are reluctant to place a Great Dane puppy in a home where it will be alone for excessively long periods. Even the companionship of another dog or cat will go a long way in providing companionship for a new dog. The affectionate Great Dane does not do well by itself for extended periods.

6. **Are you willing to spay or neuter a pet Great Dane?**

Spaying or neutering is usually required by responsible breeders who do not want their valuable bloodlines be used by novice and backyard breeders.

7. **Can you afford not only the purchase price of this pet but also the maintenance?** New owners need to be aware of how much it costs to keep their pet health and well-taken care of.

8. **Is the decision to purchase a Great Dane a unanimous one in your family?**

Danes who go into a family situation where not everyone wants this unique breed start out with a couple of strikes against them.

9. **May I visit your home?**

Responsible breeders may want to come to your home or, if they live some distance away, ask another knowledgeable Dane breeder to visit.

## **ADOPTING A GREAT DANE RESCUE DOG**

Dane rescue groups are devoted to finding homes for Great Danes who have been abandoned or given up by their owners. Many of these Danes end up in local humane shelters and, unless suitable homes are found for these animals, they are destroyed. For this reason, Dane rescue groups have been formed in many parts of the country and local Dane breed clubs may support a rescue group that tries to find new families for these abandoned dogs.

These rescue groups are to be commended and supported as they do a great service for the Great Dane breed. Many of these groups can find a wonderful pet for you, accomplishing two things--a great home for a Dane who really needs one and a soon to be cherished member of your family.

### **Advantages of Adopting a Great Dane Rescue Dog**

1. Many people find joy and pleasure in giving a "new home" to a dog that was deserted by its former owners.

2. Most Great Dane rescue dogs are adults and many are already housebroken as well as spayed and neutered.
3. Rescue dogs are often an alternative for a loving family who truly wants a Great Dane but may not want a new puppy.

### **Disadvantages of Adopting a Rescue Dog**

In some cases, rescue Great Danes have been abused and severely mistreated by their former owners or need medical care. The adoptive family may therefore need to be especially understanding and spend more time helping their new friend fit into his new home. Many rescue Great Danes may be timid or shy until they have had a chance to adapt to their new surroundings. Others may be aggressive and should be carefully evaluated before any placement is made. Many Danes with special needs blossom into endearing pets with love and patience.

## **PURCHASING AN ADULT VERSUS A PUPPY**

For some prospective new owners the selection of an adult Dane may be an appropriate choice. Reputable breeders sometimes have adult Danes available who have been retired from the show ring or from the breeding program. In some cases, breeders will place males in pet homes that are still being used in their breeding program with the understanding that the male will remain in the breeder's name, cannot be neutered and will need to go to the breeder's kennel from time to time to be bred. Former brood bitches that are now spayed may also be placed permanently in pet homes. In both cases, this type of arrangement can work well for the person looking for a good pet Great Dane.

Many people believe that they must get a puppy in order to "bond" with it. While that may be true of some other breeds, it is usually not the case with the Great Dane. While a Great Dane may pick his favorite "human," it is typically happy with any of its family. If you have a busy lifestyle, an adult may be the choice for you.

What age should I get a puppy? In some states, it is illegal to sell a puppy prior to 8 weeks of age. If the ears are cropped, the puppy should not leave until the raw edges are healed.

When considering an adult, don't go with the "free to good home" ad. Consult with a reputable breeder or rescue organization. Good rescue organizations will evaluate the dogs they place and determine what type of home is a suitable home for the individual dog. Some of these dogs may simply be victims of a death in the family, a move that was not suitable for keeping a dog, or bad habits that can be changed. By working with the dogs and the families, these organizations can make the best match.



## **SHOULD YOU CHOOSE A MALE OR A FEMALE?**

There is relatively little difference in temperament, activity or trainability between a male and female Great Dane. Both make excellent companion pets. Females (bitches) which are not spayed go into season (or heat) approximately every 6 months. In general, bitches are somewhat smaller than males, but remember that they are still both giant dogs over 120 pounds.

## **SPAYING AND NEUTERING**

If you purchase a companion pet puppy from a reputable breeder it is usually with the requirement that females will be spayed and males neutered. This prevents adding to the overpopulation of unwanted dogs in today's society. Spaying and neutering is a win/win situation for both you and your Dane. You will eliminate the mess of twice-yearly seasons in your bitch as well as helping prevent unwanted pregnancies, certain kinds of tumors and other female disorders. Neutered males also become more settled and are not tempted by bitches in season. Spaying and neutering do not change the personality of your pet.

## **PURCHASING A COMPANION GREAT DANE**

After you have decided that the Great Dane is the breed for you it will be necessary for you to decide if you want a pet or show quality Dane. The majority of prospective new owners want a companion. Breeders usually sell as pets those Danes that do not come as close to the official breed Standard as other puppies in the litter. A pet may have cosmetic flaws which are not desirable in the show ring. In the eyes of the pet owner these features are rarely seen as flaws. It is also important to understand that pet quality does not mean that a dog is in any way less healthy than a show prospect.