



## Your Dog is a Terrier

Congratulations! There are no finer dogs than terriers, in my opinion. The word “terrier” comes from the word “terra,” meaning earth. Terriers were bred hundreds of years ago to run down burrows, flush vermin from holes and elsewhere, run and grab the rat/rabbit/fox/mouse, then shake them until they were dead. Scratching, digging, lunging, leaping, grabbing, and shaking is bred into their very DNA, and for better or for worse, they are better at these behaviors than other dogs.

Unlike working breeds (German Shepherds, Labrador Retrievers, for instance), terriers typically are not motivated by praise, unless and until it has been repeatedly paired with other rewards they like. Where the gaze of a Golden retriever might imply, “What can I do for you, Master?” the gaze of a terrier usually means, “What can YOU do for ME?”

Behaviors that are typical for untrained and/or young terriers can be frightening if you do not understand and expect to see them (and stay tuned, because training is coming). For example, terriers may be well-endowed with the following behaviors:

1. Grabbing and shaking things. This mimics their catching a rat and dispatching it. You may see them do this with toys, or your shoe, or the arm of your coat (even if you are wearing it). It may be hard to get them to let go.
2. Going from lying down to racing around, knocking things down, jumping on you, nipping and grabbing at things and maybe at you while doing all of the above;
3. Leaping from a standing position straight up, over, across, down when you least expect it;
4. Doing any of the above while being walked on a leash;
5. Being really hard to settle down when you think they should be tired.

### **Training a Terrier:**

Do not be daunted, but be warned, a young terrier will not simply outgrow wild terrierness; they must be trained to do other things. Luckily, it is simple to train a terrier. Simply find out what they love, and give them what they love when they do what you want them to do. When a terrier finds out they can get stuff from you, they start to manipulate *your* behavior. (“Want to see me get a treat? I’ll just sit to make them do it!”) Every terrier should go through 2-3 levels of a rewards based Obedience class in order to help you to achieve this result, and they should learn sit, come, stay, lie down, leave it, drop it, walk on a loose leash and go to your place (which could be a bed or a crate). Also, consider sports for your terrier such as Agility and/or Nosework- they will be the stars of the classes!

Prevention is key, because every time the wildness strikes it is rewarded in some fashion, either by your attention or simply because it feels good to the dog. So, be proactive. Plan every moment of your terrier’s day. Do not leave them to their own devices, but have a food-filled toy (like a Kong) ready for them (in lieu of feeding them from a bowl) at all times. They can also have bully sticks or frozen carrots to keep their mouths busy. Learn the signs that they are

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about to get amped up- this will often be in the early evening- and give them something to do instead- play training games, or hide kibble and toys for them to find in the house. Crate them before they get wild. Also, have them sit for a treat 50x a day, so that behavior is fluent. Then, if they go on a tear, tell them to sit, *do not give them a treat (or you are rewarding the wildness)* and put them in their crate or in another room for 5 minutes. When you let them out, have them do some Obedience exercises for a few minutes, then give them something else to do. Always be ready to ask your terrier to do something for you, or give them something to do before they get riled up. As well, give them lots of large-muscle exercise, like running in a fenced-in area, up and down your hallway, or up and down stairs (toss a treat down the stairs, call them to you, and then toss their reward-treat to the bottom of the stairs. Repeat until their chest is heaving.)

If your terrier is new in training, have them wear a leash in the house so you can catch them and remove them to their crate or another room as needed if they need a time out because they are too aroused. Because of known side effects (shutting down or aggression), we do not recommend training that involves the use of prong or shock collars, or anything else that might frighten your terrier. Also, do not threaten them by leaning over them and pointing; do not yell at them; do not spray them with water or shake a penny can at them; these will all likely have the exact opposite effect and will scare, anger, or arouse your terrier further in ways you do not want.

If you are ever afraid of your terrier for any reason, such as its growling or biting or lunging seems meant to harm you, someone else, or another dog, call us for help. We will always help you, whether your dog is 1 or 10 years old.

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