

Think you want a Dane?

Great Danes are absolutely wonderful dogs, but they are not for everybody.

We have developed this to help you decide if a Great Dane is the right dog for you.

Basic Information About Great Danes

Danes are very extra large dogs, often referred to as "Gentle Giants".

- Males, on average, stand from 32" to 36" at the shoulder and can weigh from 140 to 180 pounds.
- Females typically stand 28" to 33" tall at the shoulder and weigh from 110 to 140 pounds.
- Danes do not usually reach full maturity until they are 18 to 24 months of age.

Great Danes come in six recognized colors:

- Fawn (tan with black mask)
- Brindle (tiger striped)
- Black (a solid black)
- Blue (steel blue/gray)
- Mantle (marked like a Boston Terrier)
- Harlequin (a white base coat with torn black patches)

There are other colors that are not recognized as acceptable by the Great Dane Club of America, including white, merle (gray with darker gray patches), and colors such as "fawnequin" (a white base with tan patches) and "merlequin" (a white base with merle patches). White Danes are often deaf. Some Danes, particularly merles, whites, and Harlequins can have blue eyes. Danes may have cropped ears (pointed ears that stand up) or natural, uncropped ears (floppy hound type ears). If a Dane is going to have her/his ears cropped, it must be done at a very early age. Older Danes may not be cropped. Both males and females (if spayed or neutered) make wonderful house pets.

Cost of Owning A Great Dane

Danes eat a lot. Males typically consume 7 to 10 cups of food daily and females typically consume 6 to 8 cups of high-quality foods, such as Science Diet, daily. Meals

must be served in two sittings (usually breakfast and dinner) rather than all at once to help prevent bloat (see Great Dane Health below). In addition to high food bills, you can expect higher veterinary costs for your Dane. Most medications, heartworm preventative, flea control, etc. are sold based on the weight of the dog. The more the dog weighs, the more of the medication you will need and the more expensive it will be. In addition, surgery, x-rays, and other medical services are often more expensive for these very large dogs. Boarding large dogs is typically also more expensive. The cost of owning a Dane is a definite factor you must consider carefully before you adopt one.

Great Dane Personality

Great Danes are very strong dogs. Thus, it is advisable that all dogs be given a basic obedience class. This helps establish you, the human, as the "leader of the pack" and will help create a bond between you and your new dog. A basic obedience class should make it possible for you to take your Dane for a walk and not the other way around! Many people believe that because Danes are large, they are best kept outdoors. Nothing could be further from the truth. Danes do best when they are kept as indoor pets and when the family is the core of their existence. Danes are extremely people-oriented and need to be a part of the family. Before acquiring a Dane, please be sure you have sufficient time to spend with him or her. Danes crave and need human companionship. The time requirement is far more crucial than the amount of space you have. Most Danes are usually friendly and gentle with all people, children (even babies and toddlers), and other animals. Danes are a very vocal breed, and will bark often and loudly when strangers appear. Thus, they are desirable as a "watch dog". While Danes bark and make lots of noise, they will usually be friendly to people welcomed by their family. They will, however, be protective of their family. Adult Danes tend to be very "laid back" and tend to be couch potatoes. They require minimal exercise, despite their large size. A good romp in a fenced yard or a nice walk twice a day is sufficient exercise for an adult Dane. Thus, they do not require a very large home (if you have room for a couch, you have room for a Great Dane) or very large amounts of property to roam. A small-to-medium sized fenced yard is sufficient. Puppies, in contrast, are usually significantly more active and require a great deal more exercise.

Grooming

Danes have very short hair and need minimal grooming. A good brushing once or twice a week in the winter months is sufficient for most Danes, while you may need to give them a good brushing daily during the warmer months when they shed more. A vigorous brushing should take no more than 20 minutes. Danes do not require baths

often. If kept as a house pet, your Dane should require bathing no more than once a month. You may have to wipe muddy paws in between baths, however.

Great Dane Health

Like all pure-bred dogs, Danes are susceptible to a variety of health problems. These range from the life-threatening to conditions easily controlled with daily medication. Bloat (or gastric torsion), is a life-threatening condition in which air gets trapped in the stomach and/or intestines and the stomach (or intestines) can literally turn on its axis. Symptoms include a swollen abdomen, retching (without being able to actually throw up), restlessness, excessive salivation, and a painful abdomen. If you see any of these symptoms in your Dane, get to a vet immediately. A surgical procedure, called a gastropexy, can prevent bloat in 99 percent of cases. However, this procedure is expensive (usually between \$400 and \$600). Cardiomyopathy is a form of heart disease. More common in older Danes, cardiomyopathy can be helped a great deal with medication. However, this is a life-threatening disease, particularly if left untreated or undiagnosed. Symptoms include exercise intolerance. Osteosarcoma, or bone cancer, is another life-threatening disease. Almost all dogs who develop bone cancer will die within a year. Symptoms include limping and a painful lump felt on a bone (usually an extremity). Treatment includes radiation and possibly chemotherapy as well as amputation. In addition, there is exciting new research using the drug Fosamex that shows promising results. You may wish to visit the Irish Wolfhound Club of America's Osteosarcoma Study page to learn more. <https://www.iwclubofamerica.org/index.html>. While this study deals with Irish Wolfhounds, the results will apply to Danes as well. Hypothyroidism seems to affect females more than males. In this disorder, the thyroid does not secrete enough hormone. The symptoms include dull coat, weight gain, and dry, flaky skin. This disease is easily treated with medication and the dog can live a long, normal life. Wobbler's Syndrome and Von Willebrand's Disease (VWD) are both fairly rare. Wobbler's is a lesion in the neck which affects the dog's ability to walk and the dog seems "wobbly" (hence its name). Wobbler's can be treated surgically, although surgery is expensive and often does not help. Acupuncture can help make the dog more comfortable and prolong his or her life. In addition, some exciting new alternative treatments, such as gold bead implantation are on the horizon. VWD is a rare blood disorder that sometimes affects Danes and is much like Hemophilia in humans. As with Hemophilia, VWD can be controlled but may require big changes in the dog's normal routines. In addition, blood transfusions may be necessary. Hip Dysplasia is a disease common in many large and giant breed dogs. To oversimplify, it occurs when the hip joint doesn't fit well in the socket. Symptoms include painful hips and limping. Today, with medication and surgery, dogs with hip dysplasia can be helped and displastic dogs

are no longer routinely put to sleep. Epilepsy (seizure disorder) can occur in Danes. This disease is characterized by grand mal or petit mal seizures. The grand mal seizures can be quite frightening to observe, although they usually are not life-threatening (they just look that way!). Petit mal seizures may look only like the dog "spaces" or "blanks" out. Seizures can also be caused by toxins, electric shock, as well as damage to the kidney and/or liver. If your dog has a seizure, take him or her to the vet immediately to determine its cause. If your dog has a seizure make sure that if you have other dogs, get them away from the dog having the seizure. Also make sure you stay well clear of the dog's head and mouth (or you be accidentally bitten). Also be very careful until you know your dog's reaction as he/she comes out of the seizure. Some dogs can become aggressive when coming out of a seizure. The dog does NOT recognize you or his/her surroundings. They are frightened and confused and may bite in fear. So be careful about approaching your dog until you are certain of her/his reaction to you. Once the dog has "come out of" the seizure, her or his personality will return to normal. The Irish Wolfhound Club of America has a great deal of information on seizure disorder. <https://www.iwclubofamerica.org/index.html> Most of this information can be applied to Danes.

Disadvantages of Great Dane Ownership

Before acquiring a Great Dane, you need to be aware of the possible disadvantages of owning one. First is the issue of cost. As mentioned previously, Danes are more expensive to feed and care for than smaller dogs. Second, because Danes are so tall, they can easily "counter surf" and steal anything left out on your kitchen counters—Danes have been known to steal everything from steak to cookies to entire loaves of bread. This also means that Danes can reach higher in closets (to steal your good shoes) and higher in areas where they may reach toxic substances you may think you have placed safely out of reach. Third, because Danes are tall and tend to wag their tail often and furiously, they can easily clear a coffee table of trinkets. Anything that can be broken or spilled should be kept well above "tail level". Danes sometimes hit their tail on walls or other hard, unyielding objects and split their tail open. It can bleed profusely. They will usually continue wagging the tail, spraying blood everywhere and making your home look like something from a horror film. This doesn't happen often (happily), but can and does happen on occasion. If you do not take your Dane to a basic obedience class, he or she may pull and tug on a leash. These dogs are very strong and can end up taking you for a walk. Contrary to the old wives' tale "You can't teach an old dog new tricks", dogs of any breed can learn at any age. We often get Danes into rescue because the owner "can't control" the dog. This is something that a good basic obedience class can "cure" in a hurry. Danes, however, are extremely sensitive and will

react negatively to harsh corrections. So any class or instructor should be familiar with Danes and focus on positive reinforcement with minimal use of harsh corrections and harsh vocal commands. Danes have a shorter life span than do many other breeds. In general, larger breeds die at a younger age than do smaller breeds. The average life span of a Dane ranges from 8 to 10 years, though a small number live to be 12 or older.

Puppy or Rescue?

There are distinct advantages to buying a puppy (as well as disadvantages). The same can be said of adopting a rescue dog. Puppies are cute and you will generally have them longer than you will a dog you adopt as an adult. However, puppies come without being house trained (and will make some rather large messes in your house to clean up). Puppies are expensive (they must have a series of shots, three weeks apart rather than just yearly and they must be spayed or neutered when they reach an acceptable age—usually 6 to 9 months). Having your puppy microchipped can cost from \$25 to \$50. Puppies chew—a lot! They chew because (just like humans), they lose their "baby" teeth and get new adult teeth in—so they teethe. In addition, puppies chew because that is part of how they explore and learn about their environment. And when a Dane puppy chews, you aren't left with "cute little teeth marks." More than likely, the object will be totally destroyed. Puppies can also be susceptible to additional health problems (that are resolved by adulthood). Conditions such as OCD are not uncommon and this generally require rather expensive surgery. Finally, puppies are much more active than adults and require a great deal more exercise and supervision. Adult rescue Danes are usually (though not always) house trained when you adopt them and require only yearly shots. All Danes adopted from us will already be spayed or neutered and microchipped. Adult Danes are generally past the chewing stage and adults are more calm and require less exercise and supervision than do puppies. Many people believe that if they get an adult dog, the dog will not bond with them. This is simply not true. Even dogs of advanced age can (and will) bond with their new family, particularly the dogs who have been neglected and/or abused and have never been shown much kindness and love. When someone shows them kindness and love, they bond extremely tight to that person. Some people believe that if they get an adult dog, they won't be able to train the dog. In fact, a dog of any age can learn and be trained. An adult dog can be trained much faster (a matter of days to learn a new skill) than a puppy. One big disadvantage to some (not all) rescue Danes (or rescues of any breed) is that they can suffer from "separation anxiety." They may become very anxious when left alone and can engage in destructive behavior (eliminating in the house, chewing). This can be controlled with training and medication. A new product, called Comfort Zone with D.A.P. has also been shown to help with separation anxiety. Most rescue dogs

overcome separation anxiety with time and a little effort. If you decide a puppy is right for you, please resist buying from a puppy mill or back-yard breeder. Please resist the urge to check the local newspaper and get a puppy "out of the paper". Please resist the urge to buy a puppy because you feel sorry for him or her. You are actually only encouraging these people to breed more puppies and continue adding to the already overwhelming problem we already have. If you want to buy a puppy, please find a show in your area and attend it and speak with the breeders there (in general, people who "show" will tend to be a bit more ethical and responsible than some others). Be thoughtful and wait until the person has come OUT of the ring before approaching them. Be sure you ask questions about the incidence of genetic diseases in the "line" (be very specific and show you've done your homework—ask specifically about bloat, osteosarcoma, etc). You must be responsible in studying about the breed and know what genetic problems you may encounter in a puppy you purchase. Also look at the parent's looks and behavior—that's what you'll have in a couple of years. If you can't live with that, don't buy a puppy. Also make sure the breeder is responsible enough to "take the puppy back" if you cannot keep the puppy at any time (please do not add to the burden of shelters and rescue groups by buying from breeders who will not take their puppies back. I realize you intend to keep the dog, but things happen—children develop allergies, you lose your job, etc. and you may not always be able to keep the dog as you intended). These breeders won't be there for you if you have problems. And don't be surprised if the breeder is as choosy about you as you are about them—they should be. If they aren't (they don't seem to care where the puppy goes), beware and go elsewhere. Also please check out whether you wish to have your puppy's ears cropped. This is an expensive surgery done only for cosmetic purposes in this country. This surgery is both dangerous (puppies can bleed to death during the surgery) and painful for the puppy. This surgery is now ILLEGAL in Europe (and many Dane lovers feel it should be outlawed here, too). If you elect to have this done, please be aware that your puppy will have to wear "forms" on his or her ears and you will have to care for the ears and listen to your puppy scream in pain as you care for the ears that were cut for cosmetic reasons. (Guess where we stand on this issue??) For more information on cropping, please visit <http://www.outlawdan.es.com/ears.html>.

Why do dogs come into rescue?

Most dogs come into rescue through no fault of their own. Below are some of the more common reasons dogs come into rescue: Divorce (and the family is no longer able to care for the dog); Children develop allergies to the dog; The owner becomes ill or dies; The owner "can't handle" the dog and is unwilling to take an obedience class; The dog gets too large; The owner wants an outdoor dog and the Dane keeps trying to get inside

to be with the family; Financial reverses (and the family can no longer afford to care for the dog); The owner gets married and the new partner doesn't want the dog; Someone new moves into the home (such as an elderly parent) and doesn't want the dog; The family moves (because of job considerations or they are in the military) and cannot take the dog with them. As this list demonstrates, most dogs come into rescue because of "people" problems, not dog problems!