

12 Dog Breeds That Don't Really Live Up to Their Names

Some breed names make perfect sense for the breed — like the Golden Retriever, for example. Others are anomalies, hailing from places beyond what their name suggests, or named after a parson who loved hunting, or even a 'snooty' dog that originated as a hunting dog.

Reviewed by Dr. Becker

STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- What's in a name? When it comes to dog breeds, well ... there's just no telling. Some names perfectly describe a characteristic of the breed — where it originated, the work it was bred to do, or its appearance
- The Golden Retriever, for example, has a gold-colored coat, and it's easy to guess what the Portuguese Water Dog likes to do
- But some names have little to do with the dogs of that breed. You might assume, for example, that the Australian Shepherd originated in Australia. Or that the French Bulldog hails from France
- The original Poodles worked as retrievers of fallen waterfowl. Their name is derived from the German word pudelin, which means "to splash"
- In German, "affen" means ape or monkey, and "pinscher" means terrier. That's why the Affenpinscher is also known as the Monkey Dog or Monkey Terrier

Editor's Note: This article is a reprint. It was originally published June 19, 2015.

What's in a name? When it comes to dog breeds, well ... there's just no telling. Some names perfectly describe a characteristic of the breed — where it originated, the work it was bred to do, or its appearance.

The Golden Retriever, for example, has a gold-colored coat, and it's easy to guess what the Portuguese Water Dog likes to do.

But some names have little to do with the dogs of that breed. You might assume, for example, that the Australian Shepherd originated in Australia. Or that the French Bulldog hails from France ...

Origins of 12 Dog Breed Names

- **Affenpinscher**



In German, "affen" means ape or monkey, and "pinscher" means terrier. That's why the Affenpinscher is also known as the Monkey Dog or Monkey Terrier.

This appealing little dog is descended from numerous small terriers that hunted rats and mice throughout Europe in the 17th and 18th centuries.

- **American Pit Bull Terrier**



The American Pit Bull Terrier is one of the "bully breeds" and is often called a pit bull. However, "pit bull" isn't a breed, it's a term used to describe several bull breeds including the American Pit Bull Terrier, the Bull Terrier, the American Staffordshire Terrier, and the Staffordshire Bull Terrier.

Some people believe the American Pit Bull Terrier IS the American Staffordshire Terrier; others disagree. The confusion apparently began when the AKC made the decision in the early 1930s to give the American Pit Bull Terrier a new name — American Staffordshire Terrier — to distance the breed from its pit-fighting past.

To further confuse the issue, the American Pit Bull Terrier is not recognized by the AKC, but the slightly smaller American Staffordshire Terrier is.

- **Australian Shepherd**



Oddly enough, the Australian Shepherd hails from the American West, not Down Under. However, his ancestors are thought to be Collie-type dogs from Australia, or German sheepdogs exported to Australia where they're known as German Koolies, so that probably accounts for the breed name. Aussies were bred for ranch work, and in particular, herding livestock.

- **Catahoula Leopard Dog**



This breed originated deep in the swamps of Louisiana. "Catahoula" is possibly a mispronunciation of "Couthaugoula," which is a Choctaw Indian word meaning "sacred lake." The "leopard" in this breed's name refers to coat color patterns.

- **Dachshund**



The low-to-the-ground Doxie was developed in Germany in the early 17th century by crossing terriers (for

their feistiness) and hounds (for their tracking abilities). The reason for their long bodies is to help them hunt badgers in burrows. "Dachshund" means Badger Dog.

- **French Bulldog**



The adorable Frenchie is not, as it turns out, from France. These little dogs originated in Nottingham, England, where they were popular with lace workers who kept them as companions and ratters.

After the Industrial Revolution, many of England's lace makers immigrated to France, bringing their little bat-eared pals with them. The breed then became known as the French Bulldog.

- **Irish Setter**



This is an easy one. This gorgeous creature does indeed hail from Ireland. A setter or setting dog describes a large, long-haired breed trained to stand rigid when scenting game.

- **Jack Russell Terrier**



The Jack Russell Terrier is named after, you guessed it, Jack (John) Russell. Mr. Russell was an English parson and an avid hunter who became known as "The Sporting Parson." One day he met a milkman with a white female terrier named Trump. Trump seemed to be a great foxhunting dog, so Russell convinced the milkman to sell him the dog.

Russell bred Trump and developed a line of terriers that could hunt foxes all day, and fearlessly go after game that dove into holes in the ground. The Sporting Parson also developed the Parson Russell Terrier, which has longer legs than the Jack Russell, and is recognized as a separate breed.

- **Lhasa Apso**



The little Lhasa Apso originated in Tibet, where it served as a watchdog for Tibetan palaces and monasteries. "Lhasa" is the capital of Tibet; "Apso" means "bearded."

- **Pomeranian**



The Pom is the smallest member of the Spitz family of dogs and is descended from larger Spitz breeds, specifically the German Spitz. The Pom is named for the province of Pomerania, in Germany. In many countries, Pomeranians are known as the Zwergspitz, or "Dwarf-Spitz."

- **Poodle**



The modern day Poodle, thanks largely to show dog grooming practices, is often considered a somewhat snooty, upper crust canine. However, this breed's roots are anything but.

The original Poodles worked as retrievers of fallen waterfowl. Their name is derived from the German word pudelin, which means "to splash." These dogs were known as Pudelhunds or "water dogs" originally, but their name eventually evolved into the English "Poodle."

- **Weimaraner**



This breed has only been in existence since the 19th century, when Grand Duke Karl August of Weimar began selectively breeding hunting dogs for certain traits, including speed, an excellent sense of smell, fearlessness in encounters with large game, and intelligence.

As the story goes, August's breed became popular with his fellow Weimar noblemen, and they also made great bird-hunting dogs.

Sources and References

[DogChannel.com](https://www.dogchannel.com) (Archived)

Dogtime.com

VetStreet
