

A photograph of two dogs on a boat deck. In the foreground, a light-colored dog with floppy ears sits on a wooden railing, looking towards the left. In the background, a dark-colored dog with floppy ears sits on a dark jacket, also looking towards the left. The boat's white hull and blue-and-white checkered rope are visible. The background shows a body of water and a clear sky.

DOGS WHO SAIL

**WHAT IS THE  
BEST TYPE OF  
DOG TO HAVE  
ON A BOAT?**

BOOK 1

MAXY & MEL



A fluffy white dog, likely a Maltese or Poodle mix, is sitting on a boat. The dog is looking towards the left of the frame. The background shows the interior of the boat with a green cushion and a black bag. The lighting is warm, suggesting it might be late afternoon or early morning.

WHAT IS THE BEST TYPE OF  
DOG TO HAVE ON A BOAT?

HARRY

## FOREWARD & WELCOME ABOARD

*Dogs who Sail* evolved from my knowledge, or lack of same, when my partner Anthony and I bought a thirty-four' Duncanson sailing boat. We were supported by our crew: two aged Cocker Spaniels, Maxy, and Mel. As a devoted fur-baby mother, their happiness was paramount, and they became my personal educators to living aboard a boat full-time with dogs. Following their passing, the acquisition of Harry the Moodle (a Maltese/poodle puppy) signalled an additional learning experience for me.

Welcome aboard *Dogs Who Sail*! I am so glad you have found us. My name is Tanya Rabe and I established *Dogs Who Sail* on 1st January 2017. We have grown into a global community of people who share a love of dogs and boating.

WHAT IS THE BEST TYPE OF  
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I took the transition from living on land with dogs to living full time on board seriously. There was little practical information available for the questions I mulled over. Despite reading dog psychology books and speaking to vets and dog trainers from recognised support dog organisations in Australia and abroad, questions remained. *Dogs Who Sail* arose from gathering information from professionals and world-wide sailors who loved dogs too.

Creating the *Dogs Who Sail* community immediately validated my assumption that I was not the only dog mother who worried about giving her dogs onboard the best life. There were thousands of dog owner sailors angsting over the welfare of their dogs. I was delighted to discover I was not the only neurotic dog parent.

This book is a result of my own discoveries ably supported by the valuable information I picked up from members of *Dogs who Sail*. Additionally, where pertinent, I sought the guidance of professionals.

I am not here to tell you that your dog is guaranteed to love the boat as much as you do. Many dogs do love life aboard. You see them on deck with the salty sea breeze in their flappy ears. Others ride confidently on the bow – so much better than hanging your head out a car window!

Then there are the loyal dogs, who tolerate life onboard simply because you are there. Sadly, there are also dogs who do not care for the boating experience at all, confused by the instability of sailing or engine noise.

The motivator for this book is to give your furry crew member and you pleasure and safety onboard. The more information you have, the more informed choices you can make. In this book I have addressed issues I found common amongst the sailing with dogs community. I hope you enjoy *Dogs who Sail*, not only for its content and knowledge but also as an enjoyable read.

My hope is that these tips and shared experiences will alleviate any anxiety you may be feeling as you transition your beloved dog from land to water. I am completely devoted and actively involved daily within the *Dogs Who Sail* community, and I am more than happy to offer support and guidance if needed. My wish is for you to have it all – to sail off into the sunset, with your happy furry crew member beside you.

Kindest regards

Tanya  
[admin@dogswhosail.com](mailto:admin@dogswhosail.com)



## A FEW KIND WORDS

*I am honoured to introduce the first in the series of Dogs Who Sail e-books.*

*I've known Tanya for a few years and I am a member of Dogs Who Sail Facebook group. I've watched this labour of love develop and grow into something beautiful.*

*Tanya loves dogs, that is evident. She devotes her time to the Dogs Who Sail Community to ensure the wellbeing of dogs onboard.*

*This book will answer all your questions on **What Type of Dog to Have on a Boat**, it will also say why, which is so important, helping you make an informed decision. It's a fundamental question, isn't it? It has to be right for the dog.*

*As a fellow mariner, an author, and an animal lover this is where I would start if I were embarking on a trip with my pet. Everything you need to begin sailing with your dog(s) is right here, distilled down in a succinct format.*

*If you are considering cruising with a dog, you've just found exactly what you need.*

Jackie Parry  
Author and Maritime Trainer  
[www.sistershiptraining.com](http://www.sistershiptraining.com)

WHAT IS THE BEST TYPE OF  
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*Tanya has always loved dogs, her dogs are her family. When she moved onboard permanently her two cocker spaniels of course came along and were soon part of the crew. In 2016 she decided to combine her passion for sailing and dogs with 'Dogs Who Sail'. Since then she has helped connect countless boat dogs and their owners to each other and resources, her experiences and expertise has culminated in this book.*

Dr Sheridan 'Sheddy' Lathe  
Veterinarian, Vet Tails Sailing Chuffed

*Tanya Rabe's combined loves of sailing and the furry best mates who accompany us on our adventures have inspired her to create a friendly community for sailing dog lovers.*

*She is both inspired and inspiring as she educates sailors in a dog-centred way about the relevant issues and idiosyncrasies of Dogs Who Sail...*

*Tanya's warmth and enthusiasm for our best mates and all things canine has enabled her to facilitate a thriving community.*

*To say Tanya is passionate about dogs would be an understatement! Not just her own dogs, but the welfare of all dogs, everywhere. Through Dogs Who Sail, Tanya is dedicated to improving life on board boats for pooches who go to sea, and for the people who travel with them.*

Dr Shelley Wright  
Founder Women Who Sail Australia (WWSA)

*The Dogs Who Sail community is a great place to share doggy ideas and doggy joys and solve problems in a safe and supportive environment with dog-loving sailors, health and behaviour experts from around the world.*

Nicola Wright  
Adapt Strategic Communications  
SV Albatross

WHAT IS THE BEST TYPE OF  
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## A GOOD CAUSE

For every chapter purchased *Dogs Who Sail* will be donating AUD1 to Dr Sheridan (Sheddy) Lathe's Vet Tails Sailing Chuffed projects.

Sheddy has kindly offered her time and expertise to *Dogs Who Sail* over the years. It is the least we can do to make a small contribution to her efforts.

Vet Tails started as a blog to share my stories from around the clinic and, then as my career expanded, my adventures overseas helping animals. Vet Tails is now working even harder to improve the standards of animal health and welfare around the world by offering FREE veterinary care to organizations and communities that need it most. Vet Tails is also providing education and raising awareness through Blogs and Vlogs that document our adventures and help spread our message. We hope that people will get a few laughs, learn a lot and maybe be inspired to respect, nurture and help animals from all over the world!

You can find out more about her latest fundraiser or make an additional donation at <https://www.chuffed.org/project/sanjosemiion>



WHAT IS THE BEST TYPE OF  
DOG TO HAVE ON A BOAT?



DARCY

## WHAT IS THE BEST BREED OF DOG FOR A BOAT?

A great question and one that I wish I received a dollar for every time I was asked. I will get straight to the point - there is no perfect answer to this question. The truth is it really depends on you. In this chapter I discuss characteristics about dogs that may influence your decision to bring a dog onboard or to consider when you are choosing a fur-baby to join your sailing family.

*Dogs Who Sail* has a collective membership of over 5,000 boating dogs worldwide. Initially, I thought there had to be a specific breed that would take to life aboard like a duck to water.



## WHAT IS THE BEST TYPE OF DOG TO HAVE ON A BOAT?

Was it the Portuguese Water Dog who has a well-documented history of crewing fishing boats with a primary task of retrieving lost tackle, herding fish into nets and swimming messages to and from other boats? They even have webbed feet!

Or perhaps it was the Schipperke, known as the 'Little Captain' or 'Little Skipper' - the boat captain's best friend? They had an important job guarding the barges moving between Brussels and Antwerp and to keep disease carrying rats at bay.

Historically, both breeds are perfect boat dogs and may do very well onboard; however, they were bred as working dogs with tasks to keep them motivated and focused. As domesticated pets, they may need training to appease their naturally busy personalities.

I have met Cocker Spaniels, Beagles, Weimaraners, Chihuahuas, Kelpies, Greyhounds, Bichon Poodles, Maltese Terriers, Labradors, and Labradoodles, Staffies, Pit Bull Terriers, Golden Retrievers, Foxys, Jack Russell's, Border Collies, French Bulldogs, the list goes on. There has not been a particular breed of dog that stands out as the breed most suited to life on a boat. To me, there appears to be no outstanding candidate for life on a boat.

My personal conclusion is that the best type of dog for boating is the one you love. The dog with unique traits and goofy personality that makes your heart melt and without trying manages to turn your frown upside down.

Casting the quest for perfection aside, let us instead consider certain characteristics that make life easier for you and your dog on your boat. We will examine how boat size, dog size and age, along with shedding, impact on your choices and the problems that can arise.

I will share with you the importance of having a trained dog on board, and the necessity of activity and play to improve your furry sailing companion's health and wellbeing on the boat. Lastly, we will delve a little into the possibility of having rescue dogs onboard.



## CHARACTERISTICS FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

If you are deciding to have your landlubbing dog aboard or introduce a new dog to your boating family, there are some characteristics worth considering.

I have no doubt that some of the information I impart in this chapter will be challenged by a dog owner whose own dog onboard contradicts all I have said. Believe me, I have seen it all and I have been astounded by the paradoxes.

I was advised living with greyhounds onboard created problems. Their long legs and high centre of gravity makes them clumsy – opinion debunked as there are many greyhounds who love being on a boat where they can laze the day away. I met a couple who had three Golden Retrievers on a 28-foot sailboat. Yes, three quite large dogs on board! Moreover, I have met Border Collies who have traded their land life for the sea. A German Shepherd who insists on going clamming with his owner and a gorgeous black Labrador who is a seeing eye dog for a woman living on her boat. You will meet these amazing dogs and others throughout the book and understand why it is unrealistic for anyone to speculate about the perfect breed of dog for a boat.

Owning a dog is one of the most important decisions you will make. Your dog is a commitment for its entire lifetime, which could be around 15-16 years if we are so lucky. How your dog adapts to life on your boat has the potential to make or break your sailing dreams. An ill-considered choice and you might have to sell your boat because your dog is not adjusting to boating life, or you make the heart-breaking decision to rehome your beloved dog because you simply must have your boating dream and nothing, not even your dog, will stand in the way of that. An informed decision increases the likelihood of choosing a dog who is more adaptable to life on the water, thus decreasing your stress and anxiety as to how your dog is coping (or more likely, not coping).

Factors when you decide you want to have your dog join you on your boat are not too dissimilar to the considerations we make when we are getting a dog as a landlubber. We are however looking for their adaptability to life in a confined space on the water rather than a land-based home which has a stable environment and room to move. Let us take a closer look at size.

## DOES BOAT SIZE REALLY MATTER?

We started our sailing adventures aboard *Crossroads*, a 34-foot Duncanson, a comfortable boat with basic accommodation – a small galley, simple saloon with sofa and a V berth. Skilled and courageous sailors have circumnavigated the world in boats this size and smaller but, for us, she was a perfect weekender and coastal cruiser.

To make her more liveable, we decked her out with modern upholstery and lots of comfy cushions. On reflection, I recall we spent most of the time onboard in our exceedingly small cockpit. Maxy and Mel had their beds on the cockpit floor where they would comfortably snooze between beach runs.

When we were down below, the dogs' beds were placed under the saloon table leaving the companionway clear. They were safe under the table, out of the harm's way from being trod on in such a confined, unstable area. We were content but there was little room to move. With the four of us onboard, it was sitting or lying room only.



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When Anthony, and I began considering living aboard permanently the size of the boat became an important consideration. We had travelled a few longer trips on *Crossroads* and the dogs were comfortable but when we started to plan the reinvention of our lives as fulltime liveaboards, we agreed the cabin was too small to house the four of us on a permanent basis.

Within months of making the decision to move from land to water, our dream boat appeared; a fabulous 52-foot cutter rigged Passport. *Tanua* has a spacious interior, comparable to a small two-bedroom apartment, enough room for our dogs to have a choice of sofa and beds. They were able to run from one end of the boat to the other, have floor space to roll around on, and their favourite room on the boat (the galley) was big enough to hold all of us. Yes, I admit it. We are one of those crazy couples who upgraded their boat to accommodate the dogs. *Tanua* is the most luxurious dog kennel in Australia!

Boat size matters because...

- 🐾 Modest boat owners are aware that there is limited space on a boat. If your partner is anything like mine, extra space is filled up with boat tools and boat spares, and spares for spares, and spares for spares for spares.
- 🐾 To have space is not only important for your dog who needs room to move freely,

but also for you. We have all heard the “stories” (a polite way of saying complaints) about adapting to living in close confines on a boat with our other half. Adding a dog into the equation is adding another body to squeeze past, step over, and no doubt share the sofa with, and in our case, the bed too.

- 🐾 It is not always dreamy, sunny days out on the water. Consider the rainy days too. Here in tropical Australia, there can be day after day of rain, for weeks on end, which leaves everyone subject to cabin fever, including your cute furry dog.

Friends of ours spent a summer couped up in the pilothouse of their boat due to an unpleasant cruising season of consistently severe weather. The two dogs needed to go to land a couple of times a day for toileting and exercise. Ultimately, the small space the four of them shared became damp and smelled all summer of wet dog. It was no surprise they returned home and upgraded to a larger boat.

I am not here to convince you to upgrade or buy a bigger boat. Remember the three golden retrievers? Anything is possible. You just need to be aware of what you need and want so that your time on the water is as comfortable and enjoyable as can be.

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DOG TO HAVE ON A BOAT?



BOB & REX

## DOES DOG SIZE REALLY MATTER?

*This is the most important advice I have for you.* The size of your dog matters because there may be a time when you need to handle your dog by yourself. You may be a solo sailor, or your partner or crew may be unwell, injured, or otherwise occupied, in which case it is entirely up to you to manage your dog by yourself.

The question to ask yourself here is, “Can I get my dog on and off the mothership and into and out of the dinghy and onto land without any assistance?” Even though Maxy and Mel were medium sized dogs, I was not confident transporting their 14kg each by myself. When they were wet, I found handling them challenging.

These days I am always thankful for Harry’s slight seven-kilogram body. I can tuck him under my arm or into a backpack style carry case and easily move him on and off the boat by myself safely and with ease. Once more I remind you, this is just a consideration. I have seen plenty of people smaller framed than I who have large dogs they can manage alone. There is no fixed rule, just ideas to mull over.

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Calm days are more manageable but quickly things can come undone when the swell is up, and the dinghy is bouncing around beside the boat. Can you safely transfer your dog between one and the other? Will you be able to manage doggy and dinghy at the same time when waves build close to shore? I am not trying to scare you but remind you about the risks of dropping your dog into the water, and possibly yourself too.

I would encourage you to assess the access on and off your boat, keeping in mind your sole responsibility transporting your dog in different situations. Catamarans and power boats can offer easier access into and out of the dinghy, as well as onto the jetty. Monohulls can be a little trickier depending on the freeboard and transom. Tanua has a canoe stern and extremely high sideboard, not helpful at all for getting into the tender. I have subsequently developed a serious case of Transom Envy. I pine when I see big, spacious swim platforms with a few steps leading to the cockpit. How dreamy...

There are ways around moving your dog between boats safely, so you do not jeopardise your own safety or cause your dog an injury. A decent quality dog lifejacket will have a sturdy handle you can use like luggage to lift your dog. Engage the windlasses and halyards to aid with moving your dog between boats and jetties. You can also find reviews for helpful accessories at [www.dogswhosail.com](http://www.dogswhosail.com).

Dog size matters because...

- 🐾 It may present as a safety issue for both you and your dog in the event you need to manage your dog by yourself.
- 🐾 Your dog will need feeding. You will need to store larger quantities of food for longer trips if they have their special diet or you are unsure of the availability of their food on your travels. It is not only where you store your dog's food but how to store it as well to ensure it retains its freshness.
- 🐾 Like it or not, it is important to consider the obvious; what goes in, must come out. The bigger the dog, the bigger the parcel they expel. In many cases a poop is a poop regardless of size. I met a couple who have been living aboard for over twenty years, and they have only ever had chihuahuas for this very reason.
- 🐾 All dogs require regular exercise regardless of their size. Your boating dog does not have the freedom of a back garden for a stroll to stretch their legs. Harry, being a small dog, still likes to run. He runs eight hours a day at doggy day-care. When we are away on the boat, because he is small, I am still able to throw the ball for him to chase within the boat if we cannot get to shore. The only problem with this is my ball throwing arm is much stronger than the other arm.

## IMPAWTENT QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

We have numerous friends and members of our *Dogs Who Sail* community who successfully have big dog breeds on their boats as weekenders and liveaboards. The dogs are happy, safe, and comfortable but, my observation has been that in countless cases, the size of the boat suits the size of the dog.

- 🐾 Are you able to transport your dog safely by yourself:
  - Into and out of the dinghy?
  - On and off the boat onto the jetty?
  - Up and down the stairs to your main cabin?
  
- 🐾 If you cannot confidently answer the above question then do you have a Plan B, an aid or modification to your boat that will assist with safe handling of your beloved dog?
  
- 🐾 Do you have the strength to lift your dog and the stamina to meet your dog's physical needs?
  
- 🐾 Do you have a dedicated storage space on your boat to house ample dog food supplies so that they will remain fresh?
  
- 🐾 Are you prepared to share your space with your dog who will possibly be under your feet a lot of the time?



MARLEY



CANELA

WHAT IS THE BEST TYPE OF  
DOG TO HAVE ON A BOAT?



MAXY

## AGE

### SENIOR DOGS

Maxy and Mel were senior dogs when they started sailing: both over ten years old. I was constantly concerned how they would manage living aboard. How would they cope with the smaller space? What about removing their freedom to go to the toilet when they wanted? What about the unstable surface? How will they feel about not having a backyard to wander in at their leisure?

As it was, I was worrying about a lot of things that turned out to be simply fine. They were content to have their morning and afternoon strolls and sleep during the day. My fur-babies had reached an age where they had slowed down and did not need as much time as they once did to burn up energy. If they could stretch their legs, check out doggy social media (meaning any place a dog had peed), and meet a few adoring fans, they were happy.



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As senior dogs however, they lacked the confidence and agility they once had when they were younger. They were clumsier - misjudging distances, stumbling over things they would once have leapt over, and unable to get themselves up the cabin staircase. Sadly, our furry companions do not stay young forever and, like us, they are challenged by the physical symptoms of ageing. It is important to consider degenerative disorders impacting your dog's comfort on the boat, and your ability and patience to look after them in this environment in their later years.

Most dogs will adapt. They just want to be with us. It is however still our responsibility as their carers to return the love they give us, to make sure they are comfortable and safe onboard as seniors. Other physical deteriorations which you may need to consider are failing eyesight, loss of hearing and incontinence. Then there is the unexpected diagnosis of disease.

Into his 15th year, Maxy developed doggy dementia. He began a behaviour where he would start to roam the boat at 6pm every day. Back and forth from the front cabin to the back cabin. Back and forth. Back and forth. Occasionally he would stop, let out a whimper of distress and look at me, his beautiful deep brown eyes full of confusion as if to say, "What is going on Mum?"

In dementia care, Maxy's behaviour is referred to as "sundowners". Unlike our boaties usual reference to the

term where we enjoy a few drinks together to watch the sun go down, sundowners in dementia care is a time of irritability which worsens as the day begins to turn to night.

Like clockwork, Maxy would wake up three times throughout the night, unsettled, pacing and whimpering. I would drag my tired body out of bed, sleepily dress myself and take him for a walk along the marina dock rain, hail, or moonshine. It was the only activity that would settle him for the next couple of hours when we both could catch some sleep until the next episode.

When we saw Maxy had a deterioration in his mental and physical health, we chose to spend most of our time in a marina and I am very thankful we did for I could not imagine getting him to shore in the dinghy to settle his restless sundowner spells.

Our *Dogs who Sail* community has hundreds of old salty seadogs onboard in different scenarios who are so loved and cared for. There have been times though where members have been emotionally torn about staying onboard with their ageing dog or returning to a land home to see out the remaining years of their dog's life. If you are thinking to buy a boat with a senior dog and begin travelling or living aboard, you will need to weigh up your options whether this is a dream for now or in the future once your dog has lived out their life.

WHAT IS THE BEST TYPE OF  
DOG TO HAVE ON A BOAT?

Age matters because...

- ❧ For your senior dog this may translate into compromised agility as their confidence and ability to hold themselves steady wanes. It is therefore worth considering how this will affect their sense of wellbeing on an often-unbalanced surface.
- ❧ As they age dogs are also known to have more toileting accidents with issues of incontinence, loose bladders, and bowels. In your boat, they may not be able to get themselves out to their toileting area on time or without your help. You therefore must be prepared to care for and clean up after your senior dog.
- ❧ For older doggies, sight and/or hearing are likely to decline or be lost altogether. Maxy lost his hearing just before we moved aboard as fulltime liveaboards – deaf as a doorpost. We adopted hand signals to communicate with him which he adapted to quite well. By repetitively using the same signal for certain commands he was able to make the connection.

With the loss of his hearing, I was more mindful of other situations where Maxy could be in danger. He was never unattended on deck and, when we went to shore, he remained on a lead. If his instincts got the better of him and he was caught up in the mind-altering state of the chase, he would not have heard my calls to heal or to return.



MEL

## IMPAWTENT QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

Rarely do we want to face these facts of an ageing life for ourselves, let alone our dogs but you are in a unique situation onboard, and these are critical discussion points to acknowledge for the comfort and safety of your best friend.

Now, I would like to move forward on a positive note about our older dogs. We spend many years getting to know them. Just like any mother or father, we are acutely aware of our dog's idiosyncrasies, their abilities, and their anxieties, giving us knowledge and an intimate understanding of how they would cope in differing situations. The one thing we can all be certain of with our dogs is their undeniable loyalty. For me, this is enough to make sure that I always do whatever I can to give them the best life possible.

- 🐾 Will your dog be safe on your boat if she loses her eyesight or hearing? What can you implement to make them safer?
- 🐾 How will you feel about cleaning up after your dog on a regular basis if they suffer from incontinence?
- 🐾 Will you know if your dog's wellbeing is suffering due to factors of ageing and what decisions are you prepared to make to ease their suffering?





PUPPY MILO

## AGE

### PUPPIES

Who on this entire earth does not love a puppy? These fun little creatures have the power to make females of any age squeal with delight and I am wondering if men do the same on the inside. Puppies are soft and cute. They make us laugh with their playful natures, and even when they chew the seal off your favourite diving mask, gnaw like a beaver on the teak helm wheel, or have an enthusiastic adventure with the galley rubbish bin, their cuteness melts away any irritation we may have. To have a puppy snoring peacefully on your lap is such a heart-warming moment.

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DOG TO HAVE ON A BOAT?

Harry joined us onboard when he was only eight weeks old. He was a white fluff ball who took over the ship from the moment his pure little paws hit the deck. Mutiny of the Moodle! For the first four weeks Harry was in puppy lockdown until he was able to have his next Pavo Virus vaccination. All I can say is, thank God he was a small dog. I had forgotten how much energy puppies have and how ridiculously sharp their little needle teeth are.

It was a fun time but stressful too. A friend who I met through *Dogs Who Sail* also brought her puppy Frank the Fox Terrier onboard at the same time. We helped each other through the puppy stage sharing photos of fang wounds, boats that looked like childcare centres littered with toys and endless stories of naughty puppy shenanigans.

The main difference between an older dog and a puppy is, without a doubt, energy level. When he was young Harry would be like a tornado racing from one end of the boat to the other, but just as quickly as he tore though he would zonk into a deep sleep. As each day passed and he grew older, these deep sleeps turned into micro naps until they merged into Go! Go! Go! from sunup to sundown. I managed to keep reminding myself that these puppy days are precious, and he would be a grown dog before I knew it.

I learned quickly with Harry the importance of puppy proofing the boat. Safety is paramount because puppies are quick, curious and have not learned boundaries.

For this reason, Harry is continually supervised in the cockpit or on the deck. Any poisonous or harmful substance has been stowed in lazarettes or cupboards. Just like having a human baby onboard, safety is an ongoing risk assessment.



## WHAT IS THE BEST TYPE OF DOG TO HAVE ON A BOAT?

Age is important because...

- ❧ Puppies can be trained. They have their own unique personality, but they are clean slates. Puppies can become boat dogs right from the start. They quickly learn everything from acceptance of the unstable surface to toilet training on the boat which will become a natural place for them to relieve themselves. You can also
- ❧ include in your puppy training safety commands to board and disembark the mother ship and the dinghy. Set boundaries from the beginning. Before you get too excited and consider trading in your kids, and your partner for a puppy, let us have a look at the entire picture. As cute as
- ❧ they are, puppies can be very naughty. Destruction becomes their middle name as they are incredibly curious in their unfamiliar environment. Everything is a toy or a teething aid to them. They will push the boundaries and your patience as they ignore many, if not all, of your reprimands. On a boat, a pup's confidence and courage is endearing but you will need to watch that gorgeous little creature carefully. They are small and fast and can be hard to catch, thinking that everything is a game of chase. It takes but a few seconds for them to leg it up the decks and become airborne from the bow of the boat. We delve deeper into the importance of a well-trained dog on a boat later in this section.



PUPPY FRANK

## TIPS ON HOW TO INTRODUCE YOUR DOG (SENIOR OR PUPPY) TO YOUR BOAT

- 🐾 First and foremost is to introduce your dog to your boat in gradual steps. In our culture we want results, and we want them yesterday. Go easy!
- 🐾 Take your time. For the first few weeks, visit the boat with your dog for a day or part of a day only.
- 🐾 This day that you choose is all about your dog's awareness, not a day for boat jobs.
- 🐾 On your way to the boat make it fun. Do not stress about getting there. Feel good about the day ahead so your dog knows that you are going to a fun place.
- 🐾 Sit together on the boat without engines or movement. Both can cause your dog worry as they are new and unfamiliar.
- 🐾 Let your dog smell around the boat. Have some of their toys and bedding on board so they can notice familiar scents.
- 🐾 During this time create a safe space for your dog, whether this be with their bedding or a crate (if you are in favour of this training method). I will explore the use of crates in another chapter.
- 🐾 Like all positive training methods, always follow up with praise, treats and cuddles.
- 🐾 Whatever you do, do not pick a day that you have frustrations or anxieties as your dog tunes into you better than you can yourself. Your stress and anxiety has the potential for your dog to make a poor association with the boat.
- 🐾 After a couple of introductory visits prepare to start the engine. Observe how your dog reacts. They may be fine and not even notice. If they are sensitive to the noise offer them comfort and praise. Harry is ball obsessed so the first few times we started up the engine I played ball with him. What engine?
- 🐾 Once they are accepting of the engine noise, take the boat out on the bay on a calm, sunny day for a little trip. If you see your dog is not comfortable, come back.
- 🐾 Make sure they have fun. Get them ashore if you can for a beach run, swim, and explore.
- 🐾 Factor dinghy rides into your transition planning using the same process. Slow and steady. Dinghy rides are often easier for the dog to embrace as they quickly associate the quick ride ending up at the beach – ball, water, sand, digging, crabs, waves. Yippee!
- 🐾 Exercise the greatest love and patience for your dog. This introduction to boating life will most probably unfold without a hitch but you will have a plan in place if your dog takes a little longer accepting certain things about boating life.

WHAT IS THE BEST TYPE OF  
DOG TO HAVE ON A BOAT?

## IMPAWTENT QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

- 🐾 Do you have the time, dedication and patience required to put into training your new puppy?
- 🐾 Will you be on the boat with your dog for most of the day while they settle into their new home?
- 🐾 Do you have the patience to introduce your dog to your boat over a period if that is what it takes?
- 🐾 Are you prepared to lose a shoe or two if you have a puppy?
- 🐾 Have you thought about what may happen if your dog does not adapt to boat life?



IVY, CHLOE & TRIXIE



WHAT IS THE BEST TYPE OF  
DOG TO HAVE ON A BOAT?



## ACTIVITY AND ENRICHMENT

Before moving onto the boat, Maxy and Mel shared an enormous backyard with the local wild turkeys, water lizards, magpies, lorikeets, and butcher birds. One of my favourite memories is looking out over the yard from our bedroom window to watch their morning ritual. Mel would be surveying the perimeter of the yard, nose fixed to the ground stopping suddenly to thoroughly examine a new scent left overnight. Maxy would be somewhere else in the yard, on a soft grassy tuft rolling and wriggling around on his back, mouth wide open, tongue dangling in the breeze voicing his delight with long, loud snorts. Maxy and Mel loved their backyard. It was their sanctuary, a place that provided them with physical and mental stimulation.

Even with a backyard, Maxy and Mel were always walked out from the home morning and afternoon for most of their lives. Like many dogs I have met, besides dinner time, walks are the most exciting event in their day. New smells, other dogs, and people to meet, a few treats, possibly a swim.

WHAT IS THE BEST TYPE OF  
DOG TO HAVE ON A BOAT?

In our house the word 'walk' needed to be spelt 'W-A-L-K' because one mention of the 'W' word, and chaos reigned. To use the 'W-A-L-K' word inappropriately was akin to a doggy profanity. If you said it, you had to mean it otherwise you would be looking into sad, droopy Cocker Spaniel eyes explaining that a 'walk' was not happening and apologise for dropping the 'W' word.

When a walk was on, it was on! As I prepared their harnesses and leads Maxy would prance around singing, his howls in tune with his bouncy dance. Mel was lost in her circles of joy, round and round, head to tail she would spin. You do not need to be a doggy psychologist to understand that W-A-L-K time was important to our two and there was no way I would deprive them of their enjoyment. That is why land time for our dogs has been factored into every single passage plan.

I have watched Harry when Anthony hops on deck to get the dinghy. Harry is as still as a statue, ears pinned back, listening. When the outboard starts up, so does Hazza. Let's go! He is so excited and once in the dinghy will sit on my lap, paws on the tube and enjoy the wind in his ears. Walk time is coming!



WHAT IS THE BEST TYPE OF  
DOG TO HAVE ON A BOAT?

Exercising your dog is important because...

- 🐾 Energy levels will differ from dog to dog. Even though Maxy and Mel were the same breed, they were completely different dogs. Maxy loved to swim and run. Mel was a dawdler (unless a bird came and then she ran faster than lightning). Know your own dog's needs as a landlubber and commit to fulfilling that need on the water.
- 🐾 As humans we are aware of the benefits of exercise for our own health and wellbeing. It is no different for your dog. Regular exercise will help them maintain a healthy weight which in turn offers a good chance to prevent other health problems in the future. Movement is also beneficial for our dog's joints, keeping them limber and agile, hopefully staving off arthritis. An overweight dog becomes lazy, finds it harder to move about and the extra pounds put additional strain on joints and organs. Exercise is necessary for optimum physical health. Your dog's cognitive functioning must also be taken into
- 🐾 consideration when it comes to energy levels. If their genetic predisposition to exercise is not satisfied, you may find yourself with a naughty or depressed dog in your family. On a boat our dogs rely entirely on us for their activity. They cannot take themselves out for a walk in the backyard to fill their nostrils with organic scents or have a roll or a stretch on the grass. It is all up to us.
- 🐾 If our dogs are inactive for a period - and this will again differ from breed to breed and dog to dog - they are prone to suffer from frustration which can manifest itself in a number of less than desirable ways. Your dog may start destroying things around the boat, begin to bark unprovoked, develop behavioural problems, become snappy, or fall into a state of depression. If they are an older dog, being couped up on the boat day after day can contribute to a decline in cognitive functioning.

## IMPAWTENT QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

Within our *Dogs Who Sail* community there are numerous dogs coastal cruising and even circumnavigating the globe with their owners, and they are having a healthy and happy life. In conversations I have with all dog owners I stress the importance of exercise and being considerate wherever you are travelling to.

One of the Golden Rules of cruising which we honour, is not to have a set time for arriving to a destination. If you decide to have a dog on a boat this furry little being needs to be included in your passage planning. When you know that your dog looks forward to their regular exercise, plan shorter trips allowing adequate time to be at an anchorage or marina to ensure your furry crew member can go for a walk or a swim.

Legislation about where dogs are allowed to exercise will vary from country to country and, in Australia, state to state. One place we are blessed to have boating access to are the beautiful coral cays of the Great Barrier Reef, offering the opportunity for snorkelling and diving in crystal clear water surrounded by brightly coloured tropical fish.

The closest cays to the mainland are a solid day's sail to get there and once you do, your dog is confined to the boat for the duration of your stay either from National Park or Marine Park laws prohibiting dogs. As much as we would love to spend an extended amount of time indulging in this natural beauty, we chose not to

visit these places with Maxy and Mel because we knew how much they loved their daily walks. We will be doing the same for Harry when we head up the coast this winter as well.

Having a frustrated dog onboard is an added stress for you and them. It is, however, a stress that is easily avoided if you know your dog's needs and meet those needs. Your dog is not just a dog; he or she is an integral part of your family and needs to be included in your sailing itinerary. They are your best friend so treat them with respect and remember they are joining you on your adventure without a say in the matter. I was grateful to have Maxy and Mel and now Harry creating memories on board with us, and I am content to be at a dog friendly destination at the end of a day's sailing. The price for having a dog onboard is that I may not get to visit certain places, but our dogs are happy, healthy, and content on our boat and this makes me the same.

- 🐾 Understand your dog's activity requirements; how long can they go for without a walk or run before you notice changes in their behaviour?
- 🐾 Knowing your dog loves daily exercise, are you prepared to leave destinations off your itinerary that are not dog friendly?
- 🐾 If you can have your dog aboard for lengthy periods of time before seeing land, how will you ensure they exercise for physical and mental stimulation?

WHAT IS THE BEST  
DOG TO HAVE ON A BOAT?



LAMBEAU

## TRAINING YOUR SALTY SEA DOG

This section will cover the aspect of training. I will not be teaching you how to train your dog but more so the importance of ensuring your dog is trained in basic commands onboard.

There is a dated pack theory that became a deeply entrenched social message back in the 1970s when scientists were monitoring a pack of captive wolves and subsequently assumed that it was appropriate to translate their findings to domestic dogs. With this study came dog training methods that focused on training the dog to respect the pack leader and forcing dogs into submissive states; essentially using strong physical and verbal commands. When these dogs were closely observed they were not actually well trained, but they do as they are told because they are fearful of the so called 'pack leader.'

WHAT IS THE BEST TYPE OF  
DOG TO HAVE ON A BOAT?

As my favourite dog trainer Victoria Stillwell explains, the results of these early studies have since been disproved and Victoria now has the arduous task of re-educating people on how to train their dogs with positive training methods which build a respectful and trusted relationship between human and dog. As Victoria says, 'dogs are not on a quest for world domination. They are not socialised wolves who are constantly striving to be Top Dog over us, and they are not hardwired to control every situation as traditional ideology would have us believe.' Instead like all living creatures, dogs want to avoid potential threats or conflict as this is the method to ensure one's safety and ultimate survival. Our dog's number one priority is to feel safe, secure, and comfortable.

Training is important because...

- 🐾 Training is important to all dogs whether they are dogs who sail or landlubbers. It provides them with mental stimulation and, as we discussed earlier, a mentally stimulated dog is a happy dog.
- 🐾 On a boat they are surrounded by the greatest safety risk of all - water. Your dog may be wearing a dog life jacket, but we want this to be a safety device that we rely upon as a last resort. You may have heard the saying, prevention is better than cure. In this case training your dog in basic commands is the prevention method to hopefully keep them safe on the boat and out of the water. Even if your dog falls overboard with a floatation jacket

they still must contend with tides, current, water temperature, and any ocean dwelling creatures that might come to check out this odd little four-legged furry intruder making frantic splashing.

- 🐾 We want to ensure our dog does not jump overboard when they see something that tickles their fancy: a bird, a wave, a dolphin on the bow, or you.
- 🐾 We do not want our dogs to be jumping into and out of the dinghy without waiting for a command. They could be jumping into unclear waters with snoozing stingrays, rocks, oysters, or mud. There is also the possibility of them being hit by the dinghy, the prop or being swept up in a current.
- 🐾 Within the boat you need to determine where your dog can and cannot go, for him and for you. By instructing through basic commands your dog will know if they are allowed to jump down into the main cabin from the cockpit, allowed to sleep on the bed or sofa, hang out with you in the galley and so forth.
- 🐾 When you go to shore in a designated off-leash area it is comforting to know that your dog has good recall and will come back to you when you call them no matter what is enticing their curiosity. They may find a shore creature they would like to play with, but you can see that you need to stop them pursuing this friendship for the safety and care of the shore creature and your dog. This is best managed with a basic command.

## IMPAWTENT QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

Taking these scenarios into consideration I invite you to explore training your dog to Sit, Stay, Come (recall), Heel, Drop It/Leave It. Look for positive training techniques using something that motivates your dog such as treats, toys or praise.

For the love of your dog dedicate 10 - 15 minutes a day to a devoted training plan. Mel had a fair amount of training which we did together in the mornings when she was more alert. It was great stimulation for her, and I would see a difference after the session where she was content and relaxed, happy to rest for the day after being physically and mentally exercised. The training we did together also developed the bond we shared.

Be consistent with your messages to your dog. Boat dogs are often wet from a beach visit whether it is a wade in the shallows or hardcore doggy surfing. They do not understand that there is a rule for being a dry dog and a different rule for being a wet dog. Keep it simple for them.

There are plenty of resources on the internet to guide us on how to train our dogs. Alternatively, puppy schools and older dog training programs are run by veterinary clinics as well as private trainers offering group or one on one training. As you invest in your child's education, training sessions are an investment in your dog's education.

- 🐾 Are you willing to allocate 10 – 15 minutes of your day to training your dog?
- 🐾 If you do not feel confident training your dog from online resources, can you access dog training facilities in your area?

WHAT IS THE BEST TYPE OF  
DOG TO HAVE ON A BOAT?



KIKO

## SHEDDING

Shedding of dog hair occurs as we head toward the warmer seasons. As it begins to cool, dogs' coats thicken for warmth in the winter months and then they drop their fur to be cool for summer.

Dogs' coats differ from breed to breed and sometimes dog to dog within a specific breed. There are smooth coats, double coats, long coats, wiry coats and curly coats, fur coats and wool coats, and among these are the shedders.

For us, moulting season was not an issue as Maxy and Mel were light shedders, barely noticeable. They tracked more dirt through the boat from their fluffy paws than they shed hair. Being a Moodle Harry does not shed. I expected to see some dog hair leading into summer but there was none whatsoever. Recently I was introduced to a dog who shed so much that I was surprised he was not bald! One long pat down his back and a handful of hair later I realised the need to remind readers about this issue.



## WHAT IS THE BEST TYPE OF DOG TO HAVE ON A BOAT?

Cleaning the boat is not one of my favourite ways to spend time. It takes flexibility to get into and around many small awkward spaces. And if you are anything like me, without fail you come out of those spaces with a bruise or a scratch. Whether you are living on your boat fulltime or as a weekender, it needs cleaning and if you have a dog or two or three, it will need to be cleaned, more often than if it was just the humans on board.

Dog coats are an important consideration because...

- 🐾 With one long pat down the spine of a shedding dog's coat, you will end up with a handful of dog hair. Every place on the boat that a shedder is allowed, you will find a layer of fur.
- 🐾 Regular vacuuming is the most efficient way to pick up dog hair on the boat. There are lots of nooks and crannies in boats and dog hair manages to find its way into them all. The last thing you want is a build-up of hair, especially if it leads to a blocked drain, pipe, or pump. If you allow your moulting dog on the furniture in the boat, it is obvious that these areas too will need to be vacuumed. When you buy your vacuum cleaner, remember to research the wattage so you know if you can use it when you are at anchor.
- 🐾 Allergies experienced by people around dogs are not necessarily caused by the dog's fur, but the small flakes of dead skin known as dander. The dander sits within the dog's fur coat and spreads throughout the environment when the dog has a big shake or enjoys a roll on the saloon rug depositing dander within the air and fibres of the rug.

On a boat you are in a confined space with your beloved canine which will limit where they can be contained if you discover you have any allergy symptoms that are related to your dog. When you are in the cabin, boat ventilation is restricted to portholes, hatches, and companionways. If the breeze is blowing in a favourable direction it will air the boat but there are days when there is not a breath of fresh air, or we need to close everything up due to rain. A closed sailing vessel is not a place you want to be if you are suffering an allergic reaction to your dog.

## STRATEGIES TO MINIMISE SHEDDING

My advice is that you are aware of any allergy sensitivities you may have to your dog before embarking on your sailing adventures together. There are actions you can take to care for the health and wellbeing of your dog that will help minimise opportunity for allergic reactions as well as keeping your housekeeping to a minimum. Who wants to be cleaning when we can be snorkelling instead?

Here are a couple of strategies you can take to minimise shedding.

**BRUSHING** is an excellent way to remove shedding hair before it hits the floor. For the best results grooming should be a daily activity. There are grooming gloves that you can find online designed for shedders. The ones I have used have a rubber mat on the palm with little nodules that look like a stumpy bristled brush. The combination of the rubber and the stubby bristles help drag the moulted fur off the dog. *Dogs Who Sail* members who have tried these gloves also testify to their effectiveness.

**SWIMMING** is another wonderful way for our dogs to lose some of that hair. It is important to recognise that some dogs need to have a rinse in fresh water after a swim. Salt water can be coarse and drying for your dog's skin so you may be alleviating one condition and creating another. There is no fixed rule as to which breed will suffer from dry skin, you will have to monitor this yourself.

**BATHING** regularly in fresh water is also helpful. If you wear rubber gloves it helps to remove fallen hair. Maxy came from a lengthy line of champion show dogs and his breeder has only ever bathed the dogs in Eucalyptus Wool Wash. The eucalyptus assists in keeping the coat healthy and shiny and keeps fleas away too. In our world of abundant choices there are many shampoos, conditioners, and doggy hair treatments. Do some research, talk to other dog owners with the same breed as you for recommendations and trial as you go.

**NUTRITION** is considered important for both human and animal health. What we put into our mouths has an impact on our overall wellbeing. What I have learned through my research is that the more digestible ingredients that there are in food, the better condition your dog's coat will be.

Dogs who are fed processed foods that are filled with artificial additives are likely to suffer from skin irritations so be sure to check the ingredients. If there is anything in those foods that you cannot pronounce, or you would not or could not eat by itself, ditch the food.

WHAT IS THE BEST TYPE OF  
DOG TO HAVE ON A BOAT?

## IMPAWTENT QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

- 🐾 Will it bother you if your dog sheds hair throughout the boat?
- 🐾 Do you know if you have any sensitivities to your dog?
- 🐾 Do you have a vacuum cleaner or other cleaning device you can use at anchor to keep your boat as hair free as possible?
- 🐾 What type of brush suits your dog's coat type?
- 🐾 Are you willing to spend time every day brushing your dog or alternatively, cleaning the hair from your boat?
- 🐾 Can you carry onboard or make additional fresh water to wash your dog



MONTY



WHAT IS THE BEST TYPE OF  
DOG TO HAVE ON A BOAT?

IN MEMORY OF RILEY  
THE SPRINGER SPANIEL

## RESCUE DOGS

The World Health Organisation estimates there are a staggering two hundred million stray and abandoned dogs worldwide. It is hard to imagine isn't it? To put that number into perspective it is equivalent to two thirds of the population of the United States. There is no dog lover I have met who is not saddened by such disheartening numbers.

As discussed earlier in this section, puppy behaviour can be shaped with training as they have not yet learned any behaviours or been challenged by fearful situations to cause an aggressive, protective response. There is an assumption that adopted dogs, especially those who have come from a dysfunctional and abusive background, are more likely to have unpredictable behaviours. People looking to bring a dog into their home may not feel that they can provide an abandoned or abused dog the time, care, and patience they may need. There is also a concern that the dog's behaviour could cause harm to someone in their family, especially children.

WHAT IS THE BEST TYPE OF  
DOG TO HAVE ON A BOAT?

The good news is that here in Australia animal shelters are bound by a Code of Practice where the wellbeing of the dog and the prospective owner must be taken into consideration. Animals Australia have advised me that animal protection regulations along with these Codes of Practice are regulated by state legislation.

I interviewed the wonderful staff at Animal Welfare League of Queensland (AWLQ) to gain a better understanding of rescued dogs in their care and how they might go living on a boat.

**DWS: When dogs come into a rescue organisations care, are they vetted for behavioural and health challenges before they are advertised to the public for fostering or adoption?**

AWLQ: All dogs have a behaviour and health assessment completed prior to entering the adoption or foster program. This allows us to find out more about the dog to match them with suitable homes.

**DWS: How long are the dogs in the organisations' care before determining behaviour or health challenges?**

AWLQ: This can vary. Some dogs are social and in good health so after the health/behaviour assessments and desexing they can go straight into the adoption program. Other dogs may need more time and require a behaviour plan or veterinary treatments over several weeks or months before they are ready to be adopted.

**DWS: Is there any veterinary assistance for dogs before being fostered or adopted such as microchipping, vaccinations, desexing, basic training?**

AWLQ: All dogs are microchipped and desexed prior to adoption. Basic training is done if needed, but this does need to continue in the home.

**DWS: If someone adopted a dog from a reputable rescue organisation and found the dog was having trouble adjusting to their new life, could the owner seek assistance from the rescue organisation to help further transition the dog?**

AWLQ: Most animal rehoming organisations are happy to assist owners with settling in their new pet and are keen to find out how they are going. Assistance may be in the form of behaviour or training advice or referral to a vet or trainer to assist further.

WHAT IS THE BEST TYPE OF  
DOG TO HAVE ON A BOAT?

**DWS: Do rescue organisations work with potential owners to gain an understanding of the owner's lifestyle and capabilities to ensure the dog is a suitable fit?**

AWLQ: All rehoming organisations want to match pets to suitable homes. By talking to potential owners about their lifestyle, home, previous pets and what is important to them we can recommend a dog we think will fit into their life and find a dog a loving home.

**DWS: Would you have any advice for Dogs Who Sail members who might be considering a rescue dog on a boat? Can they foster a dog to see how the dog adapts to life on a boat before committing to adoption?**

AWLQ: Most rehoming organisations have a foster option or a settling in period which allows you to return the dog if it is not working out. Most dogs do not come with a history of being on a boat, but many learn to enjoy being on a boat with their owner if they find their initial experiences positive. Dogs who enjoy water and car travel might be more inclined to like being on a boat. Go slow, taking your dog onto the boat for short periods without going anywhere is a safe way to let them get used to boat life.

A rescue dog is certainly an option worth considering. My advice would be to find a reputable organisation and work with them to find your fur-ever sailing companion. Dogs have an enchanting ability to melt our hearts and we can excuse all kinds of behavioural issues when we are intoxicated by their cuteness. Be guided by the carers, trainers, and vets at the shelter. Tell them about yourself and the life you will be offering your canine friend. They know the dogs in their care and will match you and, of course, you will feel the harmony between you both as well.

## THAT'S A WRAP

As dog parents we worry that our furry family members will struggle on board. Believe me, you are not alone in your concerns. I would like to assure you at this point that of the thousands of dogs I have met through *Dogs Who Sail* I have only ever known a handful of them who could not adjust to boating and, in all cases, it was the boat plans that were re-evaluated, not surrendering the dog.

I hope I have not concerned you by offering up some worst-case scenarios. The intention of this chapter is to ensure you have considered every circumstance before introducing your dog to a boat. The last thing I want for you or your dog, is to find yourself rehoming your beloved furry family member because they were not suited to your dream of sailing.

I did consider reviewing specific breeds in this chapter for the purpose of helping you find the most suitable type of dog for your boating adventures but to do so could potentially be misleading as we make too many assumptions. To reaffirm the opening sentence of this section - What is the best type of dog to join you on a sailing boat? I have only one answer for you and that is, the dog that you love!



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