

A Guide to the Bulldog Standard

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Prior to 1835 when bull baiting was outlawed there was no need for written standards as the function of the dog was the proof of the form. After 1835 the Bulldog lost popularity and would have perhaps become extinct except for the efforts of a few Bulldog fanciers and the advent of dog shows. With dog shows came the need for a breed standard.

The first written Bulldog Standard we have on record is the *Philo-Kuon* standard (in Great Britain) from 1865. *The Bulldog Club Incorporated* (England) wrote their own standard in 1875. This English standard was used by the *Bulldog Club of America* from the club's 1890 origin until our Official Standard for the Bulldog was written and adapted in 1896. This original BCA standard has had been changed only three times. In 1914 Dudley nose was added as a disqualification. In 1976 "Dudley" was changed to "liver colored". and finally in 1990 The Standard was reformatted at the request of the American Kennel Club but no wording was changed. I mention this lineage of over one hundred years to refresh you with our standard's history. In this past century there have been many attempts to change or modernize our Standard. This guide is not intended to use word or illustration to change the Standard of Excellence which has served our breed so well. We should keep each word, punctuation, and italics as is printed in the standard.

The objective of this guide is not to picture a particular dog but to clarify the meaning of the more difficult passages in the Bulldog Standard, to allow the judge or breeder to form their own educated opinion. This guide is to assist exhibitors and breeders who are attempting to learn the points of the breed and improve their breeding program to better produce dogs which conform to the standard, and particularly for judges who wish to learn to adjudicate this breed with a historical perspective of the standard.

I recommend you refer to *The Complete Dog Book's* Glossary of Terms. This will include standard canine terminology for the novice. *The Philo-Kuon Standard of the British Bulldog* which was the original Bulldog standard will give historical perspective to the development of the present Bulldog Standard. The novice and new judge will find terms or figures of speech which, although not used in our standard, are in common use with Bulldoggers. Standard canine terminology such as "stop" is defined somewhat differently in the American Kennel Club's *The Complete Dog Book* and the *Philo-Kuon Standard of the British Bulldog*. I do not attempt to share my opinion on these differences but to only provide sufficient information so the students of the breed can form their own considered personal opinion. Another recommended reference is *The Perfect Bulldog in word and Picture* by J. Hay Hutchison. This 1908 guide was reprinted by *The Bulldog Club Inc.* in 1977 and is available from them as a service to Bulldoggers world wide.

Keeping these goals in mind I will address the areas of our standard which I feel can use some clarification. ***Comments and clarification will be typed in this bold italic print*** and should not be confused with the words of the standard.



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Official Standard for the BULLDOG

General Appearance - The perfect Bulldog must be of medium size and smooth coat; with heavy, thick-set, low-slung, body, massive short-faced head, wide shoulders and sturdy limbs. *This must is the first of three musts in our standard. There are sixty one properties which the standard says a Bulldog should have, three which it may have, and three which a Bulldog must have.* The general appearance and attitude should suggest great stability, vigor and strength. The disposition should be equable and kind, resolute and courageous (not vicious or aggressive), and demeanor should be pacific and dignified. These attributes should be countenanced by the expression and behavior.

Size, Proportion, Symmetry - *Size*-The size for mature dogs is about 50 pounds; for mature bitches about 40 pounds. *Proportion*-The circumference of the skull in front of the ears should measure at least the height of the dog at the shoulders. *Symmetry*-The "points" should be well distributed and bear good relation one to the other, no feature being in such prominence from either excess or lack of quality that the animal appears deformed or ill-proportioned. *Size. Balance is most important but size is not to be discounted. Many dogs being shown are of much greater size than called for in the standard. Proportion and Symmetry combine for a value of five percent of the standard. The listed measurement of skull circumference should be made on a moderate dog to serve as a guide as to "excessive prominence". This breed should not be "ill-proportioned" nor overdone.*

Influence of Sex - In comparison of specimens of different sex, due consideration should be made in favor of the bitches, which do not bear the characteristics of the breed to the same degree of perfection as do the dogs. *With such a masculine breed it is easy to overlook the bitches. As with any breed, there should be a feminine "softness" in the bitches. Bitches should be smaller and not as heavy in bone nor so large in skull as the dogs. Give particular attention to the fact that the standard finds it necessary to emphasize this point.*

Head - Eyes and Eyelids - The eyes, seen from the front, should be situated low down in the skull, as far from the ears as possible, and their corners should be in a straight line at right angles with the stop. They should be quite in front of the head, as wide apart as possible, provided their outer corners are within the outline of the cheeks when viewed from the front. They should be quite round in form, of moderate size, neither sunken nor bulging, and in color should be very dark. *The wording of the standard for the eye shape is "quite round in form". This is not "a more almond look" as used in some references. Almond-shaped is used in the to describe the eyes of the Chow Chow, Chinese Shar-Pei, Finnish Spitz, and Keeshond. Please do not compare the Bulldog eye to any of these breeds. The Bulldog eye is not as "round" as the Boston Terrier or Japanese Chin nor "globular" as the Pug. Please understand "quite round in form" to mean "almost round" or "rounded".* The lids should cover the white of the eyeball, when the dog is looking directly foreword, and the lid should show no "haw." **Ears** - The ears should be set high in the head, the front inner edge of each ear joining the outline of the skull at the top back corner of the skull, so as to place them as wide apart, and as high,

completely overhanging the lower jaw at each side. They join the underlip in front and almost or quite cover the teeth, which are scarcely noticeable when the mouth is closed. *A fully "buttoned up" mouth is ideal, but teeth which are "scarcely noticeable" are also correct. In hot or stressful conditions one should not penalize a panting dog nor require the exhibitor to hold the mouth closed beyond the momentary closing to allow the judge to see this feature.* **Bite - Jaws** - The jaws should be massive, very broad, square and "undershot," the lower jaw projecting considerably in front of the upper jaw and turning up. **Teeth** - The teeth should be large and strong, with the six small teeth in front, between the canines, in an even, level row.

Neck, Topline, Body - Neck - The neck should be short, very thick, deep and strong and well arched at the back. *This "short" does not mean "no neck". A correct neck is short but with enough length to create an arch.* **Topline** - There should be a slight fall in the back, close behind the shoulders (its lowest part), whence the spine should rise to the loin (the top of which should be higher than the top of the shoulders), thence curving again more suddenly to the tail, forming an arch (a very distinctive feature of the breed), termed "roach back" or, more correctly, "wheel back". *This distinctive topline is difficult to achieve. A "roach" or "wheel" which is too forward on the back is a "camel back". An excessive dip or "sway back" is equally incorrect. A level topline or "straight back" sought by most breeds is also a fault. The correct "wheel" is a beautiful graceful round curve over the loin with the tail set-on such that it is not seen from the dogs front when looking over the top of the head. Breeder judges often ask exhibitors face the dog toward the center of the ring. After the judge examines the front the handlers are asked to move to the front of their exhibit. This allows a comparison of topline of the class from a side view.* **Body** - The brisket and body should be very capacious, with full sides, well-rounded ribs and very deep from the shoulders down to its lowest part, where it joins the chest. It should be well let down between the shoulder and forelegs, giving the dog a broad, low, short-legged appearance. *This is not a description of loose shoulders nor an excessively low dog. The stability and strength required by the Bulldog's original function of bull-baiting is not a loose shouldered dog nor too low stationed to be agile.* **Chest** - The chest should be very broad, deep and full. *When viewed from the side there should also be a prominent forechest.* **Underline** - The body should be well ribbed up behind with the belly tucked up and not rotund. **Back and Loin** - The back should be short and strong, very broad at the shoulders, and comparatively narrow at the loins. *Breeders refer to this as a "pear-shaped" body and is best viewed from behind the dog looking down from the top.* **Tail** - The tail **may** be either straight or "screwed" (but never curved or curly), and in any case must be short, hung low, with decided downward carriage, thick root and fine tip. If straight, the tail should be cylindrical and of uniform taper. If "screwed," the bends or kinks should be well defined, and they **may** be abrupt and even knotty, but no portion of the member should be elevated above the base or root. *This is the second "must" in the standard. A common fault today is a diminishing length of tail. Tails which appear to be absent are "screwed", kinked, or knotted in an indentation in the body. Although this can be within the standard's description such a tail can be difficult to clean and the source of infection. Although not commonly seen today, the straight tail with*



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sufficient length to cover the anus fits within the standard is often a favorite of knowledgeable breeders.

Forequarters - Shoulders - The shoulders should be muscular, very heavy, widespread and slanting outward, giving stability and great power. **Forelegs** - The forelegs should be short, very stout, straight and muscular, set wide apart, with well developed calves, presenting a bowed outline, but the bones of the leg should not be curved or bandy, nor feet brought too close together. *This description of the front is complete in detail. The straight bone can be seen from the front view. Any bow to the leg should be muscular and seen only at the outer edge of the leg. The straight bone can be seen at the inside of the legs.* **Elbows** - The elbows should be low and stand well out and loose from the body. *This is not to be confused with "loose shouldered". Novice exhibitors often set the front too wide in an attempt to show the wide front. In doing so they create the appearance of a shallow chest and an "A-framed" appearance. The foreleg should be straight from the front and the side.* **Feet** - The feet should be moderate in size, compact and firmly set. Toes compact, well split up, with high knuckles and very short stubby nails. The front feet may be straight or slightly out-turn. *Splayed feet and weak pasterns are a detriment to the well-being of a breed with this massive heavy front. Please note that a slight out-turn of the front is also correct.*

Hindquarters - Legs - The hind legs should be strong and muscular and longer than the forelegs, so as to elevate the loins above the shoulders. Hocks should be slightly bent and well let down, so as to give length and strength from the loins to the hock. *This is not as straight as a Chow-Chow nor as angulated as most dogs. Note "slightly bent".* The lower leg should be short, straight and strong, with the stifles turned slightly outward and away from the body. The hocks are thereby made to approach each other. *This is by definition a slightly "cow hocked" rear.* **Feet** - The feet should be moderate in size, compact and firmly set. Toes compact, well split up, with high knuckles and short stubby nails. The hind feet should be pointed well outward.

Coat and Skin - Coat - The coat should be straight, short, flat, close, of fine texture, smooth and glossy. (No fringe, feather or curl.) **Skin** - The skin should be soft and loose, especially at the head, neck and shoulders. **Wrinkles and Dewlap** - The head and face should be covered with heavy wrinkles, and at the throat, front jaw to chest, there should be two loose pendulous folds, forming the dewlap. *Wrinkles are one of the characteristics of the Bulldog which raises frequent questions. "heavy wrinkles" does not mean heavily wrinkled. Wrinkles are important to give the correct expression but no particular pattern is required; only that the blood from the bull's nose would not pool but drain away from the dogs eyes and nose. Excessively wrinkling or plain-faced with little wrinkling are both incorrect.*

Color of Coat - The color of coat should be uniform, pure of its kind and brilliant. The various colors found in the breed are to be preferred in the following order: (1) red brindle, (2) all other brindles, (3) solid white, (4) solid red, fawn or fallow, (5) piebald, (6) inferior qualities of all of the foregoing. *Note: A perfect piebald is preferable to a muddy*

Scale of Points

General Properties

Proportion and symmetry	5	
Attitude	3	
Expression	2	
Gait	3	
Size	3	
Coat	2	
Color of Coat	4	22

Head

Skull	5	
Cheeks	2	
Stop	4	
Eyes and Eyelids	3	
Ears	5	
Wrinkle	5	
Nose	6	
Chops	2	
Jaws	5	
Teeth	2	39

Body, Legs, etc.

Neck	3	
Dewlap	2	
Shoulders	5	
Chest	3	
Ribs	3	
Brisket	2	
Belly	2	
Back	5	
Forelegs and Elbows	4	
Hind legs	3	
Feet	3	
Tail	4	39
<u>Total</u>		100

DISQUALIFICATION

Brown or liver-colored nose.

Please do not disregard our "Scale of points". One is not expected to be a human calculator tabulating each quality, but rather to use the "points" assigned to each feature to determine relative value of each attribute. This may be of particular note as many of the qualities most important in other breeds have less value with the Bulldog. (i.e. Gait in the Bulldog is worth 3 points while it is worth 10 points for Dalmatian and Boston Terrier.) This does not indicate that "Gait" is not important in our standard (remember the "musts") but is only an indication that pre-conceived opinions may not be in accordance with our Standard of Excellence. Also note the head and body both total a possible 39 points. While it is true that the head features are assigned higher individual points, the total dog must be evaluated.

brindle or defective solid color. Solid black is very undesirable, but not so objectionable if occurring in a moderate degree in piebald patches. The brindles to be perfect should have a fine, even and equal distribution of the composite colors. In brindles and solid colors a small white patch on the chest is not to be considered detrimental. In piebalds the color patches should be of pure color and symmetrically distributed. *Most bulldoggers consider structure, type, and soundness more significant than the color of coat but the order of preference should not be ignored. Flashy piebalds are often more popular than a solid red brindle or solid color preferred by the standard. Black is clearly undesirable, but may be seen on a head or muzzle in small quantity without excessive penalty.*

Gait - The style and carriage are peculiar, his gait being a loose-jointed, shuffling, sidewise motion, giving the characteristic "roll." The action must, however, be unrestrained, free and vigorous. *These two sentences cause hours of discussion concerning this breed. There many things these words do NOT say. "Loose-jointed" is NOT loose shoulders nor "out" at the elbows. "Shuffling" does mean the feet scarcely clear the ground. "Sidewise motion" is NOT "sidewinding", but refers to the "characteristic roll". This roll is caused by the geometry of the structure. Remember the hind legs are longer than the forelegs. This causes an interesting problem if the dog is to have an even reach and drive. The strong short forelegs which are wide and powerful, should reach true to the front. The pivot point of the strong muscular hind legs is higher than the front shoulders and the pelvis is narrower than the shoulders. The geometric imbalance of this unique structure is accommodated by the "characteristic roll". Despite the heavy bone and muscular structure do not ignore this third "must" which is the requirement for "unrestrained, free and vigorous" action.*

Temperament - The disposition should be equable and kind, resolute and courageous (not vicious or aggressive), and demeanor should be pacific and dignified. These attributes should be countenanced by the expression and behavior.

and as far from the eyes as possible. *The ear set described is neither on top of the skull nor on the sides of the skull but rather on the top corner.* In size they should be small and thin. The shape termed "rose ear" is the most desirable. The rose ear folds inward at its back lower edge, the upper front edge curving over, outward and backward, showing the inside of the burr. (The ears should not be carried erect or prick-eared or buttoned and should never be cropped.) *Skull* - The skull should be very large, and in circumference, in front of the ears, should measure at least the height of the dog at the shoulders. *It is worth taking this measurement on a number of dogs to establish a reasonable picture of this head. Many require the head to be much larger than the standard's requirements to the detriment of balance and symmetry.* Viewed from the front it should appear very high from the corner of the lower jaw to the apex of the skull, and also very broad and square. *Do not overlook the "very high from the corner of the lower jaw to the apex of the skull". The term "brick shaped head" has been in use with Bulldoggers for years. The "very broad and square" does not mean a round head in a square box; rather, very broad with a squared appearance.* Viewed at the side, the head should appear very high, and very short from the point of nose to the occiput. *"Very short from the point of nose to the occiput" is a vertical measurement rather than horizontal. The correct shape and "lay-back" of the skull requires length between the point of nose and the occiput in the horizontal plane.* The forehead should be flat (not rounded or domed), neither too prominent nor overhanging the face. *Cheeks* - The cheeks should be well rounded, protruding sideways and outward beyond the eyes. *Stop* - The temples or frontal bones should be very well defined, broad, square and high, causing a hollow or groove between the eyes. This indentation, or stop, should be both broad and deep and extend up the middle of the forehead, dividing the head vertically, being traceable to the top of the skull. *The Philo-Kuon Standard in paragraph No. 1 states ... "and deeply sunken between the eyes which indentation is termed "the stop." This "stop" or groove should extend some distance up the head." The Complete Dog Book definition - "Stop": The step up from muzzle to back skull; indentation between the eyes where the cranium and nasal bones meet." I only mention this difference for the students of other breeds to consider when studying the meaning of "stop" in this standard.* *Face and Muzzle* - The face, measured from the front of the cheekbone to the tip of the nose, should be extremely short, the muzzle being very short, broad, turned upward and very deep from the corner of the eye to the corner of the mouth. *Nose* - The nose should be large, broad and black, its tip set back deeply between the eyes. The distance between the bottom of the stop, between the eyes, to the tip of the nose should be as short as possible and not exceed the length from the tip of nose to the edge of underlip. The nostrils should be wide, large and black, with a well defined line between them. Any nose other than black is objectionable and a brown or liver-colored nose shall *disqualify.* *The Scale of points assigns more points (6) to the nose than any other feature of the Bulldog. This is first a health consideration. As a brachycephalic breed consideration should be given to the ability to breathe. This consideration should include size of nostrils and entire airway. The dog grasping a bulls nose could not loosen his hold for breathing. Labored breathing should be considered when evaluating the "pacific and dignified" demeanor but do not mistake panting from heat or excitement as breathing distress.* *Lips* - The chops or "fews" should be thick, broad, pendant and very deep,