A Checklist For The New Shih Tzu Owner: Getting and Caring for Your Dog

By Beverly Young “The Shit Tzu Gal”
About The Author

Beverly Young (“The Shih Tzu Gal”) has been a lover of Shih Tzu for many years.

Her goal is to spread joy to the world by giving Shih Tzu owners (and future Shih Tzu owners) the absolute best information in the world on all things Shih Tzu.

She is also the author of the best-selling book, The Ultimate Guide For New Shih Tzu Owners as well as many other Shih Tzu specific books and programs available through her website, ShihTzuWeb.com.
# Table of Contents

- History of the Shih Tzu ................................................................. 4
- Personality .................................................................................. 4
- Health Issues and Requirements ............................................... 5
- Feeding and Nutrition ................................................................. 6
- Training Your Shih Tzu ............................................................... 7
- Grooming Needs of the Shih Tzu ................................................ 8
- Questions to Ask a Prospective Breeder ..................................... 9
The Shih Tzu is a great little dog for any type of family dynamic, whether you are alone, a couple, have children or a senior looking for a special canine companion. It has an extraordinary type of temperament; outgoing, friendly and trusting. It is totally loyal to its owners, entering your heart with its cute, big bold eyes, fluffy body and happy, affectionate disposition. If you have decided to bring a Shih Tzu into your life, home and family, you want to do what is best for the health and well-being of this exceptional little canine. Your decision may depend on the dog’s history, health issues and grooming requirements as listed below.

**History of the Shih Tzu**

If you bring a Shih Tzu into your home, it may present itself as the queen or king of the castle, since these dogs were raised in royalty throughout the Ming Dynasty.

The Shih Tzu name translates to mean “Lion Dog” because of its lion-like features around its muzzle. They were revered by the Buddhists and raised in palaces and property of the royal court in China. In those days, only the people of royalty were allowed to own a Shih Tzu.

Noble women used to carry these little dogs inside their robes and place them at their feet in bed because of their ability to generate heat. They were known as natural bed warmers.

The dogs were often given as gifts and ended up as treasures for the English and Dutch nobility in the 1930s, eventually making their way to the Americas. Their popularity has escalated quickly by the 1960s and is still known as great, natural bed warmers to this day. Take a bow to your little canine royal companion and enjoy the lap of luxury they provide; in your lap, of course!

**Personality**

Although your Shih Tzu is considered a “toy” breed, it is definitely big on personality and charm. This sweet canine is among the ranks of the top ten most popular dog breeds in the country. Its ranking greatly comes from its loveable, playful and calm nature.
However, it can also have a bit of a stubborn streak at times but their need to give affection, love and loyalty far outweighs any obstinate behaviors.

The Shih Tzu is a solid little dog that loves to play with its humans, snuggle in a lap and carry out its role as the home’s “royal” bed warmer.

They are friendly with everyone, including strangers after being properly trained and socialized. These little dogs are very intelligent and easy to train, even with its willful demeanor, as long as you are patient and consistent. The Shih Tzu is one of the most favored small family dogs and also gets along well with other pets in a home.

**Health Issues and Requirements**

When you get a dog, you want to ensure its health and well-being. The last thing you want to do is suffer through illness and disease with a beloved pet.

Generally, if you “adopt” from a highly-reputable dog breeder, your Shih Tzu will be in good physical health. Knowing the possible health issues and care of your Shih Tzu can help to provide a long and loving life for your pet.

Although there are possible health issues that a Shih Tzu can be prone to, it does not mean that your pet will be affected. These facts are just for informational purposes so that you can be an optimum educated pet parent. Shih Tzu’s can be prone to:

- Brachycephalic syndrome or difficulty breathing and air flow in the upper respiratory tract.
- Keratoconjunctivitis sicca or dry eye that can cause discharge.
- Intervertebral disc disease, which is a grave neurological condition.
Distichiasis is a rare condition or disorder that presents abnormal hair growth on the eyelids.

There may be other concerns with the eyes and ears, renal dysplasia, oral hygiene, bone and joint disorders, heat exhaustion and hypothyroidism.

To provide your pet with the best health, consider these tips:

- Establish a close relationship with your personal veterinarian because this collaboration will provide for a happy healthy pet.
- Visit with your vet at least once annually to guarantee your pet’s health through a physical examination and immunizations.
- Each spring it is important to have your dog tested for heartworm so that you can begin or continue a monthly heartworm preventative plan.
- Exercise your Shih Tzu daily, at least with daily walks and a little playtime interaction.
- Feed your dog a high-protein enriched diet, at the required portions to avoid obesity.
- Brush, brush, brush! You must brush your dog’s teeth weekly if not daily to avoid oral disease and conditions. Avoiding good oral hygiene can lead to tooth loss and gum disease. As your dog ages, you will also want to have your vet professionally clean the teeth annually. Most pet owners are not aware of the dangers of oral diseases; when bacteria build up around the gum line and gets into the blood stream, it can become fatal.
- Brush and comb your pet’s coat daily, especially if you chose to keep it in a long length. Have your dog groomed by a professional at least once every 6 to 8 weeks.

Feeding and Nutrition

The Shih Tzu is not a big eater so don’t be alarmed if your dog is a bit finicky. Remember
its roots! Your royal canine may be expecting more than just a tasty kibble.

However, you never want to give your pet any people foods or table scraps. That includes keeping all these types of goodies out of reach, including the trash bin that should be the securely locked variety.

One of the best options is an all-natural holistic type food. When looking for a healthy diet for your dog, you need to read labels. The advertising of foods and diets are so glorified that you think your dog is getting the best nutrition until you read the back of the bag and notice all the by-products, grains and fillers listed as the main ingredients.

Your best choice is a food that lists a real meat ingredient as the number one component in the food. A good diet will show a specific meat as chicken, herring, lamb, salmon, beef, turkey, chicken meal or lamb meal.

After a healthy protein, look for whole grains such as brown rice, barley and oatmeal. Avoid corn and wheat and other grains. Fresh, pesticide-free fruits and vegetables are also important, and some good choices are sweet potatoes, peas, blueberries, carrots, tomatoes and apples.

To maintain your Shih Tzu’s proper organ function, metabolism along with healthy skin and shiny coat, good fats and oils like omega 3 and 6 fatty acids are a good source of nutrition. Fish and olive oils are good options.

If you choose a holistic dog food, you can ensure it is preservative-free and provided with antioxidants and vitamins C, E, and A. Some foods include a yogurt, minerals and healthy enzymes. Again, you must read labels and speak with your veterinarian to be educated on the best diet for your Shih Tzu.

When feeding your dog, keep in mind that the Shih Tzu has a short nose and would benefit more from a shallow food and water dish. Stainless steel is the best option and should be cleaned regularly to avoid germs and bacteria.

**Training Your Shih Tzu**

Your new Shih Tzu will require some basic obedience training and socialization when you first bring it into your home and family. These are very intelligent dogs that are
easy to please; heeding well to training sessions. It is beneficial so that you have a well-mannered member of the family.

You may need to engage your pet in some professional training sessions. When doing so, you are also allowing your pet to become socialized as it interacts with other people and dogs. This can ensure that your pet will do well with other people in your life and pets within the home.

Housetraining can be the most difficult but not impossible task when owning a Shih Tzu. This is because of their stubborn but playful nature. “I’d rather play now, thank you!” Just be patient and consistent in the method you choose to housebreak your dog.

- One of the best methods is to crate train your pet. Choose a crate that is just large enough for your dog to sleep in; most dogs will not soil where they sleep.

- Keep your Shih Tzu in the crate when you are gone for the day, at night and at any time you are not monitoring its behavior.

- Any time you take that dog out of the crate, put it on a leash and walk it outside to the designated potty area.

- Choose simple words like, “go potty” or “go poo” plus its name and when the dog does as expected, give a little treat and a lot of praise.

- Follow a schedule of taking your dog outside; for example, first thing each morning and before bedtime, when you return home from work or errands, shortly after meals and when in the middle of extended play time. If you notice your dog stop playing and looking around or getting restless, it is time to go out.

- An additional tip that may help your dog to tell you it wants to go out; tie a long string or ribbon to the doorknob where you do exit and put a bell at the end. Each time you take the dog outside, help it to paw at the bell and eventually your dog will ring that bell when it wants to go out. It may turn into a game for a while but be persistent and he or she will get the message.

Grooming Needs of the Shih Tzu

Grooming is extremely important in caring for your Shih
Tzu. Most often, you will need to get the dog professionally groomed at least every three months.

When in the show ring, the Shih Tzu is kept in a long natural coat and a topknot tied on top of the head. But to keep this type of style, you must comb and brush your dog every single day, sometimes several times a day. This is usually not the option for most pet owners.

For easier care of your Shih Tzu, it is best to get a nice haircut on your pet that is simple to brush and comb each week. When it gets too long, it is time for a groomer visit before the coat becomes matted and painful for the dog.

When you visit your groomer, your dog will also get the nails trimmed, ears cleaned and you can opt to have the teeth cleaned.

In between regular grooming you do want to keep up with routine brushing and combing of the coat to keep it shiny and the skin healthy. Check the ears and clean them out with cotton balls.

If you detect an odor, consult with your veterinarian because an odor usually indicates some type of ear infection. The Shih Tzu can be prone to them.

You may need to also trim the nails if they start clicking on the floor when walking. Your vet or groomer can demonstrate on proper way to clean the ears, brush the teeth and clip the nails.

These are all tasks that you should undertake in between those professional visits. Nails need to be trimmed and ears cleaned at least once a month and teeth brushed weekly if not daily, which is the best scenario.

**Questions to Ask a Prospective Breeder**

Now that you know a little about this popular, loving family-type dog, you may wonder where to go and what to do to get the healthiest dog. First and foremost, you do not want to go to a pet store to purchase a dog.

Most of these facilities gain their stock of puppies from puppy mills and come most often with many health problems and conditions that will not be visible to the eye. To
find a loving pet that you can have for many years to come, and the Shih Tzu can give you at least 15 to 16 good, happy years, do you research for breeders.

You can contact the Humane Society or the American Shih Tzu Club for recommendations on good, reputable breeders. Once you make a list of prospective breeders, consider the questions to ask such as:

- Ask how long the breeder has been in the business of breeding the Shih Tzu.
- How knowledgeable is the breeder on the breed? Does he or she demonstrate high standards regarding the knowledge of the Shih Tzu?
- Does the breeder have other dog breeds on the premises?
- Is the breeder willing to assist you as a first time adoptee so that you understand the breed?
- Is this breeder involved in showing her/his dogs in shows or other competitions?
- Does the breeder trace and keep records of all health issues with the dogs? Are you provided with a health guarantee and what is it?
- Where are the puppies raised; a home, kennel atmosphere, indoors, outdoors and so forth?
- Are all the puppies evaluated for temperament and does the breeder match you up with the dog who’s temperament best matches your needs?
- How often does the breeder mate each Dam and how many Dams are on the premises?
- How many puppies were in the litter?
- Do you get to see the parents, the sire and the dam of the puppy you are interested in?
- Are the puppies AKC registered?
What other guarantees do you receive when purchasing or adopting a Shih Tzu from the breeder?

Do you get papers on a 3 to 5 generation pedigree to know the history and health of your new dog?

Does the breeder take the puppy to the vet prior to adoption and also advise you to visit your own vet when returning home? This shows good faith that the breeder is honest and concerned about the health of the dog.

Besides a health record, are you provided with information on feeding, grooming, housebreaking and training your new family member? This also shows good faith, concern and knowledge of the breed, helping you as a new owner of a Shih Tzu dog.

Will the breeder willingly take the dog back for any reason if you could not keep it? What are the stipulations regarding a return?

Is this breeder a member of the American Shih Tzu Club and other local Shih Tzu clubs, abiding by their codes of ethics?

If you are looking for that perfect pet to add to your home, family and life, the Shih Tzu, with all its royal qualities, will provide you years of joy and special companionship. All the efforts you put into finding the perfect family member and providing it years of care, love and attention is rewarded in many ways through the unconditional love of your little furry bundle of charm and elation.
Attention New Shih Tzu Owners:

“Discover Everything You Need To Find And Care For Your New Shih Tzu…”

Introducing…

The Ultimate Guide For New Shih Tzu Owners: Everything You Need To Know To Find And Care For A Happy, Healthy, And Well-Mannered Shih Tzu!

This book has answers to practically EVERY question you could possibly have about finding and caring for a new Shih Tzu. Including detailed information on…

- Finding your perfect Shih Tzu…
- Feeding your Shih Tzu…
- Training your Shih Tzu…
- Keeping your Shih Tzu healthy…
- And MUCH more!

“I read the book, and found it super helpful. Exactly what I needed to know about my Shih Tzu Bruce. All that information packed nicely into one book, and above all, it’s so simple to read.

“I had a ton of questions/worries/concerns about Bruce’s behavior. And this book answered all of them. Brilliant! This is the most comprehensive and informative book on dog breeds I’ve ever seen.

“For me, it was great to have the specific info on why Bruce eats poop, how to keep him from getting fat. Your book literally gave me all the answers to everything I needed. I would gladly recommend your book to anyone who has a shihzu. I would give it a 10 out of 10!”

Tony and Marta Almeida (Hoboken, New Jersey)

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