

SO YOU WANT A SMART DOG . . .

People often choose a dog breed because they've seen it on a list of smartest breeds. But high intelligence may not be the smartest criteria to use if you're choosing a family dog. The up side of these breeds is that they are packed with personality, excited about learning, and show a zest for life.

The down side is that they must have a job to do. Don't have a flock of sheep? Then you may not want a border collie, who probably will substitute your children for woolies to herd. In other words, if you don't find ways for these dogs to channel their boundless physical and mental energy, they'll come up with something on their own.

These are the kinds of dogs who learn to open cabinets and empty your garbage can whenever you answer your phone. They are always alert for opportunities—to take a sandwich off the counter, to bolt out an open door, to open packages left within their reach. Their intelligence and problem-solving ability is exactly what makes them challenging pets.

Don't get me wrong! These are not bad dogs; they are smart dogs! So decide for yourself whether you are mentally agile enough to keep up with this kind of dog and whether you are excited about doing the training you'll need to keep these dogs too busy to find their own fun.

Sad to say, I am not smarter than a Jack Russell Terrier. I love them in class, but they're not the right dog for my home.

Here's my nonscientific top 10 list of commonly seen, busy, bright breeds, listed alphabetically. Think long and hard before choosing one of these dogs for your family.

- #1. Australian Cattle Dog
- #2. Australian Shepherd
- #3. Belgians: Malinois, Tervuren, and Sheepdog
- #4. Border Collie
- #5. Cairn Terrier
- #6. Dalmatian
- #7. Jack Russell Terrier
- #8. Pit Bull Terrier/American Staffordshire Terrier
- #9. Siberian Husky
- #10. Weimaraner