



## Top 10 Reasons NOT to Get a Golden Retriever



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Each year, golden retrievers rank towards the top of nearly every recommended dog list—Best Dogs for Families, Best Dogs to Raise with Children, Smartest Dogs, and even Top Dogs for Landing You a Date! Yet at the same time, **thousands of golden retrievers are abandoned or turned over to local shelters by their owners every year.**

Given this breed's wonderful characteristics, **why are so many homeless?** Well, the same things that make people claim goldens are the perfect family pet also make them a challenge to live with. With over 40 years of breeding, training and owning goldens, I know that **golden retrievers are not the dog for everyone!**

**Before you decide to bring a golden into your family,** please consider the downsides of owning one. To make that easier, I've prepared this list of the top reasons I believe people should NOT get a Golden. If you read this list without batting an eye, then a golden may well be the dog for you but if one or more of these items give you pause, then it is probably best for you to get another breed of dog or even a cat. **No matter how cute a golden puppy is, they quickly grow up to be strong, active dogs that put time, energy, emotional and financial demands on their owners.** If you embrace those needs, the returns are endless but if you resent them, you will not enjoy owning a golden retriever.



**10. Perpetual Puppies.** Golden retrievers are often **slow to mature mentally and many act like puppies throughout their lifetimes.** Although most dog-lovers enjoy puppies, they know how much time and energy pups demand. Aren't we all relieved when our delightful baby puppy finally shows some signs of maturing out of chewing and chasing? Many golden owners expect their golden will outgrow puppy behaviors by six months of age but that is unrealistic.



**During their first few years** goldens present particular challenges for their owners because they are exuberant, powerful, often clumsy animals as they grow into their adult bodies. They require constant monitoring because of their **strong need to chew** and their powerful jaws and teeth. They **need a lot of attention and exercise**, regardless of how busy their owner's day has been. They have an **insatiable desire to play**--with other dogs, cats, children, strangers, and their owners. They love the outdoors but when left outside to their own devices, they may dig or bark incessantly. Sometimes they are immune to scolding while at other times they are overly sensitive and fearful.

Between 24 and 36 months, goldens turn the corner and become adults. However, even with this maturing, **grown-up golden retrievers retain puppy characteristics.** They love to play and want to be close to their owners (in the house is essential, in the same room is better, touching is ideal). Even the most dignified senior golden will occasionally dissolve into silliness.

**If you cannot tolerate two years of puppyhood and lifetime playfulness, or if you are looking for a sedate, dignified pet, DON'T GET A GOLDEN!**

**9. Most--But Not All Goldens--Are Everyone's Friend.** The majority of goldens are gregarious animals; they love everyone--children and adults, family members and strangers. Some people might consider them fickle; **their best friend is the closest person with a tennis ball or cookie in hand**, whether that person is a stranger or their owner. They are drawn to people in need, especially those who are ill or sad. It isn't that they are disloyal, they simply have hearts big enough for many people.

**If you are looking for a one-person dog, DON'T GET A GOLDEN!**

Because most goldens are **overly friendly and not terribly brave**, they fail miserably as protective watchdogs. They may bark and growl defensively, but when it comes down to it, they are more likely to run away or bring an intruder their tennis ball than protect their home or owner.



**If you are looking for a watchdog, DON'T GET A GOLDEN!**

Sadly, there has been a steady decline in the temperaments of some golden retrievers in recent decades. Instead of the self-confident, stable, friendly animal described in dog books, **this minority is fearful, unstable or hyperactive**. Problem goldens inherit some of these traits from their parents and others can be created by poor upbringings. Even if you “just want a pet,” it is important that you get a golden from a reputable breeder who has evaluated her dogs’ temperaments very carefully or from a highly regarded golden retriever rescue that evaluates all dogs they take in.

**If you cannot find an experienced, reputable breeder or rescue organization to help you find a stable, friendly golden, DON'T GET A GOLDEN!**

**8. Obedience Training Is a Must!** Although goldens by nature have a strong desire to please people and are often very intelligent, **they are not born understanding human language or house manners.** Making them into pleasant companions requires regular, consistent training for at least the first year of their lives. Without this training, goldens are likely to steal things off counters, chew treasured items, drag you down the street when on the leash, and play keep-away when off lead.



Furthermore, **goldens tend to be more sensitive** than some other sporting or working dogs so they need clear, gentle but firm training. Training techniques used for other types of dogs may be too harsh for goldens. Yet training that only uses rewards may turn a golden into a spoiled brat.

Few owners have the knowledge to do this training on their own, so they turn to obedience trainers or clubs in their community. Puppy kindergarten classes usually run from \$180-\$350 for six or eight sessions. Follow-on obedience classes cost between \$100 and \$300 for every eight-week session. Thus, essential training for your golden's first year might run upwards of \$600 before you have a nicely obedient dog with which you will enjoy living.

Additional training for hunting, pet-assisted therapy, search and rescue, or dog competitions is even more expensive and requires special training equipment—leashes, collars, jumps, training dummies, whistles and more.

**If you do not have the time, interest and money to train a dog, DON'T GET A GOLDEN!**

**7. Daily Exercise Is Essential.** Golden retrievers were originally created to be hunting dogs, spending their days working fields and ponds in search of gamebirds. Since few of us hunt our dogs daily, **exercising goldens enough can be a challenge.** Although there is a recent trend toward “couch-potato” goldens that need and want little exercise, these dogs are the exception rather than the rule. Most goldens must have hard, consistent exercise daily. This does not mean a stroll around the block but entails running, retrieving, swimming or playing with other dogs for **at least half an hour twice a day for adults.** Younger goldens need a lot more than that!



**Bored golden retrievers with energy to burn are often hyperactive around people and prone to poor manners.** As hunting dogs, goldens have a strong need to put things in their mouths so they are likely to chew things when they get anxious. A bored golden left alone while his owners are at work can do monumental damage to carpets, furniture, and other items. When left outside, many under-exercised goldens express their dissatisfaction by barking or digging for hours.

**Some parents expect that their kids will be in charge of walking the dog.** In 40 years of raising dogs, I have met only a handful of children capable of taking this on for more than a few weeks or months. Furthermore, a one-year old golden will weigh about 65 pounds and will be very strong, bigger and stronger than many children so it may not only be difficult but actually dangerous for your child to walk the dog without you. And despite their best intentions, **most children cannot be responsible for a dog's daily needs.**

**If you cannot fit vigorous, twice-daily exercise into your schedule every day of the year, rain or shine--DON'T GET A GOLDEN!**

**6. Housekeeping Demands or “Yes, Goldens Shed...A Lot!”** Goldens are large, active, hairy dogs that add to their owner’s housekeeping duties. Although the ideal golden coat sheds dirt and burrs, these items usually end up on your floor, bed or carpet. The coat also hides fleas and ticks if you live in an area where these insects are common. As sporting dogs, Goldens are also **naturally attracted to the Great Outdoors**--they love rain, snow, mud, fields, puddles, gook, slime, etc. And, they want to share this fun with their owners so muddy pawprints on your shirt and burrs on your rugs must be expected.

Unfortunately, fewer and fewer goldens have these ideal coats; instead many sport plush show coats that take hours to dry and attract rather than shed dirt and grime. Frequent rinsing, occasional baths and weekly grooming are a requirement for well-kept golden retrievers.



And **yes, golden retrievers shed their lovely, long gold hairs--a lot!** Like Labrador retrievers, goldens shed most heavily twice a year, spring and fall but they shed lightly year-round. With a golden in the house, **you will always have dog hair around**, on rugs, furniture, clothes and even in your food. Golden tails are the perfect size to accidentally knock things off of coffee and end tables with a single sweep.

Despite their passion for playing outdoors, **goldens do not do well as “outdoor” dogs** that do not live in a house with their owners. Golden retrievers have been bred to work closely with human beings, anything less brings out the worst in the breed. Because of their intelligence and strong need for social interactions, goldens confined to a kennel, backyard or chain tend to become hyperactive, noisy, and destructive.

**If you are a fastidious dresser, prefer a spotless house, or want a dog that lives outside--DON'T GET A GOLDEN!**

**5. Goldens are Big Dogs.** Goldens are considered large dogs and their size has crept up in recent years. According to the American Kennel Club's written standard for golden retrievers, males should be around 23 to 24 inches at the shoulder and weigh from 65 to 75 pounds and females should be 21 ½ to 22 ½ inches and weigh 55 to 65 pounds. However, 25-inch, 90-pound dogs are increasingly common.

Goldens also they tend to fill whatever space they are in. The combination of their size, enthusiasm, playfulness and desire to be very close to their owners makes them seem larger than they are. They are usually very happy, so their wagging tails can clear a coffee table in an instant. To enjoy living with a golden, you need uncluttered space indoors and must be able to tolerate a lot of activity in your house.



**If you prefer a calm and quiet household filled with beautiful, fragile items-- DON'T GET A GOLDEN!**

**4. Getting a Golden is a Lifetime Commitment.** Dog ownership, regardless of breed, is not a trial run or experiment; it should be a commitment for the life of the dog. Although very young puppies in shelters typically find homes easily, dogs over four months of age are far less adoptable and senior dogs have little chance of finding a home. No-kill shelters may be on the rise, millions of healthy American dogs are still euthanized every year because they have no home.

It is a myth that purebred dogs who cannot stay with their original family will easily find a new, loving home. Dogs passed from family to family usually end up being abandoned or taken to a pound or shelter. Even golden retrievers face these fates; there are presently over 100 active golden retriever rescue organizations in the United States alone. If you are not sure if you can make a commitment to a golden, contact a rescue organization and volunteer to foster a dog before you purchase one.



**If you are unable to ensure that you can provide a permanent home for a dog's lifetime, DON'T GET A GOLDEN!**

**3. Goldens Aren't Cheap!** Simply put, goldens are not cheap, from beginning to end! A well-bred pet golden retriever puppy from health-certified parents typically costs more than \$1500 while a dog from a reputable rescue organization will be \$400 or more. And this investment is just the beginning.

Like all dogs, golden retrievers require regular health care from a veterinarian. Well-puppy and dog care consists of vaccinations, parasite control (worms, fleas, and ticks) and annual blood work. Because goldens are such active dogs, there are usually additional visits for injuries, cuts and bruises. The breed is also prone to a variety of health problems, ranging from allergies to hip dysplasia to cancer.



Although a good breeder seeks to reduce the risk of these problems, it is not possible to ensure any golden will be free of these diseases. In addition, health care requirements also vary during the life of a dog--puppies and senior citizens require the most care. It is hard to give a good estimate, but you should plan on a minimum of \$700 per year in vet bills, depending upon where you live.

**If you do not want the hassle of vet visits or cannot afford these costs, DON'T GET A GOLDEN!**

New dog owners also need to buy some basic items for their dog's care--food and water bowls, crates, leashes and collars, brushes, shampoos, chew toys, dog beds, and towels. This initial investment costs around \$500 or more. Thereafter, there will be annual costs to feed the dog and replace items. Compared to other dogs of their size, goldens are relatively easy keepers. This means they don't require huge amounts of food once they are full grown. However, they do eat more than smaller dogs. Feeding a premium food to a golden for a year will cost between \$400-800 depending on the type of food and vitamins you use.

A golden needs care, feeding and exercise every day of the year, no matter what--when you are on vacation, when you have a big project at work, when your kids are sick. That means you may need to board your dog with a kennel, hire a pet sitter or use doggy-daycare during the year all of which cost at least \$35 per day or \$500 for a typical vacation.

**If you cannot afford these costs, DON'T GET A GOLDEN!**

**2. The Golden Breed Has Plenty of Health Issues.** Although originally a hearty breed, today's Golden Retrievers are at risk for many genetic and acquired health problems. Like all medium and large breeds, orthopedic diseases such as hip and elbow dysplasia, top the list. However, Golden Retrievers are also prone to cancer, skin allergies, ear infections, hot spots, eye disease, heart disease, epilepsy and hypothyroidism. Some of these problems are simple inconveniences while others can be quite costly to treat or manage, as well as seriously degrading the quality of life for the dog and its family.

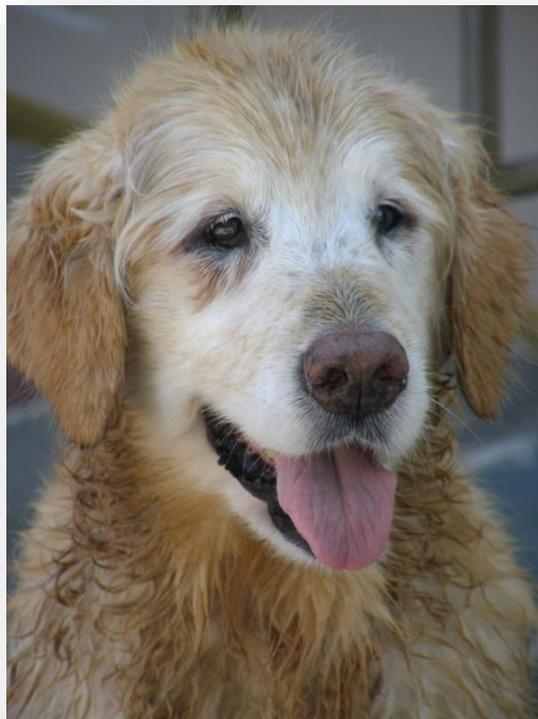


Good breeders do everything in their power to produce healthy Golden Retrievers but even breeding two healthy parents from families of healthy dogs does not assure you that your puppy will not develop one or more of these diseases. However, breeding for health does stack the odds in the puppy's favor, reducing the likelihood of him developing a serious disease. A top breeder will inform you of the health risks present in their dogs' pedigrees and will keep you abreast of health issues that arise in parents and siblings.

Good rescue organizations have incoming Golden Retrievers carefully examined by a veterinarian to assess the dog's health. Some have the financial wherewithal to treat the dog prior to placing it in a new home but all will provide new owners with as much medical information and history as possible. This enables owners to make a careful decision as to whether they have the time, money and energy to deal with the dog's health issues.

**If you cannot accept the risk of health problems in your dog and cannot go to a reputable breeder or rescue organization, DON'T GET A GOLDEN!**

**1. They Don't Live Long Enough.** The number one reason not get a golden is that they simply do not live long enough. When I got into goldens in the late 1970s, 12 ½ years was considered their average lifespan. Today, that number is down to 10 ½ years and goldens are in the top 3 breeds of American dogs most likely to get cancer. Although many breeders and the Golden Retriever Club of America are working to reverse this trend, turning it around is not an easy task and may not be possible. Many golden lovers are willing to accept this shortened lifespan and the costs associated with cancer diagnosis and treatment, finding that the gifts their golden gives them are worth it, however long their life. Still, the emotional and financial costs of this recent trend cannot be ignored.



Although no one wants to plan for their dog's death, you must be honest with yourself regarding the realities of owning one--can you both make a lifetime commitment to this animal while still accepting that you will most likely outlive it?

**If you must have a dog that lives a long and healthy life for 13 or more years,  
DON'T GET A GOLDEN!**

**If after reading this report, you are wondering why I wrote it, because in your mind the reasons I have listed are the very reasons that you want a golden retriever, then you are the right person for this breed.** If their flaws don't make you think twice about bringing one (or two or three) into your home, **then you are a golden person.**

Your next step is to find the right golden for you! Despite their popularity, **finding a good quality golden is not as easy as you might expect.** For example, my pet puppy reservation list often requires a 12- to 24-month wait. However, finding the right dog that you will truly enjoy and welcome as a part of your family is worth your effort and time. Most people put a tremendous amount more effort, research and time into buying a car than a dog, despite the fact that a car stays in the garage and does not sleep on your bed or play with your children.

Here are some resources to help you find and raise the best golden for you.

[Gaylan's Golden Retrievers](#)—learn more about goldens and how to find a good one

[Golden Retriever Club of America](#)—information about American goldens

[Golden Retriever Club of Canada](#)—information about Canadian goldens

[The Golden Retriever Club](#)—information about British goldens

[Avidog Associates](#)—Connect with reputable breeders who are committed to producing healthy, stable goldens

[Golden Retriever Rescue](#)—find a rescue golden retriever in the US, Canada and the United Kingdom

[PetFinders](#)—find a golden retriever in need of a home

**If this list of Top 10 Reasons NOT to Get a Golden doesn't bother you in the least, GET A GOLDEN!**