



French Bulldog Breed Standard

Recognized by the AMA in 2015
Revised 12/31/2023

Background: Bulldogs were originally created in England and competed in the sport of bull baiting. The sport lasted more than 700 years but by the 1800's the bloody sport was made illegal and the bulldog's athletic build was no longer needed. A group of breeders developed a smaller, lighter toy bulldog, around 12-25lbs in weight, having either upright or rose ears, round foreheads and short underjaws and a trace of terrier liveliness. These were quite popular with workers in the English midlands, in particular the artisans in the lace-making industry around Nottingham. When the Industrial Revolution closed down many of the small craft shops in England, lace-makers emigrated to the North of France—and they took their little bulldogs with them. The popularity spread from Normandy to Paris where the small bulldogs began to be called Bouledogues Français or as we know them French Bulldogs. They were favorites of ordinary Parisians such as butchers, cafe owners and dealers in the rag trade and became notorious as the favorites of the Parisian streetwalkers. They developed a more uniform breed—a dog with a compact body, straight legs, but without the extreme underjaw of the English Bulldog. Some had the erect “Bat Ears” while others had “Rose” ears. Wealthy Americans traveling in France adored the breed and brought them back to America. Americans preferred dogs with erect ears which was fine with the French breeders as they preferred the rose eared specimens, as did the British breeders. The official American Standard for French Bulldogs was written by the French Bulldog Club of America in 1897. They were the first to only allow “Bat Ears”. At the time this was a widely criticized decision but today the “Bat Ear” is universally recognized as a key element of a true French bulldog.

General Appearance: The French Bulldog has the appearance of an active, intelligent, muscular dog that is powerful. They have heavy bone, a smooth, short coat, and are short and compact in size. They are barrel chested with a the belly tucked up. They are a small dog with the distinctive “Bat Ears”. When comparing sexes the female should be given allowances as they do not bear the breed characters to the same degree as males.

Disqualifications: unilateral or bilateral cryptorchidism

Disposition: The French Bulldog has an affectionate nature and even disposition. They are active, alert, and playful but not unduly boisterous.

Disqualifications: viciousness or extreme shyness

Size: Weight not to exceed 30 pounds

Head: The head is large and square. The skin forms almost symmetrical folds and wrinkles. The top of the skull is flat between the ears with a slightly round forehead. The cheeks are well developed. The French Bulldog has a well-defined stop with a furrow between the eyes that does not extend up on the forehead.

Eyes: The eyes are round, dark and neither sunken or bulging. They are wide set and sit low down on the skull. In lighter colored dogs, lighter colored eyes are acceptable. Neither the haw nor the white of the eyes should be showing when the dog is looking forward. Full pigmented eye rims preferred.

Cosmetic faults: lacking pigmentation
Disqualifications: eyes that are two different colors, crossed eyes, divergent strabismus (wall-eyed)

Muzzle/Bite: The muzzle is broad, deep and well laid back. The muzzle is short but not to affect comfortable breathing. Heavy wrinkles form a soft roll over the nose. There are symmetrical folds of skin that come down the lips. The flews are thick and broad, hanging over the lower jaw at the sides, meeting the underlip in front covering the teeth. The teeth and tongue are never to be seen when the mouth is closed. The correct bite for the French Bulldog is undershot.

Serious faults: teeth or tongue showing when the mouth is closed, any bite other than undershot
Disqualifications: wry mouth

Nose: Black is preferred, except in the case of creams or fawns lighter color is acceptable. The nose is turned up slightly with broad well opened nares. There is a well-defined line between nostrils.

Cosmetic faults: lacking pigmentation

Ears: The only acceptable ear set is Bat Ears. They are broad at the base, elongated, with a round top, set high on the head but not too close together. They are carried erect with the orifice to the front. The pinna/leather of the ear is fine and soft.

Disqualifications: any ear set other than Bat Ears, unilateral or bilateral deafness

Neck: The neck is short, thick, slightly arched, and with loose skin at the throat.

Shoulders: The shoulder blades and upper arms are short and thick and covered with abundant visible musculature.

Chest, Back, Loin, and Body: The chest should be moderately wide, full, and deep. The back should be short in length, strong, broad at the shoulders and narrowing at the loins as to look pear shaped when viewing from over the top. There is a slight fall off behind the shoulders to the loin and the topline is roached. The loin is very short and wide. The body is short, well ribbed and the belly tucked up.
Serious faults: sway back, narrow or shallow chest, lack of tuck up

Hindquarters: : Hind legs are strong and muscular, longer than the forelegs, so as to elevate the loins above the shoulders. Hocks well let down.

Legs: Short, stout, muscular and straight with heavy bone. They are set wide apart in the front.

Feet: The compact feet are round and moderate in size. The toes are well split up and have high knuckles and hard, thick pads. The nails are stubby. The hind feet are slightly longer than the forefeet.

Tail: The tail is either straight or screwed but never curly. It is short, hung low, thick at the root and fine at the tip.

Disqualifications: docked tail, curly tail

Coat: Short, close, smooth to the touch, and glossy.

Color: Brindle, fawn, white, brindle & white or fawn & white (which are termed "pied")

Disqualifications: chocolate/liver, blue, grey/mouse, black or black & tan, or merle

Movement: The gait is unrestrained, free and vigorous. The correct gait is double tracking with reach and drive. Due to the pear shape of the dog the rear legs will track slightly inside of the forelegs. The French bulldog has a slight roll in the rear gate.

Serious faults: paddling

Disqualifications:

-Unilateral or bilateral cryptorchidism

-Viciousness or extreme shyness

-Eyes that are two different colors

-Crossed eyes or Divergent strabismus (wall-eyed)

-Wry mouth

-Any ear set other than Bat Ears

-Unilateral or bilateral deafness

-Docked or Curly tail

-Chocolate/liver, blue, grey/mouse, black or black & tan, or merle

-Albinism

Fault Degrees:

A cosmetic fault is one of a minor nature. In a show or other evaluation, the dog is to be penalized in direct proportion to the degree of the fault. Any fault, which is extreme, should be considered a serious fault and should be penalized appropriately.