



## Is my Dog an Extrovert or an Introvert?

Some dogs are easily distracted by a lot of social dynamics, lose focus with a lot of activity going on around them, and may either get grouchy or choose to leave the area if they become overwhelmed. They tend to need their space and alone time. These dogs are often friendly and social, but they find it difficult to concentrate when they are around busy, high-drive, “social butterfly” dogs. They can play just fine in a group if they are with other dogs who choose to focus on the environmental activity instead of playing with other dogs.

Other dogs prefer to play with others and are just fine in a large group. They do not shut down and become tired after navigating around a group of dogs all day. They seem to have non-stop energy and easily recharge especially with other dogs around.

I began thinking about the specific personality types of extroversion and introversion. These are personality types that are basically determined by where you put your attention and get your energy. Are you more of an extrovert or introvert? What about your dog? While most people (and dogs) fluctuate somewhere in between, many of us clearly lean more in one direction.

Extroverts are energized when surrounded by others. They are inspired by, and at their best in social situations. They are creatures of action who are sociable, excitable and light-hearted.

### **Some common traits of human extroverts include:**

- They find being alone boring and are always looking for new activities to participate in or new people with whom to talk.
- They usually have numerous and broad interests.
- They like to communicate by talking.
- They enjoy being at the center of attention. They often have a wide circle of friends.
- They are often charming, charismatic and described as the ‘life of the party’.
- They like to live in the moment and take risks without thinking everything through.
- They enjoy group work and like to talk out problems with others in order to solve them.
- They look to others and outside sources for ideas and inspiration.
- They are usually very open and like to talk about thoughts and feelings. Because of this, people feel it’s easy to get to know them.

Introverts are energized by being alone and feel drained by being around others. Introverts are often mislabeled as “shy”, but according to the American Psychological Association, shyness is the tendency to feel awkward, worried or tense during social encounters. Introverts do not necessarily feel awkward or tense but feel as if their batteries have been drained after prolonged or “busy” social encounters. Introversion is characterized by a focus on internal thoughts and learning. They are “people of contemplation” who are sensitive, contemplative, modest and calm, and spend a lot of time thinking and reflecting.

### **Some common traits of human introverts include:**

- They are very self-aware.
- They are thoughtful and will ponder things before making a decision.
- They do their best work alone in quiet places since they are easily overstimulated by noise, lights, and action.
- They prefer to choose words carefully and not waste energy on needless chit-chat.
- They enjoy solitude and need this in order to feel energized and 'recharged'.
- They enjoy understanding details and learn well through observation.
- They tend to keep emotions private. Because of this, introverts are often seen as 'aloof'.
- They are often quiet and reserved in large groups or around unfamiliar people.
- They can enjoy social situations with their friends and can be quite outgoing but after social interactions, they may need time to reflect and recharge.
- Busy social situations can make introverts feel overwhelmed or unfocused.

**So how does this play out with dogs?** Because of this difference in personality and learning style, it would be beneficial to know where your dog falls on this scale of introversion vs. extroversion. We then need to consider what your dog's needs are and set them up for success. Extroverted dogs are often able to handle groups of dogs that are a little more populated and dynamic. They often think that these situations are fun and an opportunity for good things to happen. Introverted dogs tend to struggle with higher population and multiple dynamics. They can feel defensive being converged upon or greeted by several dogs at once and they prefer to be in a familiar group of dogs.

With people interaction, extroverted dogs often enjoy people activities such as picnics, parks, outdoor malls, outdoor coffee shops, neighborhood gatherings, etc. They are likely to see these environments as opportunities to make new friends, see new things, and have new experiences. There is an underlying assumption that good things will happen. With introverts, they are often overwhelmed by these environments as the dynamics are too broad and things happen faster than they can process. These environments can be stressful and even fear-provoking as these dogs frequently worry about what is going to happen next and how it will affect them.

As pet owners, we need to consider the needs of our pets over our own social proclivities. We shouldn't place our pets in stressful situations without guiding them and giving them a safe out if and when needed. If your dog is more introverted, either consider not taking them along to these socially dynamic environments or keep them on the periphery of these environments and only stay for a short time. Remember, more often than not if these dogs act out in an unfriendly manner it is not because they are aggressive. It is because they are beyond their skill set. For the social butterflies, socially dynamic environments are often their greatest love, but we mustn't forget training for these dogs. They should still learn to comply with commands from their owners before participating in all the fun. We want well-mannered social butterflies! We don't want people to shy away from their exuberance.