

Things Vizsla Owners Most Wish They Had Known in Advance of Getting Their First Vizsla

(from a poll of VizslaTalk list members)

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That you're never ready for the reality of your first Vizsla, even if you know your breeder's Vizslas and did breed research. Like a kid I guess, having them with you 24 hrs is not the same as babysitting.

That when I rescued that poor fellow from the pet store 40 years ago, it would become a lifelong love affair that spans 3 generations getting stronger every year.

That you never go to the bathroom alone after getting a V. Don't ever expect to sit on the toilet alone again!

And that they will climb all over you or stand on your shoulders, if that is the best way to get where they want.

That Velcro REALLY means Velcro! Not just following you all over the place but literally trying to become one with you or melt into your skin...People truly do not understand the Velcro-ness until you have lived with it...and the more Vizslas you have the more flexible your body needs to be because they ALL want to be with you at the same time....unless they want a dog who will be with you, on you, attached to you and totally in your space 24/7 if possible then a Vizsla might not be for them.....

Yes, even when you tell them they are velcro some really do not understand to what degree the velcro is even when they meet your V's.

Ya can't go anywhere without the Vizsla glued to you!!

That they can become addicting.

That they love the cat litter box - they think they have found the treat container.

We're on our second V, and we've learned to keep the bathroom and office trash cans on the counter (guests wonder what is going on, but oh, well). Also, during puppy stage, the toilet paper is never on the holder, as that is an invitation to decorate the house with streamers. We have to leave the roll on the counter out of reach (because just gnawing on the roll is fun, too, apparently). Our first V got to an entire Costco sized bag of chocolate Halloween candy that was pushed WAYYYY back on the counter... thankfully for her health, but not for our carpet, she threw it all up in about 10 or 12 piles all over the carpet. There were candy bars still in their wrappers covered in chocolate goo. Can't believe she (and we) lived through that one.

We got our first V in 1968 when I was 5 years old. At that time no one had ever heard of the breed let alone seen one. She was given to us because she was the runt of the litter. She immediately took over the house and ruled her humans with the love and affection that only a V can administer. One of my favorite memories of her involves Hershey Kisses. My mother would always keep a bowl of them on the bookshelf in the living room. Many times mom would find wrappers in my sister's room on the floor and in her bed, all nicely opened but not in the garbage can where they belonged. Of course, my sister was blamed for this bad habit... until my mother happened to see our V steal a kiss by using a chair that was 2 1/2 feet away from the bookshelf to reach the shelf where the kisses were. She then watched as our V, Gypsie, then went into my sister's room, jumped up on the bed, and proceeded to use her paws to gently unwrap the kiss (never getting chocolate on her bedspread!). My wife and I now have our own "Gypsie" and she is everything my old V was and more!

I think I lucked out--between a trio of nutbar dobes (including the first one), meeting my first V in puppy class (somehow she managed to break into the cabinet under the sink and was VERY lucky I think, but came to class with a VERY hoarse bark), etc, I was as ready as I could be--then again, my V puppy was NOT the monster (grin) I had braced for.

Of course, that might all just be the selective memory that allows us to get a 2nd puppy.

I never knew that they would lick you clean after you just get out of the shower. We have to close the bathroom door or put her in her kennel while we shower otherwise she tries to hop in with us and will lick us clean while were in the shower. She doesn't seem to care if she gets soap or not (I do however...) I know she doesn't have a lack of water. The water bowl and food bowl is always filled.

Another thing she has a fascination with smelling armpits and licking mine? I had no idea dogs did such a thing. When I had my springer growing up she never did that. I hope since she's a puppy she will outgrow that.

I do love owning a Vizsla... she's such a goofy girl. I love watching her grow and change. She hasn't slept in our bed yet except every now and then at nap time. She goes to her kennel every night before bed so we haven't had the chance to get our bed taken over... I do await the day. At least we already own a king size bed. She gets lots of attention wherever we go.

People love to pet her and adore her and her color, even the vet. And of course she loves the attention right back with the tail going wild at the site of people. She always greets you when you come inside and jumps on your lap the minute you sit down.

I am looking forward to lots of years of joy. She has been such a joy already and we have a long time ahead. I do not think we will own another dog for a couple more years so for now it's just her and the cats but she is a pretty spoiled pup getting all the attention she can manage to get.

That it doesn't matter how big the bed is, two Vizslas take up all the room!!

That they prefer to sleep IN the bed with you, UNDER the covers, preferably splayed out at right angles to you so you effectively have no bed at all. We had to buy a king size bed when we got our second one!

I laughed out loud with this one. We bought a king size bed after contracting multiple vizsla disorder and no, we do not have enough room. They sure do though. Especially Teddy Brewski, under the covers.

We got our first Vizsla when he was 9 mos. old. After about a week we thought we lost him. We looked everywhere for him, thought maybe he escaped somehow. After looking around the house for a while we found him, in our bed, under the covers. We looked in the bedroom several times but never thought of looking under the covers in the bed. Needless to say he moved right in and took over. He is now 13 and still claims ownership of the bed, even though he needs to be helped in most of the time now.

We have a beach house with many frequent visitors and family members, and I can't tell you how many times I have had teenage girls horrified at the sight of their used sanitary pads dragged out into the living room and shredded... and every single time I come home, there is a shredded kleenex on the floor beside every single wastebasket... cold and flu season is a veritable shred-fest!

As for counter surfing, I have had entire sticks of butter vanish... entire loaves of bread, hamburger and hot dog buns disappear, with just the plastic bag found in the yard days later, and just recently an entire chunk of very expensive Emmenthaler cheese just vanished. To take the cake, Sophie has learned to open our pantry door, snatch the peanut butter jar, open it somehow with her front paws and teeth and lick as far down as her tongue will reach. We had to get special locks for the pantry door to keep her out and put a baby gate in front of the kitchen every single time we leave the house. She also learned how to open the freezer drawer and ate an entire key lime pie.... and when she learned to open the refrigerator door and started to forage every time we left the house, we had to devise a lock for that also. She is the single most resourceful dog I have ever had!

Gosh...mine have a full point on WITH the drool! They are WAY too funny, cute and lovable! Molly also does the low whine thru her nose like she is being abused!

Now does anyone have any clues on how to train an old man NOT to walk away leaving the steaks on the counter, the butter out, or the loaf of bread sitting? How can you train the dog if you can't train the human?

I knew very little about the breed when my first V came to live with me... actually "nothing" is a better description! Javaro loved to counter surf and I only discovered this

after considering mental health help. My memory was at issue until I found the plastic bag from a loaf of bread fluttering in the breeze in the backyard! That was my "Ah-haaa" moment with this breed. My current V takes counter surfing to new heights! Takoda is the reason for the TWO locks on the garbage cupboard. We had to fashion a bar lock on the pantry after his degustation of an entire can of Ovaltine in his favorite spot... the living room sofa! His consumption of contraband is legendary but his most expensive no-no is his love of footwear. I believe he favors Old Navy flip flops but Crocs, Nikes, Reeboks and Reefs will do in a pinch! I've lost track of the shoes I've had to replace! But I think the biggest thing I wish I had known before owning a Vizsla is how incredibly and utterly infectious they are. MVD is one condition I hope to "suffer" from in the future.

I'm a first time Vizsla owner and I love my dog like crazy, but truthfully, he's not the right breed for me. I didn't take the phrase "high-energy" seriously enough. I mean, most dogs are high-energy--you get out and play with them or train for a couple of hours a day, 3 or 4 days a week, for about 18 months, and then they become content to lay around the house until you want to go do something.

Not so my red boy. He is on the go from 5:00 am to 10:00 pm, and at this point he's over 2 years old. He takes a few naps during the day but only at times when he's absolutely sure he can't cajole a game of chase, or fetch, or tug, or keep-away, or twister out of anyone in the house. And even then I think he'd rather go bark at the squirrels.

If he doesn't get out of the house for off-leash runs he gets what we call "brain buzz" where it's like there's a vibration set up right behind his eyes and he is whining, crying, jumping, poking... it's like he can't think, can't settle,. He'll get a rawhide or a chew stick, but instead of laying down and working off some energy by just chewing he'll throw it in the air, into the ceiling fan, or over the head of someone who's attention he wants.

He uses his feet like a boxer does; trying to teach this dog to keep all four feet on the floor has so far been impossible. He climbs all over his people and his dog, he bats at objects, pulls things to him or pushes them away, all with his feet. If he's up in the morning it's certain that I can't sleep in. He'll try, quite literally, to roll me out of the bed by jumping on me from the side of the bed, putting his feet on the far side of my body and pulling with an amazing strength.

Strength... the strength that this dog possesses is almost indescribable. He can use the leash to pull me anywhere he wants to be. Trying to walk him sedately into the dog park, or the vet's office, or doggie daycare is just a joke.

Did I mention poking earlier? Bodi pokes. I don't know if this is common to the breed or if it's just my Nutty Buddy, but Bodi pokes. Hard. Most people don't appreciate this. Other dogs definitely don't appreciate it. Doggie play time often goes something like this:

Bodi: circular approach

Vic: circular approach, sniff

Bodi: POKE! Bow <big grin> freeze

Vic: What the heck?!? Did you poke me? Screw you, I'm outta here.

Bodi: Two bounding strides back to Vic's side, POKE! <big grin>

Vic: <growl> What could you possibly be thinking?!? <stares hard at dangerous red lunatic to get point across without any possibility of misunderstanding>

Bodi: Bow, whine, freeze.

Vic: <turns slowly, begins to move away>

Bodi: Bound, bow, bark, POKE!

Vic: Wheel, lunge, bare teeth, go for jugular.

Bodi: Tuck tail (can't give them anything to get a hold of) and RUN! YES! <ecstatic crazed grin> <check on Vic's progress>

Vic: I'm going to kill you! Chase. Chase. Chase. Screw you, at least you're gone now. I'm going to go play with that very sedate Labrador pup.

Bodi: Circles back to escaping Vic, POKE! RUN!

You get the picture. It isn't a pretty picture, but it's what he does. I've never seen a dog so rude to other dogs, and he stayed at the breeder's house until he was 6 months old, so it's not like he didn't get any doggie socialization as a puppy. I fully believe that he knows all of the canine rules, he just chooses to ignore them for his own amusement.

I have been to the best of the best trainers in Oklahoma City to try to get some help with getting Bodi to simply walk on a leash, but it hasn't helped. I've read Clothier and McConnell and Donaldson and Dunbar and Pryor and yes, even Milan--no avail. When I put Bodi on a leash he'll move to the end of it, turn back so that he's facing toward me and go into a routine that I call "Bronco puppy." He bucks, he rears up on his back legs, he pitches forwards with his front paws on the strap of the leash. he slings his head furiously... It is truly a sight to behold and it's brand new to me, but one of the trainers that I've been to said that when she talked to some Vizsla people they immediately recognized the behavior when she used the descriptor "Bronco Puppy." So, I think it's not just Bodi.

I'm afraid I'm coming off very negatively about my boy and I don't want to. I'm crazy about him. When he crawls up on the couch and snuggles up next to me there's nothing in the world like it. When I tell him to go to the truck and he wags from stem to stern it's just sends off waves of palpable happiness that infect everyone around him. Watching him ride his skateboard, or give a quick high-five, or chase a bird is like poetry in motion, those solid well-defined muscles rippling under the red hide. He's beautiful, and he's a great guy, but man... He's work!

That Vizslas can leap on top of furniture as effortlessly as a cat.

I wish someone warned me of the impending MVD [Multiple Vizsla Disorder].

Vizslas are like potato chips - can't have just one!!

Their attraction to kleenex, paper towels, toilet paper, sanitary/incontinence pads, sometimes used, for some sort of retrieval and shredding fest. I wouldn't feel at home without a shredded mess of paper inside or out several times a week.

The second is counter surfing. Nugget, my 10-month-old puppy, has been known to finish breakfast for people if they step away from the table (admittedly stupid if you own a V), and he loves licking the butter! I have to watch that he doesn't retrieve bacon from the pan before, and possibly after, it starts frying.

They also love to stare at you while you eat, often less than a foot away if they can, knowing that you'll possibly give in and share with them.

They are **VERY** demanding of attention from their humans. I assume for some owners it could be considered a nuisance, but thankfully I find it endearing.

Something I wish I had known in the early days of having my first Vizsla is that ALL of the work we put in would pay off (I reckon the landmarks where I could really see the results were about 20 weeks, 7 months & a year). Knowing that information wouldn't have changed what I did - but it would make me feel extra determined to do everything I could to socialize & train the next puppy, and to never feel that I wasn't getting anywhere..

That the manipulation gene effectiveness increases with numbers ~ MVD is a fact and in a multiple household they will/do gang up on you to get you to what they want. After all they ARE the center of your universe.

That Vs tend to have a need to be well socialized for longer periods of time in puppyhood and adolescence, and even beyond that age. My experience is that Vs are not like "short coated Golden Retrievers" or Labs who often, but not always, are well adjusted, happy go lucky, even keeled--even if they are not socialized as pups.

Wish I had known they were smart enough to open kitchen cabinets, unlatch the baby gate, open the refrigerator door AND the freezer door if it is a bottom freezer, remove the lid from the garbage can, lock the bathroom door from the inside, unscrew the lid from the jar of peanut butter, AND be clever enough to wait until you leave the house to do so.

I once witnessed my older girl pick up a mug of hot chocolate one of the kids left on the floor by the handle with her teeth, carry it out to the kitchen, HOLDING HER HEAD SIDEWAYS so it didn't spill, and take it through the doggy door and out into the garage to consume in private...without spilling a drop.

I had no idea when I got my first one that it would start a 25-year obsession....not only in my family but in my sister's family and my next door neighbors AND the neighbors two houses down. Now, my last and oldest girl is living on borrowed time, fighting cancer and heart problems, and I have to contemplate being Vizsla-less for the first time in years, a concept I am just not ready to face.

Patricia McConnell in her The Other End of the Leash seminar talks about how dogs really really don't like ventral "hugging". She said she had never seen a dog initiate or seem to enjoy it the way we do. THEN she came walking in my office during a break at the seminar she was giving at my facility...and there was one of my Vizslas on my lap facing towards me, his legs wrapped around my neck and his head flung over my shoulder (he probably hadn't seen me in 30 minutes!). She looked and didn't say anything. Later, she came back during another break and there was my 6-month-old puppy...on my lap, facing towards me with her front legs wrapped around my neck with her tongue searching out my nose or open mouth or ear. She left again without saying a thing but then reappeared holding a camera. She said, "Well, I can't say never anymore," and snapped our picture. We talked later and I explained that it really isn't unusual for the breed. She thought it to be an absolute hoot.

Most dogs who are capable of doing it seem to counter surf, and most dogs get the zoomies and hang their heads out the window. And although I don't believe it to be exclusive to Vizslas they don't seem to have a grasp of personal space (although they aren't as bad as whippets who truly do like to be worn and really enjoy sleeping in piles) and they really do like the whole ventral thing.

I like it, but I can see where it would be truly annoying for some people...they probably should not get a Vizsla. Maybe a potential Vizsla owner should be asked if they enjoy wearing their dogs.

One other thing i noticed is "jealousy"...only my Vizslas will jump up off the couch to "intrude" if my husband gives me a hug...they insinuate themselves between us...if I sit on his lap, they jump up on his lap also and make sure to get between us...but it doesn't seem to be protective because they won't do it with strangers or people they don't see often....only with family members. I guess they want to make sure that if affection is being dished out, they get their fair share!

I went in to this fully with eyes open, as we have already 'survived' two Weims. Having said that, thinking back to the first Weim, I would say the one thing people need to understand is what a truly "high energy dog" demands in the way of exercise and training. We previously had a Dobie, and figured "how much different can it be? Dobies have lots of energy." We had no idea...

My Nikki pulls the bucking bronco routine every time I put her on leash too, plus trying to chew the leash. But the half hitch was always very effective in keeping her from pulling too hard. Yet she will still do the bucking bronco act just to see if she can get out of it. She's a stubborn little devil.

What I consider the DEFINITE breed traits, and not really TRAINED traits:

- The intelligence levels -- Vizslas can be hard dogs to train for the novice because they are such astute observers and have incredible memory more than

any other breed I've owned
 -The destruction if not exercised both physically AND mentally. I can run my dogs for 2 hours. If they take a 30-60 minute nap, they'd go again. HOWEVER, if I spend 60 minutes at training class, they are done for the night. Vizsla owners who kennel board other dogs can affirm that most of the destruction to their kennels comes from Vizslas, not Rottweilers.

I too had dobes first (still have one) . . . my first Vizsla was on the lower end of the energy scale (for a Vizsla) so more like the dobes, but my youngest Vizsla, holy moly! One time in agility class, a fellow student was watching the red freak in action and commented, "Well, he's probably been cooped up at home all day, right?" My response "Oh no, he's been in daycare since 9 am." The look of awe mixed with a tiny bit of terror was priceless. I think dobes are more sprinters; Vizslas are marathon runners. The other thing to remember for a multi-dog household, is that your Vizsla will probably get along with everyone, but maybe too well. In my case, the addition of Vito has resulted in pretty much non-stop playing.

Do they REALLY have to give you another bath after you just get out of the shower?! Anytime anyone in my family takes a bath or a shower she is right there when they get out, ready to give them another bath with her tongue. I love her bundles but it drives me crazy having her lick me after I get out of the bathroom, and if she has her choice she'd probably jump right in with ya while you're in the shower; heck she already tries to lick it off while you're still in there?! I know it's not because she doesn't have any water... I always keep my water bowl full because we have cats as well.

I do have to say that I wouldn't take back getting her for anything in the world, and starting at puppy stage has been wonderful for us as a family! Although i say a lot of "Shelby, no!" and "Shelby off!" I enjoy every puppy kiss I get and I love having her cuddle with me and put her head on my lap, or I love watching her prance around with her toy (or toilet paper earlier today). Shelby has a fascination with licking my arm pits! i had no idea dogs actually did that... Who would think a four legged creature could bring so much joy?

When I got into the breed as a kid, as a teen & then as an adult, I wish that I and EVERYONE ELSE had understood VERY early & followed through with the ideal of a great camera, for telling our stories in photos & videos as well as how the camera was used. We really missed the boat for realizing the great need in the future for someone to make a deliberate path of photographing dogs/people at Vizsla events from the past. What burns me is movie & point/shoot cameras were right in front of my face, all along, but I never "got it" until the next century.

I got my first Vizsla via rescue to be a buddy for my Vizsla/ridgeback. The rescue person said that I'd need to be careful. These red dogs are addictive and ya can't have just one. Well, they were right!! Since then, I've been lucky to have been owned by 4 more wiggly red dogs, all from rescue, though only 2 at a time.

I have a 5-year-old male who came to me at a year old (I was 18 at the time) and his almost 9 year old mother, who officially became mine almost 2 years ago.

I wish I'd known how creepy they can be. This mostly only applies to my boy. While the girl ignores me until I get out of the shower (then I receive that secondary cleaning), he will sit with his head on the edge, staring at me, the entire time. A few times he's gotten in and napped on my feet, IN THE SHOWER. Baths are the opposite of relaxing, as I have one head on the ledge while the other tries to drink the water, usually with both trying to hug me at various points. One puts a paw up, the other has to put 2 paws up, and a big "no give ME attention" feud starts. He stares at me all the time. I'll be in bed, comfortable (he waits until I'm in and comfortable before getting up), and he jumps up and sits and stares. All I can see in the bit of light coming through the curtains is his outline and his eyes watching me. If I nap during the day, whenever I open my eyes he's looking at me.

Not to mention potential boyfriends. He has scared away just about every one, other than the few that I rejected because they didn't like him. Yes, he HAS to sit between us on the sofa and stare at you. "Cuddling" time is even worse... if I convince him that he can't wedge between us, he will sit on the pillow, directly next to my head, and stare. I'm currently dating a Canadian who owns a rescued V mix and is as dog crazy as I am - well worth the long distance!! While I fly to visit him, he drives and brings his girl, which means he sleeps on the floor and I share the bed with the 3 dogs :)

I wish I'd known about the separation anxiety. Before adding his mother, the boy wouldn't eat for days if I was gone. He would have to be carried outside as he'd refuse to get up and go out. Now I can never go anywhere with just one of them. He has panic attacks, resulting in pooping everywhere. She panics and tries to escape. She can eat a door frame in 20 minutes. Putting them in a large crate (they share it) helps, but when I'm gone for longer periods they both get medication.

I wish I'd known how gentle they are. I have a 3.2lb house rabbit that lives loose with them; she is the alpha. She chases them, steals their bones, bosses them around (she's a bigger riot than the Vs are! she firmly believes she's a dog) and they comply. They are both protective of their food but didn't make a sound when she tried to climb in their bowls. That was a hilarious moment, sad V eyes looking at me while a bunny sits in the bowl, trying to eat the dog food! Up until recently I also had rats who were often kept loose. The older rat was best friends with my boy. Every morning the rat would clean his ears, eyes, and teeth, trim his nails, and check his fur. They made up games to play together that they'd repeatedly play. Sometimes the dog would walk around with the rat sitting on his back. At one point I had a mouse and the dog would sit perfectly still while the mouse crawled around on him. The mouse once started to slip off his muzzle and grabbed firmly onto the dog's nose - being a V, he lifted his head a bit and held perfectly

still while the mouse climbed back onto his face.

They are the same with children. Neither was raised with kids, but they adore them, and seem to know to be calmer. I've had to approach kids in stores and ask if they can pet my dogs because the dogs wanted to say hi. They stand still, their tails low but going crazy, their eyes lit up. A story with that: I used to take them to work with me at the security office of a college. One week a very large group was visiting and kept dropping off the kids (about 70 of them) without chaperones in the rec room in front of the office while the parents went and did other things. Most kids were afraid of the dogs (why do people always assume they're pit bulls?!) and the few that came in to act bad would get low growls. Then 3 younger girls, about 10-years-old, came in. Each day they would sit on the little sofa with the dogs, petting them and giggling. One of the days I'd left the girl at home (she's a trash digger and jumper, so didn't go in every day), so they bought the male an ice cream cone and held it while he gently licked it, just like a person. Talk about a good dog! This led to a large group of the kids standing outside the door, trying to work up the nerve to come in and ask for things they knew they couldn't use, but still afraid of the dog gently eating the strawberry ice cream.

This makes me feel sooooooo good that there are other people out there that love their animals as much as I do and let them sleep under the covers, sit in the double recliner with me, look in the fridge with me, sit with me and on me when using the bathroom. I too had to go from a queen to a king bed just for my dogs. I only have 2 V's and a rescue mutt, but we use the whole bed.

That they are so wonderful, I would have gotten one WAY SOONER!! It has finally gotten to be summer in San Diego. Tonight at 6PM, it was so nice that Savannah and I sat on the loveseat together in the backyard. The air temperature was PERFECT. As I leaned down to kiss her, I thought, "What could be more perfect than this?"

I wish I would have known that the little bundle of ears with the sad eyes (which they placed in my arms) was going to capture my heart in an instant and never let it go.

I wish I had known how wonderful they are and how I can't imagine my life without one. Savannah is my 3rd Vizsla and I have been addicted since 1987. They love to snuggle under the covers, paw me to cover them up in the middle of the night and then how contented they are and sigh with happiness.

That Vizslas are the sweetest most loving animal I have ever had the pleasure to meet.....and I sure wish I had been able to be introduced to them YEARS ago!

Sometimes they are so loving and understanding. I will not ever own any other breed again!

That when you look in their eyes you will see the soul of a great love, a great clown and a

true love of life; that those eyes will take you in, hook, line and sinker and you will not want to get unhooked.

That they will steal your heart like no other dog you have ever had, that you can never imagine your life without one in it and one is often never enough!!!!

No matter how long they may live--it is always too short of a time