

# 10 Reasons Not to Get A Shih Tzu

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I Had a Shih Tzu. It Was Cute Until Reality Kicked In

When I brought home my Shih Tzu, I genuinely thought I had everything under control.

- A small dog? That should be manageable.
- Fluffy coat? Grooming would be fun, right?
- Lap dog? Perfect match for my chill lifestyle.

At least, that is what I thought.

What I did not expect was just how much work this little dog would bring into my life. The constant care, the stubborn attitude, the separation anxiety, and the growing vet bills. At first, I brushed it off like it was just part of having a puppy. But as time passed, it became clear. This was not just a “cute phase.” It was a full-on responsibility I had not really prepared for.

That is when I started digging. I read everything I could, from expert vet articles to real stories from other Shih Tzu owners. And suddenly, everything started to make sense. The struggles I was going through were actually common. I just had no idea until I was already in it.

So here it is. Based on what I lived through and what I learned, these are the **10 reasons not to get a Shih Tzu** unless you are truly ready. This is not just my personal opinion. It is a mix of experience, expert quotes, and real facts that I wish I had known sooner.

They look cute and cuddly, but Shih Tzus are not as easy as they seem. Before you fall for the fluff, here are 10 things I wish I knew before bringing one home.

## 1. That Beautiful Coat Is a Lot More Work Than It Looks

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I knew Shih Tzus had long hair. What I did not realize was how relentless the grooming would be.

If I missed brushing for even a day or two, the tangles would start. And they were not just annoying. They actually hurt my dog because they pulled at his skin.

Dr. Lisa Lippman, a vet from New York, once said,

**“Shih Tzus need daily brushing and professional grooming every few weeks. Without it, their coat mats quickly, leading to skin infections and discomfort.”**

And she was absolutely right. Even after I trimmed his coat into a shorter “puppy cut,” I still had to clean his face every day, wipe away tear stains, trim the hair around his paws, and deal with hair everywhere.

If you love grooming or have a budget to take your dog to a professional every few weeks, great. If not, you are going to get tired quickly.

## 2. Potty Training Was Way Harder Than I Expected

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I knew puppies needed time to learn, but this felt like a never-ending process.

It took me almost nine months to fully house-train my Shih Tzu. Even then, if it rained or if I changed his routine slightly, there would be accidents. And trust me, it gets frustrating.

According to *The Intelligence of Dogs* by [Stanley Coren](#), Shih Tzus are ranked pretty low when it comes to working intelligence. That does not mean they are not smart. It just means they are not very eager to follow instructions. They prefer doing things their own way.

[See also 10 Reasons Why IUL is A Bad Investment](#)

A 2016 survey from Canine Journal also placed them among the top five hardest dogs to potty train. I can definitely back that up.

## 3. Behind the Cute Face Is a Little Boss

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My Shih Tzu looked like a cuddly little angel, but he had a mind of his own.

He was sweet, yes. But also incredibly stubborn. He would only respond to commands if there were treats involved. He would demand attention, then walk off the second he had enough. If I ignored him, he barked nonstop. If I needed him to cooperate, he suddenly lost interest.

Victoria Stilwell, a well-known dog behaviorist, summed it up perfectly, **“Shih Tzus were bred to be adored, not commanded. They love humans but prefer to do things on their own schedule.”**

So if you are hoping for a dog that listens because they respect authority, this breed might frustrate you.

#### **4. Not the Best Match for Families With Toddlers**

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This one really caught me off guard.

I figured a small, soft, teddy bear-like dog would naturally be great with kids. But the reality was different. Shih Tzus are not always patient, especially when it comes to poking, pulling, or loud noises.

Once, my nephew accidentally bumped into my dog, and he growled in warning. It was not aggressive, but it was enough to make us pause.

Veterinary behaviorist Dr. Wailani Sung says,

**“Shih Tzus are better with older children who understand dog boundaries. They may react defensively when overwhelmed.”**

If you have toddlers who are still learning how to handle pets gently, this may not be the ideal breed for your family.

#### **5. They Really Hate Being Left Alone**

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I used to think dogs just napped while we were gone. That was not the case here.

Every time I stepped out for a few hours, I would come home to shredded tissues, scratched doors, and a very anxious dog. It was not boredom. It was full-on separation anxiety.

The American Kennel Club even lists Shih Tzus among the breeds most likely to struggle with being left alone. And a 2020 study in *MDPI Animals* found that smaller companion breeds like Shih Tzus often have higher stress hormone levels when separated from their owners.

If you have a job that keeps you out of the house all day, or if you travel often, this will be tough.

#### **6. Breathing Issues Are Way Too Common**

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At first, I thought the little snorting sounds were cute. Then I learned they were not just quirks. They were signs of a deeper problem.

My vet told me my dog was showing signs of BOAS, or Brachycephalic Obstructive Airway Syndrome. Basically, their flat faces can make it hard to breathe. These dogs can overheat easily, snore loudly, and sometimes even collapse if they overdo it.

See also 10 Reasons Why School is A Waste of Time

A 2015 *PLOS ONE* study found that flat-faced dogs like Shih Tzus are twenty times more likely to suffer from breathing problems than dogs with normal snouts.

Dr. Erik Hofmeister, a veterinary medicine professor, explained,  
**“These are not isolated issues. Breathing problems in Shih Tzus are chronic and often require lifelong management.”**

Because of this, I had to avoid walking him during the day, use cooling pads in the summer, and always keep playtime short and calm.

## 7. They Are Surprisingly Loud

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I thought I was getting a quiet companion. Instead, I got a tiny watchdog.

Every sound triggered barking. The mailman, a knock on the door, someone walking past the window, and sometimes things I could not even hear. It was constant.

In 2022, BarkBox released a report ranking Shih Tzus in the top ten for excessive barking among small breeds. I can believe it.

Eventually, I taught him to quiet down, but it took months of calm, reward-based training. Getting angry only made him bark more.

## 8. Health Issues Just Kept Coming

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I thought breathing would be the only concern. But then came the eye infections. Then the dry skin. Then dental problems. Then issues with his hips.

Shih Tzus are prone to a long list of health problems, including:

- Eye ulcers and dry eye
- Spinal disc disease (IVDD)
- Skin allergies
- Crowded teeth that lead to gum disease

Nationwide Pet Insurance lists Shih Tzus among the most expensive breeds to care for based on how often people file claims.

Dr. Marty Becker says,  
**“This breed has a very specific set of problems related to their anatomy. You must budget for regular dental care, eye care, and possible surgeries.”**

If you are planning to get one, just know that vet visits will be a regular part of your life.

## 9. Training Takes a Whole Different Approach

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My Shih Tzu was not untrainable, but he was picky.

He tuned me out if I raised my voice. He lost interest if the training was too long. He was smart, but he did not like to be told what to do.

Dog trainer Ian Dunbar says,

**“Shih Tzus are clever but not biddable. You need to earn their interest. Not demand it.”**

What worked best for me was keeping sessions short, fun, and light-hearted. If it felt like a game, he played along. If it felt like a chore, he walked away.

## 10. They Need More Than Just Couch Time

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People assume Shih Tzus are lazy because they like naps. That is only partly true.

They do enjoy lounging, but if you skip walks or playtime, they get restless. Mine would bark more, chew things, or pace around the house when he got bored.

A study from the University of Helsinki showed that Shih Tzus score high when it comes to mental activity needs, even though they do not require intense physical exercise.

See also [10 Reasons Why Homework is Beneficial](#)

Interactive toys, brain games, and short daily walks made a big difference.

## Real Answers to Common Questions I Had

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### **Are Shih Tzus good for first-time dog owners?**

Only if you are fully prepared for grooming, training, and regular vet care. They are sweet, but they are not low-maintenance.

### **Can they live in an apartment?**

Yes. Mine did well in one. Just make sure they get daily play and attention, and be ready for barking.

### **How much does it cost to own one each year?**

For me, it was between 1,200 and 2,000 dollars a year. Grooming, food, vet bills, and toys added up fast.

### **Do they shed?**

Yes, especially if you do not brush them often. Even though their hair is different from most dogs, it still falls out.

### **Are they really hypoallergenic?**

Not quite. They are often called that, but they still produce dander and saliva that can trigger allergies.

**Can they be left alone during the day?**

Not for long. After about four hours, mine would get really anxious. You may need a pet sitter or dog walker if you work full time.

**What is the best age to adopt a Shih Tzu?**

Puppies between ten and sixteen weeks are ideal, but adult and senior Shih Tzus can be amazing too, and they are often already trained.

**Are male or female Shih Tzus better?**

Males are often more clingy and affectionate. Females can be more independent. But honestly, every dog is different.

**Do they get along with other dogs?**

They can, especially if socialized early. Mine did great with calm dogs but avoided the hyper ones.

**Can they swim or go hiking?**

Swimming is risky because of their flat faces and short legs. Long hikes are too much for them. They prefer short walks and cozy rest time.

**Final Thought**

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I am not saying all of this to scare anyone away. I just wish I had known these things before I got my Shih Tzu.

They are loving, loyal, and full of personality. But they also come with a lot of responsibilities that most people do not talk about.

If you are willing to put in the effort, they can be one of the most affectionate companions you will ever have. But if you are still unsure, take your time. Ask real owners, visit rescues, and do not rush the decision.

Because the right dog is not just the one that looks cute in pictures. It is the one that fits your life and makes your home feel complete.

And when you find that perfect match, it will be worth every bit of it.

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