

## **Right Pet Door for Dogs**

If you've ever had a cat, the chances are you've also had a pet door, or cat flap. These familiar flaps allow cats to move between indoors and outdoors without needing any help from you. What you might not know is pet doors are also designed to be used by dogs. Like their feline friends, dogs are able to use pet doors to gain a bit of freedom and improve their quality of life.

Dogs benefit from being outdoors a great deal. Not only is the exercise and fresh air good for them, outdoor environments also provide mental stimulation. Having the freedom to indulge in these pleasures whenever they want is brilliant for dogs – especially if they're often left alone during the day. Even better, a dog door reduces the chance of little accidents inside when your dog isn't able to get out in time!

There are lots of things to consider when you're choosing a pet door. There's not a one-size-fits-all solution, and buying a door for a dog involves a bit more research and preparation than buying for a cat.

### **Size**

Small dogs might be more associated with pet doors, but large dogs can use them too! Pet doors come in all sizes, and it's really important to choose one that works best for your pet. The correctly sized door is easier for your dog to use, and will prevent injury.

### **Location**

Where is your pet door going to lead to? Cat owners often put cat flaps in their back door, but this might not be an option if you have a medium or large dog - you may decide to install your pet door into a garage or outhouse instead to give your dog access to a comfortable, indoor area.

### **Positioning**

The exact positioning of your pet door is very important. You want to make sure that your dog has a clear lead up to the door, and that he won't have to squeeze or wriggle into a space to use it. Height is also vital, make sure your dog doesn't have to jump or stoop to use his door. Actions like this can lead to repetitive strain injury.

### **Robustness**

Pet doors are available in a number of different materials. The most common kind is plastic, but for some large dogs this might not be strong enough! Dogs often approach pet doors at speed, so make sure you choose a door strong enough to stand the weight of your dog! You may find that an aluminium pet door, rather than a plastic one, will be best for you.

### **Locking**

You may want your dog to have the freedom to come and go as he pleases at some times of day and not at others. For these situations, a pet door with locking facilities will be ideal. You can choose from different locking mechanisms that give you control over when your door is used. Some two-way doors can be locked manually from the inside. Other four-way doors can be set to allow only inward traffic, only outward traffic, free use or no use at all.

### **Safety and security**

It's important to give your dog freedom, but it's also important to make sure he's safe. When you install a pet door, you need to make sure that your garden is safe and secure for your dog to play in unaccompanied. The key consideration here is whether or not your dog is able to get out of the garden. If he can, you need to do something. A dog who can escape from a garden can get into all sorts of trouble, and put himself in danger as well as other people. Consider installing a more secure wall or fence, or take a look at the pet containment systems that are available.

A pet door can make a big difference to your dog's quality of life, so it is worth the effort to find the right one!