COUCH POTATOS NEED NOT APPLY:
What you can expect owning a typical Labrador Retriever

ACTIVITY!
- Labs need daily exercise as they have lots of energy to expend.
- Labs can be content with an hour of exercise per day however, their preference is to always be active.
- If you lead an active lifestyle, a Lab is definitely for you.
- If you prefer the couch to the outdoors then a young Lab may not be the choice for you.

MENTAL STIMULATION:
- In addition to exercise, Labs require some mental stimulation.
- Toys that encourage a thought process are a good idea
- Mental stimulation can be as simple as hide 'n' seek in the house or throwing toys for your Lab to retrieve and praise when he does so.
- You will find a lot less chewing and separation anxiety from a Lab that has had a balance of body and mind exercise.

SIZE DOES MATTER:
- Labs are considered a medium sized dog.
- Height: 20"-26", Weight: 50-100 lbs is typical.
- They can be happy in an apartment environment with proper exercise
- You need to consider if you will be happy with a medium sized dog in your space.

AFFECTION/ATTENTION:
- Labs are happiest when they are with their human family.
- They are eager to please and will take any opportunity to have you pet them or be with you at all times.
- A contented Lab is one in which their basic needs are met AND their human is with them, preferably next to them.

TRAINING BASICS:
- The best way of successful integration of a Lab into the family is via training, training, training!!!
- Just as the Lab doesn't come with a manual, neither do we on how to train therefore, learning how to train your Lab is necessary and highly recommended for successful family integration.
- Attend some classes or at a minimum, invest time in reading training books that are available at a book store or your local library.
- Training classes abound. Visit a dog park and ask around about classes they have attended. Check out the local pet store as they may be offering classes or may be able to tell you where you can attend classes.   Your local vet's office should be able to direct you to great training ideas, literature or classes.
- Remember that ALL training takes a little time and patience.
- Investing the time and patience in training will pay off in the long run for everyone. Think of it as 'short term pain for long term gain'.
- Frustration when training comes from giving too much freedom too soon, before it's earned and not enough supervision from you causing your Lab to become confused.

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- Typically, if your Lab has done something that displeases you, you need look no further than yourself for the reason why. It usually means there was a breakdown in your communication of expectations to the Lab and not enough consistent training.
- LOTS of praise and positive reinforcement of actions will make training go quickly, happily, effectively and productively for both you and your Lab.
- Consistency, clarity, positivity, careful commands and repetition are key for successful training.
- Be <u>consistent</u> to ensure you are not giving confusing messages or signals to your Lab. If you don't want your Lab to sit on the couch when he feels like it, don't let him/her up 'just this once'. Repetition and praise will work wonders with your Lab.
- Be <u>clear</u> with what you want from your Lab. Don't give too many commands at the same time without giving time for your Lab to process and respond. It's a good idea to ensure that command words do not sound alike to avoid confusion.
- Be <u>positive</u> with your Lab. Yes, correct mistakes but, don't over correct or dwell on them. Instead, over accentuate the positive behaviour.
- <u>Careful commands</u>. Be careful not to confuse your Lab with conflicting commands/actions. i.e. Don't ask your Lab to 'come' and then carry out an action it won't like (like a bath) immediately after your Lab comes to you. What's the incentive for the Lab to 'come' to you next time? Instead, treat the actions separately by giving praise (or perhaps a 'treat') and then lead him/her to the bath.
- <u>Repetition</u> is the way for actions to become habits. Ensure the training is reinforced at every opportunity.
- Reinforcing training isn't as daunting as one may think and can take place anywhere, anytime. For instance when you walk to the kitchen for something for yourself, you can ask your Lab to 'heel' and walk into the kitchen with you. Once there, give praise and ask him to "sit" while you are there for a minute. Praise and ask him to 'heel' back with you to elsewhere in the house. In this instance you've reinforced both a 'heel' and a 'sit' from your readings or training class.
- A good rule of thumb is if you wouldn't want to or you would find it difficult to carry out a command, so will your Lab who of course isn't as intelligent as you are.

EASE OF TRAINING:
- The human is everything to a Lab and they are happiest when their humans are pleased.
- They need their human to take the lead role to let them know what is required.
- Once you've established your role as leader, a Lab will try their best to please you' which makes training easier than some other breeds.
- Don't confuse ease of training with not requiring any training at all.
- All dogs (Labs included) do not come with an innate idea of what you expect of them therefore, they require training to become the member of the household you envision

FRIENDLY/GOOD NATURED:
- Labs are friendly and accepting of most anyone
- Labs are people dogs and like just about everyone.
- Labs make good watch dogs and not guard dogs for the reasons above.
- They will let you know there is something amiss but, are likely to be accepting of all that come around.

ENTHUSIASM:
- Enthusiasm abounds when it comes to the Lab.
- They are basically a happy dog who, like other dogs, can take up to 2-3 years to reach maturity. T
- his enthusiasm helps the Lab fit into the active family environment.

INTELLIGENCE:
- Labs are intelligent animals. Ranking within the top 5 spots on most lists.
- It takes some work at times to stay one step ahead of a clever Lab.
- Don't confuse their intelligence with stubbornness.

- A Lab that seems stubborn most likely is trying to figure out how they can get what they want while at the same time not upsetting their leader. A firm (not loud or mean) command for what you are asking for most likely will overcome the 'stubborn' action.

CHEWING:
- Labs have been known to be chewers.
- This is true of puppies which can extend into adulthood if not kept in check with proper training and enough exercise.
- Try correcting the chewing of inappropriate items with the addition of exercise, mental or social stimulation.
- Also try to correct chewing of inappropriate items by remembering to praise your Lab when he/she spontaneously (or calculated by you) chews the right items (like a dog bone) and not your furniture.

CLUMSY:
- Labs aren't always the most delicate dog.
- They are like young children and are quick to be caught up in the moment perhaps breaking an item or two.
- If you are annoyed by occasional breakage, the exerburent Lab may not be for you.

FOOD MOTIVATED:
- Labs are food motivated!! Again, Labs are food motivated!! They will take ANY and EVERY opportunity to grab some extra 'snacks'.
- Being food motivated makes the Lab an expert at counter surfing! You will constantly need to ensure that food is not left unattended on counters until your training has been successful. Even then, its not unheard of for a Lab to have a 'relapse' when it comes to 'snacking'.
- Food motivation isn't all bad, having 'snacks' at training time helps to motivate your Lab to carry out your commands. You can have a special treat that you only use at training time to assist with the motivation.

SEPARATION ANXIETY:
- Separation Anxiety can occur because dogs are pack animals and do not want or fear to be alone, without their human companions.
- Signs of separation anxiety: following human around the house 'underfoot' abnormally, pacing, whining, drooling,
- Once the human has left a Lab with separation anxiety may chew items, baseboards, urinate in the house, excessively bark or exhibit other unwanted behaviours.
- Consult your vet when trying to determine if your Lab is suffering separation anxiety as your Lab could have a medical condition that is making them conduct themselves in a certain way.
- If no medical condition, work on the behavioural issue causing the separation anxiety, largely that your Lab is not independent enough to be left alone, he/she is too insecure.
- Teach your Lab by leaving the house for short periods of time and rewarding when you come back to an intact home. Gradually leave for longer periods of time.
- Your vet or training guides can give more detail on how to deal with separation anxiety.
- The good news is that with patience and consistency separation anxiety can be overcome.

JUST THE HIGHLIGHTS:
History: It is widely believed that Labs descended from dogs that were brought to Newfoundland, Canada by explorers, fishermen and settlers.
Height: 20"-26"
Weight: 50-100 lbs
Lifespan: 12-14 yrs.
Coat: short, dense, water repellent fur without wave
Colours: Black, Chocolate, Yellow. Colour is simply a matter of choice as it does not affect personality of the Lab.
Grooming: Labs shed more than people think however, not excessively. Weekly brushing and occasional baths keeps shedding at a minimum except at seasonal change times when shedding is a little more pronounced (as with most dogs).
SUMMARY: Labs are medium sized dogs who are friendly, gregarious, affectionate, loyal, active, and intelligent. They are easy to train and happiest with lots of exercise and being with humans as much as possible