

# · BREED PRIORITIES · YORKSHIRE TERRIER

BY NIKKI RIGGSBEE

## THE

Yorkshire Terrier is the most popular toy breed in the United States based on AKC registration statistics for 2021, ranking thirteenth among two hundred recognized breeds. It was one of the first toy breeds (with the Pug) to be recognized by AKC, in 1885.

The breed was developed in northern England and used as ratters. Several now extinct breeds are estimated to be the progenitors of the Yorkie: Clydesdale Terrier, Waterside Terrier, and Old English Terrier. They were originally shown in England as the Broken Haired Scotch Terrier or Toy Terrier. They got the name "Yorkshire Terrier" by 1874.

We found thirty-eight Yorkshire Terrier experts to invite to take a survey on their breed's priorities; six could not be reached. Twenty-two said they would participate, four declined. Twelve completed surveys arrived by the deadline. The group averaged over forty-four years in the breed. Those who judge have been doing so for over eighteen years on average and have judged their national specialty and other Yorkie specialties.

*This discussion is not intended to promote fault or part judging. One should always evaluate a whole dog as a package. One develops and improves his picture of excellence by deciding what to emphasize for each breed. They say that evaluating dogs is a matter of what you will forgive. Having priorities can help with that process.*

*Questions, Comments, or Concerns?  
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### Yorkshire Terrier Virtues

The survey asked the Yorkie experts to rank a list of virtues taken from their AKC standard from most to least important. The Yorkie standard says, "Coat: Quality, texture and quantity of coat are of prime importance." We were curious to see how these would be valued by this group. Below is the list in order by the average of the experts' placements, with one being the most important.

1. Body well-proportioned and compact
2. Backline level, height at shoulder same as at rump
3. Hair glossy, fine, silky in texture
4. Color...blue is dark steel-blue
5. High head carriage and confident manner
6. Color...all tan hair darker at roots than middle, shading to lighter at tips
7. Coat moderately long, perfectly straight
8. Ears small, V-shaped, carried erect, not too far apart
9. Forelegs straight, elbows neither in nor out
10. Eyes medium-sized, dark, sparkling with sharp, intelligent expression...eye rims dark
10. Toy terrier
12. Bite neither undershot nor overshot, teeth sound
13. Head small, rather flat on top
14. Stifles moderately bent
15. Tail docked to medium length, carried slightly higher than level of back
16. Feet round

The greatest agreement was on "Body well-proportioned and compact" (1<sup>st</sup>) and "Hair glossy, fine, silky in texture" (3<sup>rd</sup>). Nearly as many experts similarly valued "Backline level, height at shoulder same as at rump" (2<sup>nd</sup>), "Ears small, V-shaped, carried erect, not too far apart" (8<sup>th</sup>), and "Feet round" (16<sup>th</sup>).

Eight experts agreed on "Eyes medium-sized, dark, sparkling with sharp, intelligent expression...eye rims dark" (tied at 10<sup>th</sup>), "Stifles moderately bent" (14<sup>th</sup>), and "Tail docked to medium length, carried slightly higher than level of back" (15<sup>th</sup>). "Eyes" (tied at 10<sup>th</sup>) ranked 7-10 for most, but four placements of 12-14 put it lower in the list.

The smallest majority of seven placed "Color...blue is dark steel-blue" (4<sup>th</sup>) 3-6, "Color...all tan hair darker at roots than middle, shading to lighter at tips" (6<sup>th</sup>) 4-7, "Toy terrier" (tied at 10<sup>th</sup>) 13-16, and "Head small, rather flat on top" (13<sup>th</sup>) 11-14. Four others ranked "Toy terrier" (tied at 10<sup>th</sup>) 1-4 and "Head size" (13<sup>th</sup>) 7-9, improving their averages.

Half of the experts agreed on "High head carriage and confident manner" (5<sup>th</sup>), "Forelegs straight, elbows neither in nor out" (9<sup>th</sup>), and "Bite neither undershot nor overshot, teeth sound" (12<sup>th</sup>). Each had a smaller consensus that pushed its average up or down. "Head carriage/confident" (5<sup>th</sup>) was 3-6 on six surveys, 10-13 on another four. "Forelegs" (9<sup>th</sup>) was 11-14 on six, 6-9 on four. "Bite" (12<sup>th</sup>) was 7-10 on half, 12-15 on five.

"Coat moderately long, perfectly straight" (7<sup>th</sup>) had five place-

ments between 2-5 and another four 12-15.

Additional input would break the tie at ten and might also change relative rankings among traits whose averages were close. "Backline" (2<sup>nd</sup>) and "Hair texture" (3<sup>rd</sup>) averaged within one-tenth of a point of each other. "Forelegs" (9<sup>th</sup>) was similarly close to the virtues tied at ten.

### Yorkshire Terrier Faults

The Yorkie experts also prioritized a list of sixteen faults taken from or derived from their AKC standard. Below are the faults in sequence by the average of the experts' priorities, with Number 1 being the biggest problem.

1. Backline not level
2. Body not compact
3. Hair not glossy, fine, silky
4. Lacking appearance of vigor and self-importance
5. Sooty or black hair mingled with tan coat (adult)
6. Tan extends above elbow on forelegs or above stifle on hind legs
7. Coat wavy
8. Silver-blue or blue mingled with fawn
9. Weight exceeds seven pounds
10. Skull prominent or round
11. Eyes not dark in color
12. Tan color extends down on back of neck
13. Muzzle too long
14. Eyes prominent
15. Tail not docked
16. Small white spot on forechest that does not exceed 1 inch at longest dimension

Eleven of the twelve placed "Small white spot on forechest that does not exceed 1 inch at longest dimension" (16<sup>th</sup>) 15-16; eight had it in last place. Nine experts ranked "Eyes prominent" (14<sup>th</sup>) 11-14.

Eight of the group agreed on "Backline not level" (1<sup>st</sup>), "Sooty or black hair mingled with tan coat (adult)" (5<sup>th</sup>), "Eyes not dark in color" (11<sup>th</sup>), and "Tail not docked" (15<sup>th</sup>). The smallest majority of seven concurred on "Hair not glossy, fine, silky" (3<sup>rd</sup>), "Silver-blue or blue mingled with fawn" (8<sup>th</sup>), and "Tan color extends down on back of neck" (12<sup>th</sup>).

Several faults had split opinions. "Body not compact" (2<sup>nd</sup>) was in the top three on six surveys and in the second quartile for another five. "Lacking appearance of vigor and self-importance" (4<sup>th</sup>) had a similar split. Half of the experts ranked "Weight exceeds seven pounds" (9<sup>th</sup>) 14 or 15, but four in the top quartile moved it up the list. "Skull prominent or round" (10<sup>th</sup>) was similarly split, but not as divergent. Six experts had "Muzzle too long" (13<sup>th</sup>) in the third quartile.

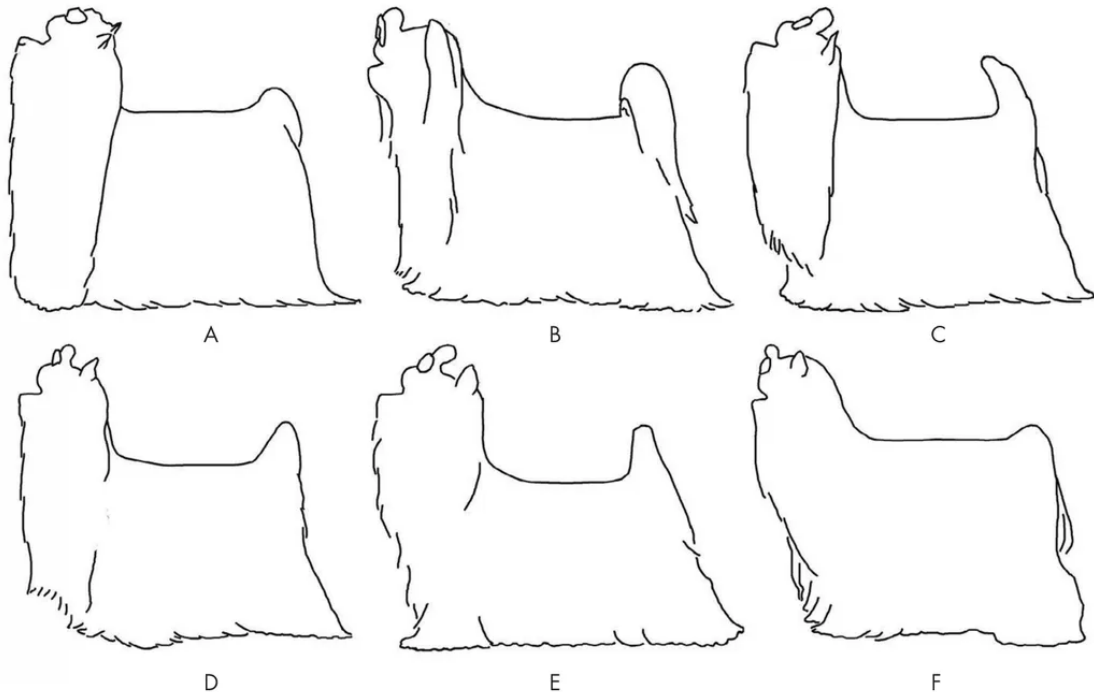
"Coat wavy" (7<sup>th</sup>) was in the second quartile for five, with another five ranking it 12-15. "Tan extends above elbow on forelegs or above stifle on hind legs" (6<sup>th</sup>) had three groupings: four at 2-5, four at 7-10, and four at 11-14.

Faults in the middle of the list ("Blue in fawn" (8<sup>th</sup>), "Over 7

## Yorkshire Terrier Outlines

*Pick Best of Breed and Best of Opposite Sex*

### DOGS



lbs.” (9<sup>th</sup>), and “skull prominent/round” (10<sup>th</sup>) had averages close to each other so that additional input might change the relative ranks.

Almost two points separated the averages of “Black hairs in tan” (5<sup>th</sup>) and “Tan above elbows” (6<sup>th</sup>), confirming the greater seriousness of the top five faults. More than two-and-one-half points separated “Tail not docked” (15<sup>th</sup>) and “Small white spot” (16<sup>th</sup>), confirming the lesser importance of the last place fault.

The group had majorities on twelve virtues and nine faults. They were fairly consistent valuing compact proportions, level topline, and coat texture and color over head details. On coat, texture ranked higher than color in both lists.

### Outlines

The survey had the experts evaluate two sets of outlines, six Yorkie dogs and six Yorkie bitches, as they would classes at a dog show—except based on outline alone. All of the outlines

were made from photos of good quality, real Yorkshire Terriers. It is harder both to outline and to evaluate coated breeds on outline alone. The top-knots are meant to be seen from the front, not the side, so that portion varied in the outlines. The experts couldn’t see the important coat texture and color, see the face and expression, do a hands-on exam, or watch them move. So, the placements might well change if the experts could see these exhibits in person.

The dog with the most first placements and best placement average was Yorkie “D.” Those who placed him first said “best overall outline, compact body, proper head, perfect tail set and carriage,” “proper head carriage, good rear angulation, lack of face furnishings,” “square, topline,” “lovely stop, desirable small ears,” “back leaning tail set, it shouldn’t be straight up,” “balanced,” and “perfect facial features and muzzle.”

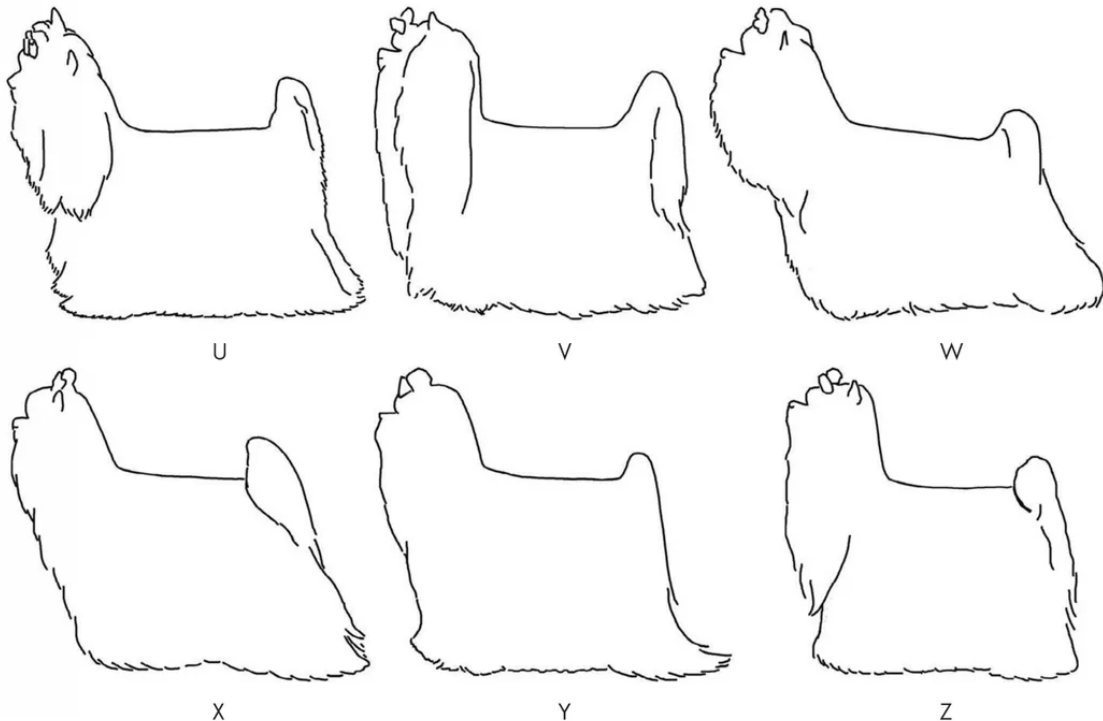
Second place dog was Yorkie “C.” He tied in average placement with dog “E,” but “C” was placed first by one expert and “E” was not placed first by any. Comments on “C” included “Good square outline, good head carriage, tail a little gay,”



## Yorkshire Terrier Outlines

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### BITCHES



"level topline," and "compact, well-proportioned, head in proportion to body, flat on top, small "V" shaped ears, 90-degree muzzle/stop ratio," "neck blends smoothly into shoulder," and "coat long, straight, and neat appearing."

The bitch with the most first placements and best placement average was Yorkie "Y." Those who liked her best noted "absolutely best, though I'd like her tail docked a few centimeters longer to complement and balance the nice neck," "short back, proper tail set, high ear placement," "square appearing, small head, muzzle/stop okay, abundance of straight, neatly hanging coat," and "overall proportions."

Yorkie "U" was second among the bitches based on number of first placements and average placement score. Among the comments on her were "most compact, fair balance, good front, rear, tail set, head carriage," "best outline, nice head, good topline and neck, proper angulation," and "neck blending smoothly into level topline, may be downfaced."

Best of Breed was dog "D." All experts but one placed him first among dogs and half named him BOB. Dog "C" was the only other dog placed first on any survey. Bitch "Y" was placed first among the girls by half the experts and BOB by two, so

she is Best of Opposite Sex.

Dog "D" and bitch "Y" were the only outlines that placed on every survey. Bitches "W" and "X" were never placed first and were out of the ribbons for three-quarters of the experts. Dogs "A" and "F" were unplaced by half the group, as was dog "B" by nearly as many.

The Yorkshire Terrier experts had average agreement on the lists. They were extremely consistent when agreeing on the most correct outline.

### Essential Characteristics

The survey asked the experts to list four to six characteristics that a Yorkshire Terrier must have to be a good one. Most often named by almost every expert was level topline and that the back was short. Almost as many listed coat texture being glossy, fine, and silky, and that it must reflect light.

Just behind those virtues were coat color and temperament. This is a toy terrier and must have a confident attitude. Many also mentioned sound movement (with purpose, fluid, smooth), a compact body, and balance.

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## BREED PRIORITIES - YORKSHIRE TERRIER

### Additional Notes

The Yorkshire Terrier experts had the suggestions below for students of their breed.

- No need to dig around for a small white spot; if it is noticeable, you will see it.
- Everything in moderation, no extremes.
- Body length shouldn't be confused with topline length.
- Low tailset is very distracting and difficult to breed out.
- Coat color and texture are of prime importance, but they must also have that confident, showy attitude that says, "I'm here, now look at me!"
- Movement is not discussed in our standard, but I like a balanced front and rear with smooth movement and a level topline.
- Puppies may have a white spot on the chest that will turn tan. Don't DQ the puppy for this.
- It is said that a Yorkie head is like a West Highland White Terrier head in smaller proportions.
- Check the age of puppies and adults when considering coat color and length.
- Proper color of the coat is darker at the tip of the tail.
- Watch out for tied ears which give a great ear set but don't move.
- If you have two equal quality dogs to decide between, let them face each other. The true terrier will stand out showing topline, ears, eyes, and terrier spirit.
- Colors change through the life of the dog. Puppies are born black and tan. Don't discount an older dog with mature color for a youngster with dark steel blue who hasn't gone through color maturation yet.
- Body length of a square, short, compact terrier is enhanced with a high tail set.
- Judge the dogs on the move.



Much appreciation to the Yorkshire Terrier experts who contributed to this project.