Great Dane

The breed standard outlines the ideal characteristics, temperament, and appearance of a breed, and ensures that a dog can carry out its original purpose. Breeders and judges should be mindful to prioritize dogs that are healthy and sound in both mind and body.

General Appearance

The Great Dane combines in its distinguished appearance dignity, strength and elegance with great size and a powerful, well formed, smoothly muscled body. He is one of the giant breeds but is unique in that his general conformation must be so well balanced that he never appears clumsy and is always a unit – the Apollo of dogs. He must be spirited and courageous – never timid. He is friendly and dependable. This physical and mental combination is the characteristic which give the Great Dane the majesty possessed by no other breed. It is particularly true of this breed that there is an impression of great masculinity in dogs as compared to an impression of femininity in bitches. The male should appear more massive throughout than the bitch, with larger frame and heavier bone. In the ratio between length and height, the Great Dane should appear as square as possible. In bitches, a somewhat longer body is permissible. **Faults** Lack of unity; timidity; bitchy dogs; poor musculature; poor bone development; out of condition; rickets; doggy bitches.

Size

The male should not be less than 76 cm (30 in) at the shoulders, but it is preferable that he be 81,5 cm (32 in) or more, providing he is well proportioned to his height. The female should not be less than 71 cm (28 in) at the shoulders, but it is preferable that she be 76 cm (30 in) or more, providing she is well proportioned to her height. Substance is that sufficiency of bone and muscle which rounds out a balance with the frame. **Faults** Lightweight whippety Danes; coarse, ungainly proportioned Danes; there should be balance always.

Coat and Colour

The coat should be very short and thick, smooth and glossy. **Faults** Excessively long hair (stand-off coat); dull hair (indicating malnutrition, worms, and negligent care).

Colour

a) **Brindle Danes:** Base colour ranging from light golden yellow to golden yellow always brindled with strong black cross stripes. The more intensive the base colour and the more intensive the brindling, the more attractive will be the colour. Small white marks at the chest and toes are not desirable. **Faults**: Brindle with too dark a base colour; silver-blue and greyish-blue base colour; dull (faded) brindling; white tail tip.
b) **Fawn Danes**: Golden yellow up to deep golden yellow colour with a deep black mask. The golden deep-yellow colour must always be given the preference. Small white spots at the chest and toes are not desirable. **Faults**: Yellowish-grey, bluish-yellow, greyish-blue, dirty-yellow colour (drab colour), lack of black mask.
c) **Blue Danes:** The colour must be pure steel blue as far as possible without any tinge of yellow, black, or mouse grey. **Faults**: Any deviation from a pure steel-blue colouration.
d) **Black Danes**: Glossy black. **Faults**: Yellow-black, brown-black or blue-black. White markings, such as stripes on the chest, speckled chest and markings on the paws are permitted but not desirable.
e) **Harlequin Danes:** Base colour: pure white with black torn patches irregularly and well distributed over the entire body; pure white neck preferred. The black patches should never be large enough to give the appearance of a blanket or so small as to give a strippled or dappled effect. (Eligible but less desirable are a few small grey spots, also pointings where instead of a pure white base with black spots, there is a white base with single black hairs showing through which tend to give a salt and pepper or dirty effect.) **Faults**: White base colour with a few large spots; bluish-grey pointed background.

f) **Boston or Black-Mantled Danes:** A black and white dog with a black mantle extending over the body; white blaze or muzzle or both; white chest; white on part or whole of forelegs and hind legs; part or whole white collar; white tipped tail; dark eyes; dark nose. Acceptable but less desirable-- lack of collar. **Faults**: Any variation detracting from the general appearance.
g) **Merle Danes** The base colour shall be pure grey ranging from silver mouse grey to pewter (slightly brownish due to its nature as a dilution gene). Black torn patches shall be irregular and well distributed over the body. The black torn patches shall not be so large to give the appearance of a blanket nor small enough to give a dappled effect. Dark eyes and dark nose leather preferred. **Faults**: White socks, partial small facial blaze.
h) **Mantled Merle Danes** A grey ranging from silver mouse grey to pewter and white dog with a grey mantle extending over the body; black torn patches irregularly shaped and well distributed over grey mantle; white blaze or muzzle or both; white chest; white on part or whole of forelegs and hind legs; part or whole white collar; white tipped tail; dark eyes; dark nose. Acceptable but less desirable - lack of collar, break in blanket. **Faults**: Any variation detracting from the general appearance. Any deviation from the colour described above.

Head
Long, narrow, distinguished, expressive, finely chiselled, especially the part below the eyes (which means that the **skull** plane under and to the inner point of the eye must slope without any bony protuberance in a pleasing line to the full square jaw), with strongly pronounced stop. The masculinity of the male is very pronounced in the expression and structure of head (this subtle difference should be evident in the dog's head through massive skull and depth of muzzle); the bitch's head may be more delicately formed. Seen from the side, the forehead must be sharply set off from the bridge of the nose. The forehead and the bridge of the nose should be straight and parallel to one another. Seen from the front, the head should appear narrow, the bridge of the nose should be as broad as possible. The cheek muscles must show slightly but under no circumstances should they be too pronounced (cheeky). The **muzzle** part must have full flews and must be as blunt vertically as possible in front; the angles of the lip must be quite pronounced. The front part of the head, from the tip of the nose up to the centre of the stop should be as long as the rear part of the head from the centre of the stop to the only slightly developed occiput. The head should be angular from all sides and should have definite flat planes and its dimensions should be absolutely in proportion to the general appearance of the Dane.**Faults:** Any deviation from the parallel planes of skull and foreface; too small a stop; a poorly defined stop or none at all; too narrow a nose bridge; the rear of the head spreading laterally in a wedgelike manner (wedge head); an excessively round upper head (apple head); excessively pronounced cheek musculature; pointed muzzle; loose lips hanging over the lower jaw (fluttering lips) which create an illusion of a full deep muzzle. The head should be rather shorter and distinguished than long and expressionless. The **nose** must be large and in the case of brindled and "single- coloured" Danes, it must always be black. In harlequins, the nose should be black; a black spotted nose is permitted; a pink-coloured nose is not desirable.
Teeth strong, well developed and clean. The incisors of the lower jaw must touch very lightly the bottoms of the inner surface of the upper incisors (scissors bite). If the front teeth of both jaws bite on top of each other, they wear down too rapidly.**Faults:** Even bite; undershot and overshot; incisors out of line; black or brown teeth; missing teeth. **Eyes** of a medium size, as dark as possible, with lively intelligent expression; almond-shaped eyelids, well-developed eyebrows.**Faults:** Light-coloured, piercing, amber-coloured, light blue to a watery blue, red or bleary eyes; eyes of different colours; eyes too far apart; Mongolian eyes; eyes with pronounced haws; eyes with excessively drooping lower eyelids. In blue and black Danes, lighter eyes are permitted but are not desirable. In harlequins, the eyes should be dark. Light-coloured eyes, two eyes of different colour and walleyes are permitted but not desirable. **Ears** should be high, set not too far apart, medium in size, of moderate thickness, drooping forward close to the cheek. Top line of folded ear should be about level with the skull. **Cropped ears:** high set; not set too far apart, well pointed but always in proportion to the shape of the head and carried uniformly erect. **Faults:** Hanging on the side, as on a Foxhound.

Neck
The neck should be firm and clean, high set, well arched, long, muscular and sinewy. From the chest to the head, it should be slightly tapering, beautifully formed, with well-developed nape. **Faults:** Short, heavy neck, pendulous throat folds (dewlaps).

Forequarters
The shoulder blade must be strong and sloping and seen from the side, must form as nearly as possible a right angle in its articulation with the humerus (upper arm) to give a long stride. A line from the upper tip of the shoulder to the back of the elbow joint should be as nearly perpendicular as possible. Since all dogs lack a clavicle (collar bone) the ligaments and muscles holding the shoulder blades to the rib cage must be well developed, firm and secure to prevent loose shoulders. The upper arm should be strong and muscular. Seen from the side or front the strong lower arms run absolutely straight to the pastern joints.Seen from the front, the forelegs and the pastern roots should form perpendicular lines to the ground. Seen from the side, the pastern root should slope only very slightly forward. Paws round and turned neither toward the inside nor toward the outside. Toes short, highly arched and well closed. Nails short, strong and as dark as possible.**Faults:** Steep shoulders, which occur if the shoulder blade does not slope sufficiently; over-angulation; loose shoulders which occur if the Dane is flabbily muscled, or if the elbow is turned towards the outside; loaded shoulders. Elbows turned towards the inside or towards the outside, the former position caused mostly by too narrow or too shallow a chest, bringing the front legs too closely together and at the same time turning the entire lower part of the leg outward; the latter position causes the front legs to spread too far apart, with the pastern roots and paws usually turned inward. Seen from the side, a considerable bend in the pastern toward the front indicates weakness and is in most cases connected with stretched and spread toes (splay foot); seen from the side a forward bow in the forearm (chair leg); an excessively knotty bulge in the front of the pastern joint. Spreading toes (splay foot), bent, long toes (rabbit paws); toes turned toward the outside or towards the inside; light-coloured nails.

Body
The withers form the highest part of the back which slopes downward slightly toward the loins, which are imperceptibly arched and strong. The back should be short and tensely set. Chest deals with that part of the thorax (rib cage) in front of the shoulders and front legs. The chest should be quite broad, deep and well muscled. Ribs and brisket deals with that part of the thorax back of the shoulders and front legs. Should be broad, with the ribs sprung well out from the spine and flattened at the side to allow proper movement of the shoulders extending down to the elbow joint. The belly should be well shaped and tightly muscled, and with the rear part of the thorax, should wing in a pleasing curve (tuck-up). **Faults** Receding back; swayback; camel or roach back; a back line which is too high at the rear; an excessively long back. A narrow and poorly muscled chest; strong protruding sternum (pigeon breast). Narrow (slab-sided) rib cage; round (barrel) rib cage; shallow rib cage not reaching the elbow joint. Poor tuck-up.

Hindquarters
The croup must be full, slightly drooping and must continue imper- ceptibly to the tail root. Hind legs, the first thighs (from hip joint to knee) are broad and muscular. The second thighs (from knee to hock joint) are strong and long. Seen from the side, the angulation of the first thigh with the body, of the second thigh with the first thigh, and the pastern root with the second thigh should be very moderate, neither too straight nor too exaggerated. Seen from the rear, the hock joints appear to be perfectly straight, turned neither towards the inside nor towards the outside. Paws, round and turned neither towards the inside nor towards the outside. Toes short, highly arched and well closed. Nails short, strong and as dark as possible. **Faults** A croup which is too straight; a croup which slopes downward too steeply; and too narrow a croup. Hind legs: soft, flabby, poorly muscled thighs; cow-hocks which are the result of the hock joint turning inward and the hock and rear paws turning outward; barrel legs, the result of the hock joints being too far apart; steep rear. As seen from the side, a steep rear is the result of the angles of the rear legs forming almost a straight line; overangulation is the result of exaggerated angles between the first and second thighs and the hocks and is very conducive to weakness. The rear legs should never be too long in proportion to the front legs.

Spreading toes (splay foot); bent, long toes (rabbit paws); toes turned towards the outside or towards the inside. Furthermore, the fifth toe on the hind legs appearing at a higher position and with wolf 's claw or spur; excessively long nails; light-coloured nails.

Tail
Should start high and fairly broad, terminating slender and thin at the hock joint. At rest, the tail should fall straight. When excited or running, slightly curved (sabre-like). **Faults:** A too high, or too low-set tail (the tail-set is governed by the slope of the croup); too long or too short a tail; tail bent too far over the back (ring tail); a tail which is curled; a twisted tail (sideways); a tail carried too high over the back (gay tail); a brush tail (hair too long on lower side). Cropping tail to desired length is forbidden.

Gait
Long, easy, springy stride with no tossing or rolling of body. The back line should move smoothly, parallel to the ground. The gait of the Great Dane should denote strength and power. The rear legs should have drive. The forelegs should track smoothly and straight. The Dane should track in two parallel straight lines. **Faults** Short steps. The rear quarters should not pitch. The forelegs should not have a hackney gait (forced or choppy stride). When moving rapidly the Great Dane should not pace for the reason that it causes excessive side-to-side rolling of the body and thus reduces endurance.

Faults
Any departure from the aforementioned ideals shall be considered faulty to the degree in which it interferes with the health and well-being of the dog and the breed's purpose. The faults below are important according to their grouping (very serious, serious, minor) and not according to their sequence as placed in each grouping:

Very Serious
- Lack of unity.
- Poor bone development.
- Poor musculature.
- Lightweight whippety Danes.
- Rickets.
- Timidity.
- Bitch dog.
- Sway back; Roach back.
- Cow-hocks.
- Pitching gait.
- Short steps.
- Undershot teeth.
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Serious
- Out of condition.
- Coarseness.
- Any deviation from the standard on all colouration.
- Deviation from parallel planes of skull and foreface.
- Wedge head.
- Poorly defined stop.
- Narrow nose bridge.
- Snipey muzzle.
- Any colour but dark eyes in fawns and brindles.
- Mongolian eyes.
- Missing teeth.
- Overshot teeth.
- Heavy neck.
- Short neck.

- Dewlaps.
- Narrow chest.
- Narrow rib cage; round rib cage; shallow rib cage.
- Loose shoulders; steep shoulders.
- Elbows turned inward.
- Chair legs (front).
- Knotty bulge in pastern joint (adult dog).
- Weak pastern roots.
- Receeding back.
- Too long a back.
- Back high in rear.
- In harlequins, a pink nose.
- Poor tuck-up (except in bitches that have been bred).
- Too straight croup; too sloping croup; too narrow croup.
- Over-angulation.
- Steep rear.
- Too long rear legs.
- Poorly muscled thighs.
- Barrel legs.
- Paws turned outward; rabbit paws.
- Wolf 's claw.
- Hackney gait.
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Minor

- Doggy bitches.
- Small white marks on chest and toes--blues, blacks, brindles, and fawns.
- Few grey spots and pointings on harlequins.
- Excessively long hair.
- Excessively dull hair.
- Apple head.
- Small stop.
- Fluttering lips.
- Eyes too far apart.
- Drooping lower eyelids.
- Haws.
- Any colour but dark eyes in blacks, blues and harlequins.
- Discoloured teeth.
- Even bite.
- Pigeon breast.
- Loaded shoulders.
- Elbows turned outward.
- Paws turned inward.
- Splay foot.
- Excessively long toenails.
- Light nails (except in harlequins).
- Low set tail.
- Too long a tail.
- Too short a tail.
- Gay tail.

- Curled tail.
- Twisted tail.
- Brush tail.

Disqualifications

- Danes under minimum height: males 76 cm (30 in); females 71 cm (28 in)
- Any colour other than those described under "Colour"
- Docked tails
- Split noses.

Scale of Points

General Conformation		
General appearance	10	
Colour and markings	8	
Size	5	
Condition of coat	4	
Substance	3	30
Movement		
Gait	10	
Rear end (croup, legs, paws)	10	
Front end (shoulders, legs, paws	8	28
Head		
Head conformation	12	
Teeth	4	
Eyes (nose and ears	4	20
Torso		
Neck	6	
Loin and back	6	
Chest	4	
Ribs and brisket	4	20
Tail	2	2
TOTAL		**100**

Breed Name: Great Dane
Year of Recognition: 1889
Effective Date: January 2019