

You Be the Judge – the French Bulldog

by Robert Cole

Judge, Author and Illustrator Robert Cole presents us with an imaginary class of French Bulldogs. Draw on your knowledge of the breed standards to decide how to place the entries.

Before you uncover the 21 faults possessed by six inferior French Bulldog heads, and before you place four stacked French Bulldogs in order of merit, first examine this typical French Bulldog face-on head, and also compare the profile head drawing of a typical French Bulldog to the profile of a typical English bulldog to gain a fuller appreciation of the uniqueness of the French Bulldog head.



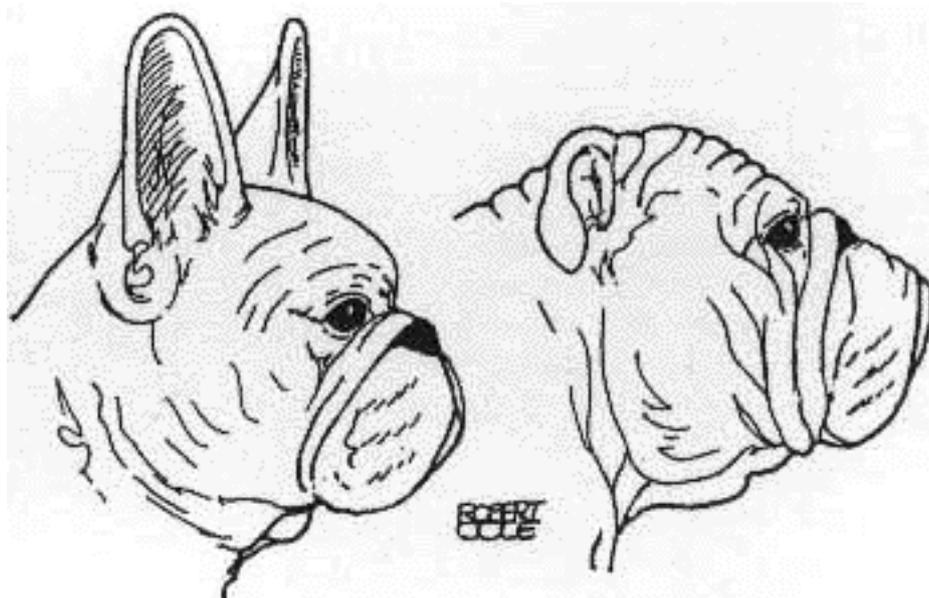
FACE ON

I have taken graphic license in my face-on drawing of this good French Bulldog head to emphasize three features: First, the bat ear is “elongated” to conform to the AKC Standard.

Second, I have highlighted the open nostrils (“broad” in the Standard) because I am finding too many nostrils in the show ring that are barely open.

Third, I have highlighted the “well-defined line” between the nostrils all the way down to where the centre of the lips join to emphasize that when this vertical line deviates from straight, it is the first indication that the mouth may be wry (lower jaw laterally displaced so that the teeth do not occlude correctly).

Unlike the English Bulldog, the Frenchie’s forehead is slightly rounded and the hollow groove between the eyes does not extend up to the top of the skull as it does on the former. Face-on the top of the skull is correctly flat.



IN PROFILE

The English Bulldog’s ears are the rose type, the French Bulldog’s are bat (other than bat is a disqualification).

The Frenchie’s forehead is slightly rounded, the stop is more well defined, the skull is squarer, the upswing of underjaw is not as pronounced as the English variety and the nose is described as “short” rather than the English Bulldog’s “nose tip is set back deeply between the eyes.”

TWENTY-ONE HEAD FAULTS

To elaborate on the Frenchie's unique head I have drawn six inferior heads (shown below) that by way of their 21 defects expand on appreciation for correct.

For instance, what major breed characteristic is absent on Head 1? What about the remaining 20 faults?

Head 2 has three faults, Head 3 has five, Head 4 has six, Head 5 has five, and Head 6 has one fault, for a total of 21 faults depicted.



HEAD 1

Absent is the soft roll over the nose.

The AKC 1991 Revised Standard is the first to include "with heavy wrinkles forming a soft roll over the extremely short nose."

As you can see by its absence in this drawing that the roll over the short breed characteristic worthy of official recognition.



HEAD 2

This drawing depicts three obvious faults: the drop ears disqualify because they are "other than bat ears;" the second fault is the large bulgy eyes; the third fault is a wry mouth which is equally obvious but far more complex.

I have included all the wry mouth suspect clues except a protruding tongue, i.e., the line down the centre of the muzzle twists sideways instead of following the straight line between the open nostrils; the teeth protrude and one side of the mouth is lower than the other.



HEAD 3

The five faults begin with the domed skull; which in turn places the ears low and at the wrong angle.

Then the first eye fault: the colours do not match. Then the second eye fault: the whites of the eyes show.

Finally a hare lip (or cleft lip) a condition of the upper lip in which the left and right halves are not joined leaving a fissure.

According to The Dictionary of Canine Terms by Frank Jackson, Crowood Press, England, 1995, it is a fault that may be congenital, inherited or developed. A hare-lip is no longer on the AKC list of French Bulldog disqualifications which suggests inclusion of this deformity as a disqualification is no longer thought necessary.

Eyes of a different colour has also been removed from the AKC disqualification list.



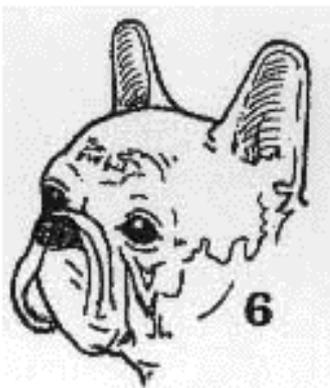
HEAD 4

Six faults. The tops of the ears are not rounded; the forehead is flat instead of slightly rounded; the stop is not distinct; the groove between the eyes continues as a furrow upwards to the top of skull; the eyes are triangular and small; the too forward jutting angle of the muzzle is wrong; and six, the underjaw lacks depth.



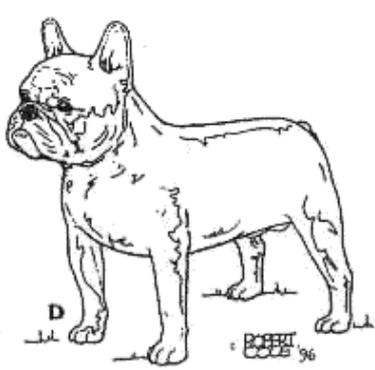
HEAD 5

Five faults. The ears are set too far rearward; the eyes are set close together; the muzzle is long; the underjaw is straight (level) rather than "well turned up" and the end of the muzzle is squared off.



HEAD 6

The one fault is the lack of muzzle breadth, the jaw being narrow and the flews (chops) lacking cushion or thickness.



STACKED

You have four French Bulldogs in this class and in order to focus attention on certain breed characteristics, I have arranged this judging scenario in such a way that you really have only two major decisions: first place and third place.

There is little difference in the four heads, and their tails are either correctly "straight" (spike) or "screwed" (but not curly). Necks are thick and well arched with loose skin at the throat. Bodies are short and well rounded. Chests are broad, deep and full. Forelegs are stout, straight and set well apart. Hind legs are strong and muscular with hocks well let down. The Standard

includes muscular and heavy bone but makes no reference to angulation nor does it mention a shoulder blade, upper arm or stifle.

Your placement decisions should take into consideration: leg length, back roach with slight fall close behind the shoulders, bellies tucked up, breadth of chest, and depth of body (withers through down to brisket).

PROPORTIONS

The revised AKC wording now relates the ratio of height to body length, but it does so in such a vague manner that the new wording will not help you, and I have not helped the cause since I have drawn these four dogs in the traditional head and front three-quarter angle, not in profile.

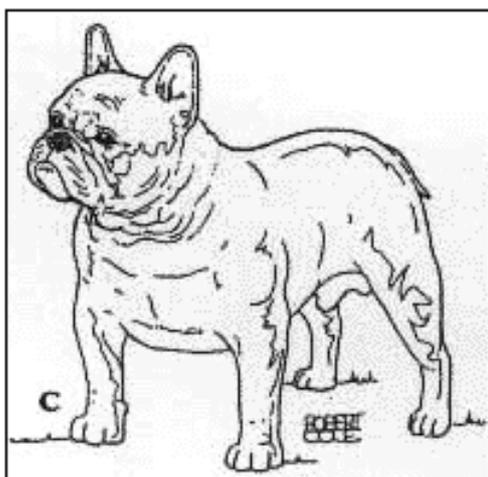
Rather than leave this gray area of correct height to body length ratio unanswered, I have also drawn what I believe the Standard means when it advises: "Proportion – the distance from withers to ground in good relation to distance from withers to onset of tail, so that the animal appears compact, well balanced and in good proportion" and placed the drawing at the end of this article. I should mention that it does not have official blessing, I am a committee of one and not a breeder.



DOG A

This was my winner in an earlier 1990 treatise and quite rightly so; however my knowledge of the breed has increased over the past six years and in this updated judging scenario, Dog A is no longer first place.

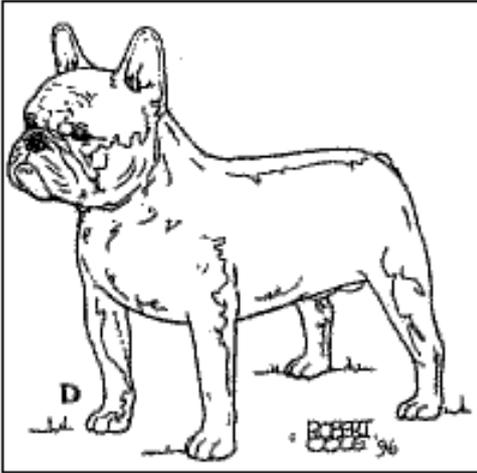
He possesses all the virtues of my first place winner with the exception of one major difference...



DOG C

Authorities seem to agree that the English Bulldog was the main breeding stock from which the French Bulldog was developed, and this individual strengthens that agreement. He is sound and well balanced but tending bodywise towards bully. Compared to Dog A, he is wider, deeper from shoulders to brisket and heavier weighing almost 28 pounds (12.7 kg), (more is a disqualification).

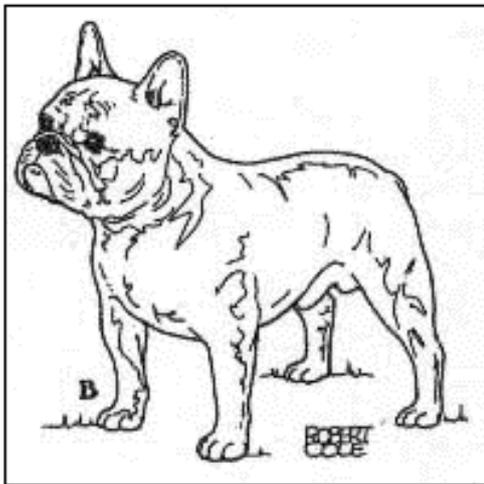
More like the English Bulldog, his elbows stand away from his body and the forequarters appear to be tacked on. As with both the English Bulldog Standard and the French Bulldog Standard, his topline is roached and his belly is tucked up.



DOG D

This dog's topline is level and tuck-up is almost non-existent, two serious departures from type. He is sound and balanced for a dog but not for a French Bulldog. Viewed from above he narrows very little at the loins.

How much are you willing to forgive the loss of these three body characteristics?



DOG B

This dog possesses all of the virtues listed under a previous heading plus correct topline and underbelly. He differs from Dog A in only one respect – his forelegs are more the required “short” than the short I drew as ideal in 1990. A slightly shorter than short leg length greatly alters appearance. View head on the space inside his forelegs, brisket and the ground now form a square.

Dog B's shorter legs makes his body appear comparatively longer but no less compact. His stance is more solid, more four- square. His head appears larger but not to excess. The difference in leg length is only an inch but the effect on type is dramatic.

This is not to say you must accept Dog B over Dog A... published in six countries not one reader ever suggested Dog A's forearm should be shorter. In fact the original article was republished in Australia in 1991 by an appreciative French Bulldog Club Newsletter without comment.

DECISION TIME

In accordance with the revised Standard's requirement for short forelegs, I believe Dog B's leg length to be more correct and I placed him first. Second place goes to Dog A. Third place was the second of your major decisions. Bully Dog C has the most to offer the breed, I placed him third. Dog D is included mainly to strengthen your eye for type via departure, his level topline is a current concern in the breed.

QUESTION OF COLOR

Not a factor in this judging scenario, but it is nonetheless important to know that there are a variety of colors in the breed and that the 1991 revision continues to use a confusing way to list them in advising that: “the acceptable colours are: All brindle, fawn, white, brindle and white,” and then adds “and any color except those which constitute disqualification” as a sort of afterthought. It appears as if the intent of the Standard is to convey certain colour preferences without actually using the word “preferred.”

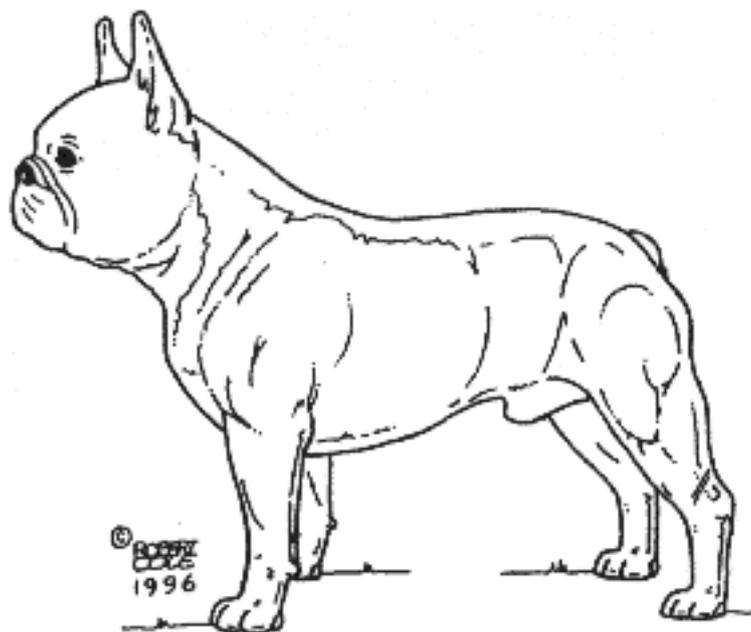
Why are certain colours popular in the US but not necessarily overseas, such as all cream, and cream and white? Why are they not on the acceptable list? Why is pied not listed? Pied is thought by many Americans to be a Frenchie with any amount of white which technically is wrong. Overseas, pied is restricted officially to a predominance of white over brindle. What should the reaction of a judge be to a fawn pied?

Then there is the occurrence of white and brindle peds where one of say three patches have no trace of

brindle. Would this pied be treated like a black and white, or a white with black and be disqualified? And how many hairs constitute a “trace.”

A black dog is disqualified if “the black is without any trace of brindle.” How many hairs make up a trace? Would four brindle hairs on one front leg held up under a good strong light constitute a trace? How about one hair?

Light-coloured French Bulldogs are permitted to have (“acceptable”) lighter coloured noses, otherwise other than a black nose is a disqualification. What about a white and brindle pied with no colour markings on head? A white and dark fawn pied? Speaking of head markings, are the people who maintain that head markings should be balanced correct? There is also the question of black eyelashes and eye rims on solids as well as peds and the question of ticking in the white areas on peds.



IDEAL PROPORTIONS

The revised wording clarifies many points and the Breed Standard Committee or Committees are to be commended for their contribution; I know how difficult it is to get worded agreement. However on body-length-to-height proportions, the committee fudged, preferring to publish a paragraph that meant nothing rather than publish nothing.

Not advised as to ideal ratio of body-length to height, I can as an artist provide my interpretation of “in good proportion,” whether I could get a breed committee to agree with me is not known. In my opinion this 1996 profile (devoid of distracting colour markings) has correct body-length-to-height proportions. What do you think?

Before you answer with a simple yes or no, lets take full advantage of my French Bulldog depiction and consider a number of features that directly or indirectly influence good proportions by answering the following proportion questions. (Where the Standard provides a hint e.g., “slight” or “short”, quotation marks enclose the word).

Answer the following 11 questions.

- Does this dog’s head fit its body?
- Does the size of muzzle balance with size of skull?
- Does the neck have sufficient length?
- Is the body “short”?
- Is the chest “deep”?
- Is the body “well ribbed”? (meaning well ribbed up or... is the loin short?)
- Is the belly “well” tucked up?
- Does the degree of tuck up balance with degree of topline “roach”?
- Are the forelegs “short”?
- Are the hind legs “longer” than the forelegs?

How short is “short”, how deep is “deep” and to what degree is “well” a matter of interpretation, in this case visual. My opinion is in the form of a graphic statement. You don’t have to agree with me, you only have to answer yes or no to the way I have graphically answered each of the eleven questions. However if you disagree with any of my ideal proportions, a simple yes or no will not suffice, for this drawing then serves as a platform for dissent.