



✧ Highlights ✧

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LIVING WITH DOGS

Taming The Tooth Monster

Some dogs take treats too hard. As in, they manage to scrape your hands painfully when they grab the goody. Usually these dogs weren't taught as puppies what is an acceptable amount of pressure for big pearly canines on human skin. They are not trying to hurt us; they just never learned to regulate jaw pressure.



Sometimes this tendency is exacerbated by excitement (Ooh! My favorite treat!) or stress (Yikes, another dog is close by and she might also be interested in my favorite treat).

What to do about it

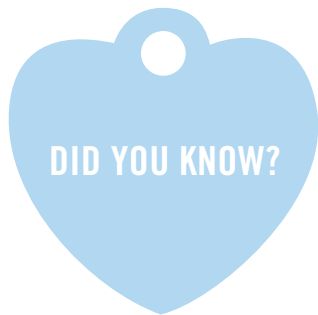
Stop letting go. Get a good hold on a treat before you offer it and only release the treat if your dog uses a soft mouth, i.e. light pressure or, preferably, all lips and no teeth. If your dog grabs too hard, say, "Too bad" or "Bummer" in an oh-what-a-shame tone of voice and pull the treat away. As long as your dog isn't grabbing for the treat, try offering it again. Release the treat if she is gentle or repeat the pull-away maneuver if not. Repeat until she gets it right. (If your dog is taking treats so hard that it hurts or even breaks skin, hold the treat in your closed fist instead of the tips of your fingers to protect yourself.)

Once you and your dog have practiced this to the point that she takes her treats gently most of the time, you can up the ante. From now on, if you offer a treat and your dog grabs too hard, she loses the treat for good—no more second or third chances to be gentle. Switch to a zero tolerance policy.

Remember: consistency is key

To really soften your dog's mouth for good, you must insist on a gentle mouth every time you offer something. Dogs may revert to rough grabbing at moments of excitement or stress. Just stick to your guns in these situations and don't release the treat until your dog remembers to be gentle.

"Dogs are better
than human beings
because they know but do not tell."
- Emily Dickinson



These Doggie Figures?

Number of dogs worldwide. Around 525 million. At 75.8 million, the U.S. has the highest dog population in the world. France has the second highest with 8.8 million.

Reproduction rate. One female dog and her offspring could produce 67,000 puppies in 6 years.

Number of words dogs can remember. Somewhere between 150 and 200. A few dogs have super-canine abilities in this area, though. One collie is known to have learned over 1,000 words.

Size differential. Dogs can vary in size from a 150 lb. Great Dane to a 2 lb. Chihuahua.

Sources: MSPCA Angell, Dr. Stanley Coren, The World Health Organization.



A WORLD OF DOGS

Building A Lifelong Relationship

The American Veterinary Medical Association defines the human-animal bond as “a mutually beneficial and dynamic relationship between people and animals that is influenced by behaviors that are essential to the health and well-being of both.” So, what are the behaviors in question?

Being a responsible caretaker is at the foundation, of course, and includes providing food, water, shelter, and safety, as well as medical care when needed. But aside from that, what influences a person’s relationship with her dog? What takes it from good to great? In the human world, psychologist John Gottman spent four decades studying couples to find out what makes marriages happy and lasting. His major takeaway was that a deep sense of connection and trust is built between couples that make many “bids”—verbal or nonverbal requests for attention and connection—and offer positive responses to those bids.



Positive reinforcement training shows us that the same principles apply to dog-human relationship building. If you like something and reward it, not only will it be more likely to happen again, but everyone involved in the interaction feels better about each other. More connected, more trusting. The one caveat is that it’s important not to reinforce behavior we don’t like (with any kind of attention, positive or negative) and that we should therefore ignore whining, jumping up, nudging, and so on. Beyond that, though, any time spent with dogs offers opportunities to extend and respond to bids.

For example, just looking at a dog with a happy or playful expression qualifies as positive attention and therefore a bid for connection. Ditto saying “what a good dog you are...” in a soft voice for no particular reason. The same goes for reaching over to a dog lying quietly on or beside the couch to scratch a belly or neck, depending on the dog’s preference. Have three minutes to spare? Play a quick game. Get out a treat and practice a fun trick. What’s the lesson? Never think you’re spoiling your dog with these kindnesses. They are tiny investments in a lifelong, loving relationship. Every time we remember to stop to give our dogs affection and attention, we are making deposits on a richer and ever-deepening bond.

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DOGS IN ACTION

Canine Freestyle

Ready to tango with your terrier? Do the mambo with your mutt? Canine Freestyle is, in essence, dog training set to music—with a heaping helping of artistry thrown in. The first rule to learn is: Have fun! The idea is that you and your dog carry out a choreographed sequence of moves to music, mixing positive dog training with fun, exercise, and showmanship. Freestyle combines a variety of common training moves like Heel and Sit-Stay with show-stopping tricks like Take a Bow, Weave, Twirl, Jump, and Back Up. Teaching your dog all these cues and timing the moves to music challenges your training chops, creativity, and patience. Freestyle is open to anyone and can be enjoyed at all levels—from your living room to national competitions where you and your dog will don elaborate costumes and perform in front of adoring crowds. You get to develop your own routine to showcase your dog's strengths; the only prerequisite is that you work with your own dog (no hired handlers). So, put on your glad rags, queue up your favorite tune, and start shaking some bootie.



Learn more at www.worldcaninefreestyle.org or www.canine-freestyle.org.



HEALTHY DOG

Yoga for Dogs

Like cats, dogs seem to have a built-in understanding of the healing and wellness-boosting properties of stretching. It's a priority to them and most stretch thoroughly several times a day. Yoga for dogs can be a natural extension of this stretching habit—a fun, healthful, and relaxing activity you can share with your dog, whether at a neighborhood yoga studio (some offer *dog*a classes), with a group of friends, or in your own living room. For dogs who get into the practice, yoga can promote flexibility, increased blood circulation, and quicker recovery from strenuous walks or play sessions. And for dogs who don't quite catch on, yoga sessions mean spending enjoyable time with you.

To explore yoga with your dog, check out some of the many videos on YouTube on the topic, or invest in a DVD or book. And if you are a yoga enthusiast already, do a little research online for inspiration on how to include your dog in your favorite workout and then get stretching.

DOG IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Old English Sheepdog

The quintessential shaggy dog, the Old English Sheepdog (OES) likes to herd anything and everything, including family members and innate objects. Dating back to the earliest herding dogs in England, the OES is adaptable, sturdy, playful, and, when well socialized and trained, calm and thrilled to have a job to do. Though naturally at home in rural and rugged environments, the OES thrives in urban settings too, provided he gets plenty of exercise. A clownish energy, laid-backness, and strong instincts to protect people and property make the OES a great family dog. But that big, fluffy coat takes significant maintenance to stay healthy, so the OES is a dog for those with time to spare. With his standout looks, the OES is a frequent TV and movie star, appearing in classics like *Hook*, *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*, *One Hundred and One Dalmatians*, and *Sesame Street*.

To give an OES a home, search online for nearby rescue groups.



OUR SERVICES

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Where To Look For Ticks On Your Dog

Even if you use prevention meds, tick-transmitted diseases are too serious to be nonchalant about. To keep your dog safe, make tick patrol obligatory after all outdoor playtime sessions and walks.

Here's where to check extra well:

- ✓ Under the collar
- ✓ Under the tail
- ✓ Under the elbows
- ✓ Under the front legs
- ✓ Behind the ears
- ✓ Between the toes
- ✓ In the groin area
- ✓ On eyelids

Spotting ticks can be tough, especially if your dog's coat is dark. Look for irritated areas, but don't rely on your eyes alone. Feel for lumps or bumps and if you find any, go in for a closer look, using a magnifying glass if need be. Be careful when removing ticks—if you're not sure how, search online for instructions.



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