

the PAWSitive Post

FROM PAWSITIVE HOUND DOG TRAINING

POSITIVE TRAINING FOR PETS AND THEIR PEOPLE



✧ Highlights ✧



LIVING WITH DOGS

Oh How I Miss You!

Dogs are intensely social creatures that find it hard to spend hours alone each day. Many dogs are finding alone time more challenging than usual after having their humans at home during the pandemic. Often, problematic dog behaviors can be directly attributed to boredom and loneliness: Chewing, digging, barking, and separation anxiety. If that's your dog, here are some ways you can help:



Physical exercise. Passing the day is easier if you're napping. Exercise makes your dog healthier, happier, and much calmer. For absences of a few hours to half a day, be sure to give your dog a workout before you leave. Throw a ball or a Frisbee, play tug, or let your dog play with other dogs for 20–30 minutes. For absences of more than 4 hours, consider getting a dog walker (if you haven't got one already) or, if your dog is social and enjoys the company of other dogs, enrolling your dog in a doggie daycare.

Mental exercise. Mental stimulation—providing outlets for natural canine energy—will also help to keep your dog out of mischief. Interactive toys come in the brain puzzle variety (hide-and-seek boxes), chew or dissect variety (plush toys with squeakers, Nylabones), and food puzzles (stuffed Kongs, treat balls). If you have only one dog, another good option is the The Pet Tutor from Smart Animal Training Systems.

When to get help: Separation anxiety requires expert assistance. Call a force-free trainer for advice if you see any of the following: Excessive barking, urination or defecation within minutes of your departure, excessive anxiety when you're getting ready to leave, frantic greetings when you return, digging or chewing at exit points (doors, window frames), self-mutilation, and escape attempts.

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**"Expect your dog
to act like a dog. He's not being bad.
He's just being a dog."**

—Jean Donaldson

DID YOU KNOW?

The Canine History of the Canary Islands?

You might reasonably assume the Canary Islands were named after birds. In fact, the birds were named after the island and the islands were named after dogs! The Spanish archipelago's title derives from a Latin name that translates to "Islands of the Dogs."

Why the name? The historian Pliny the Elder wrote that the largest of the islands were inhabited by "vast multitudes of dogs of very large size." It is also believed that the island's original people, the Guanches, worshipped dogs as holy animals—even mummifying them. (Some anthropologists think their practice may have been connected with the Anubis cult of the ancient Egyptians.)

The island's original connection with dogs can still be seen today in its flag, which features two large dogs standing on their hind legs in the island's coat of arms.



A WORLD OF DOGS

Older and Wiser: Why Adopt a Senior

Let's admit it: We have a youth bias. Puppies and young dogs up to about three years of age are the first to be adopted in shelters up and down the country. Meanwhile dogs older than seven—or as young as five—are overlooked, which means they are often the first



to be euthanized when space runs out. For many potential adopters, it's an obvious choice. Who wouldn't want as much of a dog's lifetime as you could get? Nobody looks forward to the inevitable physical decline and eventual loss of a loved companion, and it makes sense to postpone that heartbreak as long as possible. But these considerations, while certainly valid, leave out a great deal of important information.

Older dogs, for example, are often easier to live with than their younger counterparts. They are usually house-trained, may have learned polite manners, rarely require daily marathon exercise sessions, and have left most youthful follies behind, which means they won't chew up the living room rug or pull shoulders out of sockets when walked. Senior dogs are low-maintenance dogs. By contrast, puppies and teenage dogs require round-the-clock monitoring and attention—and they're blank slates. What does "no" mean? When is it okay to plant muddy paws on clean slacks? Oh, never? They have no idea and must be patiently taught everything. What's more, maturity in a dog equals predictability. Size, personality, grooming requirements; it's all there in plain view. Not so for puppies.

For all these reasons, it's odd that the bias for adopting young dogs is so pronounced. Surely many prospective dog guardians, if they thought about it, would love to live with a well-behaved dog that quickly adapts to the household routine and is content with a half-hour stroll every day. Finally, there's the inside story shared by those who have adopted senior dogs: Older dogs are just plain grateful. They got a second chance at happiness and they seem to know it. So for every remaining day of their lives, they adore their new human family with quiet, heart-stealing intensity.

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DOGS IN ACTION

Indoor Games to Play With Your Dog

The health and behavioral benefits of a well-exercised dog are legion. Quick summary: Regular exercise means our best friends live longer and are easier to live with. Sometimes life conspires to keep us inside, however, requiring creativity to keep our canine companions gainfully active.

There are the obvious go-to's, like a rousing game of hallway fetch or catch-me-if-you-can around the dining room table. But if you're looking for something different to break up indoor monotony for both you and your dog, you might try picking up a new dog sport. Options for indoors include Rally-O (great for basic manners!), putting your dog's sniffer to work with scent tracking or Nosework, getting the ball rolling with Treibball (the perfect sport if you live with a ball-obsessed dog), Canine Freestyle (dancing with your dog!), and Dog Parkour (games-based training that's fun for any dog and a great confidence booster for anxious canines).

You can get started at home with books (Dogwise.com carries titles on all these sports and more), YouTube videos, or online classes. If you and your dog find something that looks like a good fit, look for classes with a local qualified trainer when you can, too!



HEALTHY DOG

Why Dogs Eat Grass

It's a rare dog that never partakes of a tender stalk of juicy grass—and some dogs practically graze. Dogs are omnivores and it's likely their diet in the wild would include fruit, berries, seeds, herbs, and a variety of grasses (despite lacking the enzyme to digest grass). On occasion, grass-eating is an attempt to induce vomiting or otherwise soothe a digestive issue, and it's speculated that dogs also instinctively seek out certain herbs as a cure for other ailments.

Because of the connection with gastric upset, it's always worth paying extra attention if your dog suddenly develops a ravenous appetite for grass. Look for vomiting that lasts more than a few days, blood or mucus in the stool, and lethargy. Any of those should trigger a visit to the vet for a full checkup.

Absent any other symptoms, don't worry if your dog snacks on the foliage—and perhaps a bit of soil in the bargain. If nothing else, it's good roughage.

DOG IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Finnish Spitz

The Finnish Spitz originated in (you guessed it!) Finland. Remains of the breed date there from 8,000 years ago, and it was named their national dog in 1979.

This little powerhouse of a dog was bred to hunt all types of game, from small (squirrels and other rodents) to impressively large (elk!). In its native country the Finnish Spitz continues its original job as a hunting companion today.

Despite its proclivity to work, the breed is known to be quite friendly and well suited to domestic life. There's just one thing you should know—having been bred to point out game during a hunt by barking, they do love to bark. In fact, Scandinavia hosts a "King of the Barkers" competition and The Finnish Spitz has been clocked for as many as 160 barks per minute!

That said, they are quite intelligent dogs and can learn to keep the noise down through positive training. So if you don't mind a bit of canine chatter in your home, search online for a nearby rescue organization.



OUR SERVICES

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Stress-free Nail Trimming

If you can, arrange to have a Fear-Free veterinarian, vet tech, or groomer show you how to trim your dog's nails, or watch a video: it's much easier to replicate if you see it done first.

The prep. Have delicious treats on hand to dish out with every snip of the trimmers. If your dog has already had a bad experience or is nervous, go slow. Better to get less done but have a good experience that builds a lifetime of easy nail trimming.

The strategy. Aim to cut a little bit at a time to make sure you don't hit the painful pink part. Cut conservatively first and then use a nail file from there.

The trimming. Hold your dog's paw and gently push out a nail. Avoid the pink (live) part of the nail. When you cut, be quick, smooth, and decisive. After each snip, give your dog a yummy treat.

The alternatives. If nail trimming is just too stressful for you or your dog, consider filing down your dog's nails with a dremel made for that purpose, or teach your dog to use a scratch board.



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