

# D.O.G. TALK



from D.O.G. OBEDIENCE GROUP



## ✦ Highlights ✦



### LIVING WITH DOGS

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#### Will Work For Food

Does your dog scarf down meals in mere seconds? Then both of you are missing out. For dogs, eating should be work. First of all because searching and hunting for food is natural for canines whose ancestors spent the majority of their time this way. And second of all—and here’s the major benefit to you—switching to a work-to-eat strategy keeps your dog wonderfully occupied during your absences or while you’re trying to focus at home. That means he won’t be splitting apart the couch cushions or getting into the trash or barking up a storm at the birds outside the window, driving you and your neighbors crazy.



Instead of just serving up your dog’s meals, try feeding him in treat puzzles or Kongs that he gets when you’re not home or when you have a particularly important work meeting to attend from home. This way, your dog will spend half his day retrieving his food and the other half sleeping off the mental effort. The result? A calmer, more content dog and a less chaotic household.

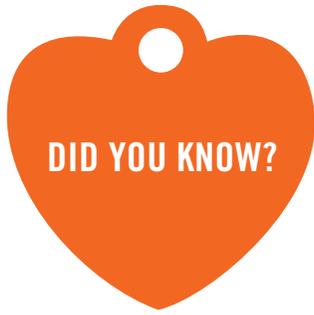
The key to a successful work-to-eat program is to start simple and only gradually increase the level of difficulty. You can go low-tech by hiding your dog’s food under a laundry basket or cardboard box, or inside an empty cereal box. Or you can use interactive food toys like treat balls, Kongs, or lick mats.

Kongs in particular are great because you can easily make the food retrieval task more difficult—and more rewarding—by varying the type of stuffing and the tightness of the layers. An easy Kong might contain loose kibble and chicken bits and be plugged by peanut butter or wet food. An advanced Kong might be a many-layered masterpiece that includes food log cubes, dog biscuits, wet food, and your dog’s favorite table scraps if you indulge him in such culinary delights. (For recipe inspiration, visit [kongcompany.com](http://kongcompany.com))

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“A dog can snap you out of any kind of bad mood that you’re in faster than you can think of.”

—Jill Abramson



### These Doggie Superstitions?

A dog eating grass means it will rain soon.

A yawning dog predicts a change in the weather.

A dog that howls, growls, or whimpers for no apparent reason means a ghost is nearby.

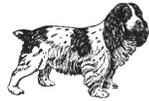
Meeting a white-and-black spotted dog gives you good luck in business endeavors that day.

Conversely, it's apparently unlucky to meet a barking dog early in the morning.

A strange dog walking into your house means you will soon make a new friend.

A white spot on a dog's forehead brings wealth to her owner.

And finally, a timely one: Pet a dog before job-hunting and you will get the job.



## A WORLD OF DOGS

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### Making a Lassie: The Art of Puppy Raising

Service dogs—assistance dogs trained specifically to help people with various disabilities—embody a modern canine ideal. Mellow, stoic, and highly trained, these contemporary Lassies help their humans open doors, answer phones, navigate traffic, or respond to smoke alarms. Coming across a service dog calmly steering through a busy downtown street or lying placidly under a chair at an outdoor restaurant amid tantalizing smells, it's easy to think these dogs are made of special stuff, impervious as they seem to distractions. That's true to an extent—many service dogs are bred from particularly good-natured and trainable parents—but it's only part of the answer.



What else makes a service dog? Socialization. That's where puppy raising enters the picture. Puppy raisers are volunteers who provide service dog puppies with a home for 12–18 months, usually starting when the pups are eight weeks old. They teach the dogs basic manners and, most importantly, socialize them. Consider the many experiences and situations a service dog must be comfortable with. Cars, buses, ferries, and airplanes; hotels, libraries, shops, supermarkets, and movie theaters; escalators, fountains, strollers, garage doors, and construction noise. Not to mention all manner of people and everything in a home, from the vacuum cleaner to the hair dryer.

With the support of the service organization, puppy raisers undertake the mammoth task of helping to create a dog that has, more or less, seen it all. Few things are left to chance in this carefully planned program of experiences. Day after day, the handler takes her canine charge out into the world to encounter enough things enough times that most of them become mundane. All that effort and time spent early in the dog's life make the Lassie we see possible. And perhaps your dog doesn't need to be quite that sophisticated. Perhaps less will do. But it's worth remembering that, although some dogs are more naturally calm than others, no dog is born cosmopolitan. That takes training.

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## DOGS IN ACTION

### COVID-19 Detection Dogs

The amazing canine sniffer has done it again! Dogs' noses have led them to many a job, from hunting prey to sniffing out bombs, drugs and other illegal paraphernalia, detecting illnesses like cancer and malaria, or warning their people of an oncoming seizure. Now Helsinki Airport is employing sniffer dogs to detect COVID-19 among potential passengers.



Dogs are capable of smelling substances diluted to one part per trillion. To put that figure into perspective, imagine yourself being able to note one drop of scent in the water of 20 Olympic-sized pools put together. With such tremendous olfactory ability, the Helsinki dogs are reported to require as few as 10 molecules to detect the virus (current lab tests need 18,000,000). Plus they can do it fast. Hopeful airline passengers are asked to rub their skin with a wipe, which is then handed over to the dog for a sniff test—no nasal swabs or waiting for lab tests required!

The Helsinki Airport dog program may eventually be one factor in reinstating safe travel. Maybe similar programs will soon help increase our safety in other places, too, such as hospitals and nursing homes.



## HEALTHY DOG

### The Right Rest

Regular exercise is key to keeping your dog in tip-top shape. It's also key to enjoying your dog's best behavior. Keep your dog well exercised and he's likely to reward you with more behavior you like (like snoozing while you make dinner or attend that Zoom meeting) and less you don't (like barking, attention seeking, or inappropriately-timed race-track circuits around your living room).

But the right amount of rest is equally important. Dogs are programmed for plenty of napping, and both their health and behavior can suffer when they don't meet their sleep quota. If you and the kids are home more these days, be sure your dog is still getting his downtime. Some quiet time in a crate (provided he likes his) or in another room away from all the extra activity can do wonders if your dog appears agitated or over-stimulated.

## DOG IN THE SPOTLIGHT

### Borzoï

The history of the Borzoï, or Russian Wolfhound, dates back to 17th century Russia. Bred in a wide array of colors to hunt prey ranging from rabbits to wolves, these sight hounds were so valued in Tsarist Russia that prior to the 1917 revolution the only way to acquire a Borzoï was as a gift from the Tsar himself.

The Russian Tsars weren't alone in their admiration of these beautiful dogs; Borzoï continue to appear throughout modern culture. The Borzoï is the symbol of the Alfred A. Knopf publishing house and Borzoï feature in many works of literature, including Tolstoy's *War and Peace* and Fitzgerald's *The Beautiful and Damned*. Borzoï often find themselves in films as well. Consider Boris in *Lady and the Tramp*, for example, as well as cameo roles in such pictures as *Legends of the Fall*, *Excalibur*, and *Bride of Frankenstein*.

Unlike in Tsarist Russia, today anyone can enjoy the company of a Borzoï. Interested in providing a Borzoï a home (and plenty of exercise)? Search online for a nearby rescue organization.



## OUR SERVICES

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### Ways To Tell If Your Dog Is Sick

Masking pain or illness is an evolutionary survival mechanism in dogs, which makes it hard to tell at times whether Fido is unwell. Here are some signs of trouble to look out for (when in doubt, always consult your vet):

- **Physical symptoms.** Vomiting, diarrhea, bloody stool, drooling, excessive thirst, rashes, swelling, discharge, wheezing, coughing, sneezing, flaky or crusted skin, dull coat, odor from mouth, skin, or ears.
- **Changes in behavior.** Loss of appetite, disorientation, circling, lethargy, persistent scratching or licking, twitching, trembling, head shaking, unprovoked crying out (a sign of acute, severe pain) or crying out when a specific area is touched (a sign of mild to moderate pain), seizures, frequent urination or unusually long urination. Lapses in house-training in adult dogs.

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