

“Why Does My Dog Do THAT?”

A Dog Lover's Guide to Over 50 Weird and
Wonderful Dog Behaviors

Cris Johnson

Why Does My Dog Do THAT? A Dog Lover's Guide to Over 50 Weird and Wonderful Dog Behaviors

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Portions of this book were based on my own experiences with dogs. I'm not a dog expert, so check with your veterinarian before following any of the advice in this book.

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Why Read This Book

Do you love dogs? Dogs are amazing creatures. They are loyal, friendly, and far more intelligent than many people believe. Dogs are task-driven and can even solve problems.

This book is a deep dive into several unusual behaviors common to dogs. As you discover the meaning behind many of these behaviors, you'll realize they not only shed light on what's going on inside your dog's brain but also when something might be wrong with your dog.

Part dog memoir and part guide to how to communicate with your own dog, you'll come away from this book with a deeper appreciation of the beauty and charm of these amazing animals.

Not a dog owner? You just may want to become a "doggie parent" after reading this book. Dogs can enhance your life and provide you with unconditional love and companionship. These wonderful animals can serve as a reminder of the joys of kindness and friendship without expecting anything in return.

Do you love science?

Cars, smart phones, televisions, ceiling fans, dishwashers, and on and on... none of it would be available to us without advances in science. Science is amazing by itself, but by combining superheroes and science, this book is an irresistible combination to young readers! Why?

Kids LOVE superheroes! By using simple science experiments that seem to reproduce superhero powers, kids will be hooked! On top of that, readers of this book will be able to access videos of each experiment conducted and explained by the author.

With *Super Science*, the lessons and concepts are easy to understand. This book is funny, silly, and features a lot of weird ways to illustrate scientific principles for young readers. From asking the question “Can a hot dog fly?” as a way to explain the Scientific Method to wondering “Did the President of The United States steal my bicycle?” to illustrate what makes a good hypothesis, and why dropping pizza on your sidewalk will help you understand Potential and Kinetic energy, this book is a wild, wacky way to learn fun science experiments that anyone can do safely.

Get the incredible book to help your kids unleash
their superpowers!



**Written by an expert with 20 years of
experience in education**



Cris Johnson is an experienced speaker, author, and presenter, having traveled across North America delivering programs to audiences of all sizes and ages.

Cris Johnson is also a Board-Certified Hypnotist & Instructor through the National Guild of Hypnotists and a Master Practitioner & Trainer of Neuro-Linguistic Programming, giving him unique insights into how people of all ages think and process information. Cris is an accomplished speaker on topics such as stress management, teambuilding in the workplace, communication strategies, and more.

Do you want Cris Johnson to be the motivational speaker at your next event?

Call (716) 940-8963 for more information

Praise for Cris Johnson's previous books:

“This is a great book for kids and parents! Kids will get the chance to try out different experiments and learn science is fun! Parents can help guide the scientific process; this book is especially good right now when so many students are doing distance learning. These experiments have supplies you can get from the grocery store and minimal prep and supervision is required. The book has LOTS of science vocabulary, and these experiments will encourage and excite your child about science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM). It's also a great way for you to hang out with your kid and talk about learning. There are easy-to-follow videos available, and the videos make it easy for the parents to see, step-by-step, what is required. I especially liked the mentos and coke experiment and the elephant toothpaste experiment. The text encourages using the scientific process and developing and testing hypotheses. The Superpowers angle is a great hook for young people! If you want to encourage your child to develop a curiosity for science and have some fun while doing it, you should get this book!”

– Linda W.

“As more kids are in remote learning classes, it becomes increasingly important to have a way for kids to get some hands-on learning. These are great and accessible projects that are very easy to set up and allow kids to learn some important science lessons while at the same time having fun. Also, they'll be a great way for parents and kids to do some fun things together, and you can't get that time back once you've missed it so this can be a great way to bring the family closer together.”

– James S.

“Everyone who spends time with children will LOVE this book. Parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and teachers will spend HOURS of fun with these experiments. The kids will be excited to learn about their own superpowers and how they can try and make hot dogs fly! The author presents the directions in a really fun and very clear and organized fashion so anyone can follow them. He even took the time to make videos of every experiment and post them on his website. Best of all, it is so much fun, and the kids will learn without even realizing it. What a great way to introduce play and excitement into learning! Don’t hesitate! Get your copy today!”

- Jayne W.

“The author’s passion for science & entertainment shines all throughout this book. It is very well written, easy to understand, fun to read, and loaded with lots of chances to engage in what you’re reading. I can’t decide which I enjoyed more, the super-hero powers, the 11 fingers, or all the things that are “super fun & messy!” This is probably the most entertaining science book I’ve ever read!”

- Eva Wells

“For teachers that are new to science education, this is a great discovery book. Add to it that the projects have connected videos so that you can see how to do the experiment and what the results are makes it easy for a teacher to decide if that is what the class needs.”

- Colleen Meacham

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Introduction

I am awakened by a very wet tongue that coats my face with saliva.

The owner of the tongue works vigorously to ensure every square inch of my face—every nook, every cranny, every access point—is liberally coated. Eventually, the tongue begins working its way in between my closed eyelids, and, astonishingly, up underneath my eyelids.

Trying to ignore the tongue intruder and get back to sleep, I finally realize that I am outmanned and outgunned when a second, smaller tongue also begins assaulting my face, concentrating its efforts at my mouth, working its way to my teeth until -

“Okay,” I finally cry out, “I’m getting up.”

My two assailants look at me, tails eagerly wagging at the prospect of starting the day.

Stanlee, a Havanese/Bichon mix with white fur and cream patches, is a small dog and is the more vocal of the two,

growling his 'happy-that-I'm-going-outside-before-I-pee-the-bed' growl.

Sophie is a pure-bred white Bichon Fraise, and even smaller, about half the size of what a full-grown Bichon should weigh, despite being over 10 years old. She whines excitedly more and more as I rouse myself from bed, finally barking loudly when she determines that I've taken too long getting my clothes on for the day.

When I'm finally ready, I open our bedroom door and amongst a clicking of doggie toenails, my two goofballs tear out of the bedroom and down the hallway. While the two dogs leave, two cats enter the bedroom: Biscuit, our gray stray tabby who decided a year ago that she was going to live with us, and Mittens, another stray we found as a two-pound soaking-wet kitten at our old house during the waning days of its sale. If she's yours, call me... please.

As I trudge half-awake downstairs to let the dogs out the back door to pee, I pass CaliAnn, our ancient, arthritic tortoise cat. She's super fluffy and is the softest cat I've ever touched. I'd compare her fur to that of a chinchilla...which annoys my wife whenever I threaten to shave her to make a coat.

After both dogs come back in from their morning bathroom break, it isn't long before Stanlee (yes, he really is named after Marvel icon Stan Lee) begins pawing at my arm as I sit on the couch. It's his way of letting me know that it's time for his morning walk.

My name is Cris Johnson, and I love pets, especially dogs. Stanlee and Sophie are like my kids to me. My wife Libby

and I never had children, so we do whatever we can to spoil our furry goofballs and give them a great life.

Despite all the love we lavish on our dogs, there are still so many things about their behavior that I don't understand. At seemingly random times, Stanlee will open his mouth wide in a yawn and a high-pitched squeaky noise comes out. Strangely, that one sound was the inspiration for this book.

Not long ago, I was finishing up my first book, *Super Science: Unleash Your Superpowers with These Fun Experiments*, when Stanlee made that noise during our afternoon walk. I remember thinking, "I wonder why he does that noise?"

He wasn't the only dog I'd ever heard make that noise: My former dog Frodo, a brown Cock-A-Poo, made the same sound from time to time.

As usual, when hearing that noise, I asked the question but let it pass. A few minutes later, Stanlee was walking around our spacious three-acre back yard, nose to the ground, sniffing intently, until finally settling in on what he had determined was the perfect place to poop.

"That's it," I thought. "I gotta write another book."

A year ago, the idea of writing a book seemed inconceivable to me. Now, after having published two books—the afore-mentioned *Super Science*, along with *Virtual Magic: Amaze Your Friends with Fun Tricks You Can Do Online*—the idea of writing a book about dogs seemed not only possible but a lot of fun.

I realized that there had to be a lot of weird pet behaviors out there that I could write about that would interest other people—enough to fill an entire book!

Pets, especially dogs, have been a major part of my entire life, most prominently the last near-20 years after marrying my wife, Libby. She introduced me to her dog Molly, a Pomeranian with an attitude the size of a Doberman and a penchant for McDonald's French fries.

Molly had her own set of strange behaviors... well, strange to me, at least. I'm not a dog expert, nor am I a veterinarian. I'm just a guy who loves dogs.

The purpose of this book is to celebrate pets, shed some light on some of their odd behaviors, and hopefully help you, dear reader, to understand your furry goofballs a little better.

In this book, you'll get answers to a litany of pet behavior questions such as: why do dogs eat poo? Why do dogs cock their heads when they hear certain sounds?

I decided early on to make this book mostly about things you can see your dog doing and not about what was going on inside their bodies, as I find their assorted behavior quirks to be more than enough for an entire book.

In planning this book, I took the weird behaviors that were most interesting to me and decided to write this book based on those quirks. I'm mentioning this now because as you read the book you might wonder, *"Why didn't he mention behavior X?"*

The answer is... because I didn't think about it.

With each chapter, well, I should say each *question*, I attempted to answer one specific dog behavior. Along the way, I'll share with you stories from the lives of my cherished pets: Pomeranian Molly (well, she was more of a step-dog but I'm still counting her!), Frodo, Sophie, and Stanlee.

As I researched this book, I found out that much to my surprise, some of the behaviors that dogs do are not merely cute or charming but potentially indicate that a pet might have a health issue of some kind.

At the end of each chapter, I will have a short section labeled "What Can I Do?" This will list a few possible options to consider in case it appears your dog is having a health issue. Of course, some of these questions will not have any negative effects on your pet's health... they are just oddball quirks. If that is the case, I'll mention it in the final section.

However, I have no veterinary training of any kind, so do not assume your pet has any kind of health issue based on what you read in this book. Many pet behaviors may have multiple meanings. The reason behind the behavior might be different depending on what's happening inside your pet.

I fully researched all the behaviors for this book by talking to veterinarians, combing through various pet expert sites, and studying to be a dog trainer. But before you make any decisions about your pet's well-being, talk to an expert. Remember; I am just a pet lover, not a medical expert.

Finally, some of these questions will have longer answers, perhaps going multiple pages, while others may only go for a paragraph or two. Some questions might seem incredibly obvious while others may be more obscure.

My point in mentioning all of this is to let you know that I'm writing this book mostly to satisfy my curiosity about dogs. I hope you will enjoy going on this journey with me.

Let's get started because there's a lot of fun stuff to get to.

Do Dogs Have a Language?

In many ways, this is the foundation of this entire book. While many details of how dogs communicate (both with humans as well as other dogs) are discussed in the following chapters, in a basic sense, dogs do indeed have a language.

Dogs do not have the same range of vocal abilities that people do. They can't use thousands of different words as we can. But dogs can communicate in complex ways many people still don't understand.

While humans like to focus on the actual words being said (and many of us stubbornly ignore vocal tonality, body language, and other markers), dogs are more varied. Dogs will use many communication channels to get their point across.

When you get up to get a drink of water, has your dog ever ran right over and taken your spot on the couch? Your dog takes your space when you leave as a show of affection and feeling a need to protect your spot from other animals.

Watch a dog that is fearful or wary. His body language gives him away. His head will be lower, his tail may be tucked, and his movements tentative. Look at the dog's ears. Are they flattened? How about his eyes? Do they look relaxed or is there a 'hard stare' in his gaze?

Speaking of tails, dogs use them to convey a lot of information. A wagging tail does not always mean a dog is happy, as you'll find out later in this book.

When it comes to communication, a dog's nose does a lot of heavy lifting. The simple act of taking a whiff is the bedrock of doggie communication. It's a way to greet another dog and exchange information.

Although not as complex, a dog's 'voice' is useful in communication, too. When a dog growls, it's communicating a certain message. Barking has many different meanings, depending on the dog and the situation. Even a dog's yawn, the 'stress yawn,' communicates vital information about a dog's emotional state.

"What Can I Do?"

To best communicate with your dog, read this book and others like it. I've done my best to accurately convey the ways dogs will communicate with us. My first goal for this book was to explain the behaviors or quirks that struck me as odd or amusing. However, after delving deep into the world of dogs, I came away transformed.

Want to say hello to your dog? Look at him and say “Woof!” as happily and energetically as possible. Here, the tone is important. The same “Woof” with a lower cadence could be interpreted as “stay away.”

Remember that dogs are very adaptable. Not only can they learn the intent behind many of our words, but they will come up with their own unique ways to communicate with you.

In the following chapters, I relate many of my favorite stories about my dogs. I do this first because they amuse me. Second, I do it to illustrate many of the behaviors explored in this book. Finally, you’ll see that each dog you encounter is unique, and while many of the behaviors I cover are universal to all dogs, they don’t always fall in lockstep perfectly. Like people, dogs are individuals.

Why Does My Dog Bark When I Come Home?

On the eve of our Alaskan cruise, my wife and I arrived home from work. The house was strangely silent: no excited, shrill barks, no clicking of toenails, nothing.

We had boarded the dogs at a kennel a day earlier so that on the morning of our flight life would be less chaotic.

I find the excited greetings of our furry troublemakers to be oddly comforting. Coming home to a quiet house sucks!

I have often wondered why our dogs bark excitedly when we arrive home. Are they happy to see us? Are they warding off what they think is an intruder until they see us and realize, “Mommy and Daddy are home at long last!”

After I began researching information for this book, I found the answer to the barking to be one with many possible answers.

If your dogs bark when you arrive, it could be because of any number of reasons:

- They must go to the bathroom.
- They are nervous or anxious.

- Your dog is bored and wants exercise
- Your dog might also be hungry
- It also might simply mean your dogs are happy to see you again.

Interestingly, there's a possibility that I found rather surprising: Your dogs might also be barking simply because you have reinforced it.

"What a minute," you might be thinking. "I've never tried reinforcing my dog's barking." No?

Upon returning home, did you ever walk up to your barking dogs and rub their heads or pet them to help calm them down? If so, over time your dogs have learned that their barking gets rewarded... by receiving attention.

While I find my dogs' greeting charming, I know many people reading this book might have different emotions ("please just make it stop") so here are a few suggestions you can try.

"What Can I Do?"

1. Exercise your dog before leaving.
2. Take your dog outside to pee before leaving
3. Stop encouraging the behavior. Reward your dog for sitting quietly.
4. Feed your dog before leaving so he doesn't have to wait so long for food.

In our house, this last suggestion is not an issue as our dogs always have access to dry food. Despite what others have

told us (dogs will stuff themselves with all available foods) my wife and I have not found this to be true.

Our dogs nibble on their dry food here and there throughout the day, with a full bowl of dry food often lasting two days, depending on their appetites. Our vet tells us our dogs are at the proper weight for their sizes and ages. My wife and I attribute this to the dogs learning that since food is always available, there is no need to scarf it all up and become overweight.

Why Do Dogs Squeak When They Yawn?

Both of my boy dogs, Frodo and Stanlee, on many occasions have made a noise where they open their mouths wide and a steady, low-volume squeak comes out. It's sort of a whine, but it does not change in pitch.

Based on the research I have done, it's called a 'stress yawn.'

When a dog stress yawns, it is most often due to stress. Something in the environment is freaking the dog out and they whine because they are worried about what's going to happen to them.

Here's where it gets interesting: Dogs learn to play on your emotions!

This is not going to be a big surprise to most dog owners, but if you immediately comfort your dog when he whines, you're essentially training your dog to keep whining.

In our house, we have what we call a 'dog room.' It's on the first floor and in the same room as the sliding glass doors which lead to the back porch and yard. We have a swinging

baby gate that allows us to lock the dogs up while we are eating. Otherwise they sit on our laps and try to take our food while we watch TV!

In truth, we should simply do a better job training our goofballs, which I have been working on, but our immediate solution is to put the dogs 'in lockdown' while we eat.

They typically are just fine for 10-15 minutes while we eat, but soon it starts. First a small soft whine, then the volume increases, until it gets to the point that both are yelping in a high-pitched squeaky whine/yelp/bark sound.

I always joke with my wife because it sounds like the dogs are having hot oil poured over them.

Both of our little monsters, as I'm fond of calling them, have simply learned that whining gets them what they want, which is to be released from 'lockdown' and allowed to rejoin us.

What's interesting, to me at least, is the fact that if the dogs cannot see us, which is the case when we eat on the couch in the living room while watching TV, they get agitated and start complaining much quicker.

On the other hand, there are certain days when we sit at the dining room table to eat and while they would prefer to be released to be with us, Sophie and Stanlee are much quieter until we let them out.

This tells me that at least being able to see us relieves some of their stress. Many dog owners forget that dogs are pack

animals, so a dog left in isolation is never going to be happy.

Because my wife and I do need to leave the house to go to work, we always have two dogs so that when they are left alone while one or both of us goes to work, at least they have each other.

“What Can I Do?”

1. Practice proper training techniques so your dogs don't take charge.
2. Remember that your dog is a social animal. Long periods of isolation are not good for their mental well-being.

Why Does My Dog Lick His Lips?

Sophie and Stanlee are excellent beggars.

When they see their humans (my wife and me) with something especially tasty, they sit at attention and fix their gaze on whatever it is that we are eating. Often, they will even follow the motion of our hands as we move the fork from our plate to our mouths.

While doing this, they will also often lick their lips, or as it's sometimes called, "lick their chops."

When planning this book, I just assumed that when a dog licks his lips it meant they were drooling and simply wanted some of whatever it was that I was eating.

To my surprise, I quickly learned this was not the case. When a dog licks his lips, it can of course mean they want whatever yummy thing they see you eating, but it can mean so much more.

For instance, let's say you come home and find that your dog has peed on the couch. If you start yelling at your dog, he might start licking his lips and looking away from you.

It turns out that in this case, your yelling is stressing your dog out and his lip licking is his way of letting you know that he's not a threat to you.

In other words, he's trying to get you to back off by backing off himself.

When a dog pees or poops where they are not supposed to, yelling at the dog after the fact only confuses him as he does not make the connection between the accident (which happened minutes or hours ago depending on when the accident is discovered) and the present when the dog is being yelled at.

There are times in our house when one of us will yell about something that we are upset about, and even though the yelling is not directed at either Sophie or Stanlee, one or both will lick their lips and hide. The yelling causes them stress.

Still, another reason why a dog might lick her lips is because of a health issue of some kind. They might have an upset tummy, a mouth disease, or something else might be going on. If you are ever unsure of your dog's health, the best course of action is simply to take your dog to the vet.

On the other hand, if my plate is full of mashed potatoes, then my dog Sophie will be licking her lips because mashed potatoes are her favorite food in the entire world!

“What Can I Do?”

Understand your dog’s normal behavior and patterns. Taking your dog in for regular checkups will help your vet establish baselines for your dog’s behavior.

In addition, it’s up to you to know and understand your dog’s regular, everyday behavior. If he’s not feeling well or is injured, likely he will act differently.

If you are concerned about your pup, contact a vet.

Why Does My Dog “Chuff?”

This behavior is one big neon sign to let you know that there are not necessarily absolutes in pet behavior.

Both of my dogs “chuff,” although Stanlee does it more often. “Chuffing” is when a dog exhales rapidly with a little bit of vocalization so the sound is kind of a cross between just exhaling and barking.

In most dogs, it is usually what they do before they start fully barking at what they think is an intruder.

Here’s an example: Sophie will be laying on the back of the couch. She hears the neighbor talking outside, so she starts chuffing, which is her way of trying to ward the neighbor away without going into complete protection mode. If the neighbor gets louder or closer, then she may start barking.

In other words, when Sophie starts chuffing, she’s at DEFCON-4 or so. Barking means she’s up to maybe DEFCON-3.

So chuffing is, most of the time, a dog's way of firing a warning shot: "Hey, whoever you are, I'm on to you! If you don't back off, things are going to get real."

What's funny about Sophie is that when Frodo was still alive, she would use chuffing to get him riled up.

Sophie would again be laying on the back of the couch. Her devious little face would be away from the window. All would be quiet. Then she'd give a little chuff. Instantly, Frodo was at DEFCON 2—barking crazily, racing through the house, ready and able to take on any threat to his kingdom.

He would eventually settle down... until Sophie, with what I interpreted as an evil gleam in her eye, would softly chuff again, re-starting Frodo's crazed behavior.

Stanlee, however, is an oddball.

He chuffs at me all the time and it's never a precursor to barking. He does it when he wants to play, but he most often does it when he wants to go for a walk. He will also do it if he hears what he thinks is a threat and will start barking if the threat does not back off.

What I find hysterical is that nowhere in my research did I find any references to chuffing being anything other than an indicator of stress and that barking was imminent.

Stanlee's chuffing, most of the time, means he simply wants my attention. I find it cute, but according to every source I found, he shouldn't be doing it to play.

He's a weird dog.

“What Can I Do?”

Monitor all your pet’s interactions with other pets, especially if they are unfamiliar with each other.

Watch your dog’s body language. Are his ears flattened? Fur standing up? Do they have that fixed “hunting mode” stare in their eyes?

By becoming intimately familiar with your dog’s body language, you’ll have a better idea of his mental state when interacting with other pets.

Why Does My Dog Eat His Own Puke?

I watched as Frodo walked through our dining room to the kitchen and back again, finally arriving in the living room. His head was down, his back slightly hunched, and he walked gingerly. Something was wrong.

Then the sound sounded: rhythmic retching, working its way up to his throat as he wandered behind the couch. The retching sounds continued for a few moments until the unmistakable sound of vomit hitting the floor was heard.

A few seconds later, I could hear my dog eating his vomit.

I have loved every dog I have ever had, but the first time I watched one of my dogs throw up and then begin eating it (I guess that could be called 're-eating'), I thought I was going to be sick myself.

Frodo, my boy dog Cock-A-Poo, was always very highly food-motivated, meaning he would do practically anything to get a treat. This aspect of his personality made him quite easy to train, but the fact that he would eagerly gobble up

his own puke immediately after throwing up was hard to take at times.

I wondered whether this was just some horrifyingly disgusting practice unique to my oddball dog or whether this was something common among dogs. After doing some research, it turns out Frodo was not unique among domestic canines.

When puppies are being weaned off their mother's milk, Mama Dog will regurgitate (yup, puke) food to feed the puppies to help them transition from a completely liquid diet toward solid foods.

Also, when a dog smells vomit, to him it still looks like food, so he simply sees it as the surprise appearance of a yummy treat!

A big part of this behavior comes down to smell. A dog's sense of smell is so acute that amongst the bile and other assorted gross-bits that he launches, he can smell the individual bits of food, causing him to think, "Oh, I gotta get me some of that!"

Since the puke is viewed and smelled like a food source, some experts claim that dogs eat their vomit simply because they are hungry and they happen to throw up at just the right time to give them what they see as a tasty treat.

Thankfully dogs do not always eat their vomit. Some dogs turn away from this food source after smelling it, most likely because they smell bile or some other toxin, which is what may have made them sick to begin with.

This comes back to a dog's super-sniffing abilities. Humans have around six million olfactory receptors... dogs have three hundred million! No wonder they can differentiate tasty smells of food from the other bits of unpleasantness in that smell pile.

While it's not recommended that you allow your dog to eat its vomit, it's at least a relief to know that dogs are a little more discerning than many might have thought!

“What Can I Do?”

Try to prevent your dog from eating his own vomit. It's probably safe, but if there's bile or other toxins in the mess, it could make your little guy even sicker if he eats it again.

Why Does My Dog Pee on Furniture?

“Go get the spray. Sophie did it again!”

It had happened yet again. My wife and I had gone out to our garage to look for something. Thinking we would only be outside for a few minutes, neither of us thought to crate the dogs.

Fifteen minutes later, we came back into the house to the sight of a big wet spot on the couch.

Sophie was already behind the couch, hiding. Sighing, my wife went to get the cleaner.

Sophie is an extremely nervous dog, small for her breed, and prone to peeing when anxious. The problem wasn't with Sophie—it was with us. As dog owners of nearly 20 years, we knew better.

Neither of us yelled at Sophie. Because the peeing was in the past, we both knew yelling at our tiny furry goofball would only confuse her.

Why do housebroken adult dogs (presumably without any physical ailments) mark furniture from time to time?

Truthfully, there are a lot of possible reasons why. A lot of it comes down to territory: Just as people stake out their territory with vanity license plates, DMV records, and other visual man-made documents, doggies feel a need to put their stamp on their territory.

If there is new furniture or a new article of clothing in the house, your four-legged friend may feel the need to mark it since it's in his/her territory.

What about visitors? They bring a whole host of unfamiliar sniffs with them. If the visitor also has pet-smell on these articles of clothing, that may trigger a need to mark.

I can remember many times when I've gone to a friend's house, one who also has dogs, and upon returning home, Sophie and Stanlee spend an inordinate amount of time sniffing my clothing, carefully going over every inch of cloth.

It sometimes felt as though I was being interrogated: "Who were you with? How long were you there?"

If you have more than one dog in your house, another reason for your dog's marking might be dominance, that is; marking to assert themselves as higher in the pecking order in your home's doggie-hierarchy.

Or your dog may feel threatened and pee on something out of anxiety. Most of Sophie's couch-related accidents occur on my wife's side of the couch, so we used to believe that Sophie was expressing her displeasure with my wife in some way.

Sophie is and always has been a very nervous little dog, so in her case, her couch marking is probably related to anxiety more than anything else.

Understanding what motivates behavior is one thing, but what is a pet owner to do?

“What Can I Do?”

Experts suggest several possible remedies:

- Spay or neuter your dog
- Thoroughly clean the area with special cleaners
- Limit your dog’s access to those areas
- Limit your dog’s view of the outside world so he can’t see other dogs wandering into “his territory.”
- Step up potty training: Many dog experts agree that often the issue with a dog’s behavior is the owner!
- Work with your dog on commands such as “stay,” “sit,” and so forth, which will help establish yourself as the pack leader.

Why Does My Dog Pee Over Other Dogs' Pee?

Stanlee sniffed at the spot where Sophie just peed. After a few moments of careful sniffing, He lifted his leg and peed over her spot.

The problem was Sophie hadn't left the spot on the grass. As both dogs came running toward our back door, I could see bright yellow droplets on Sophie's fur.

I sighed and reached for the container of doggie-safe spray cleaner.

Never a dull day in our house, I thought.

Most dog owners have heard of the phenomenon of dogs peeing over the same spot where another dog just peed, and most have probably heard or been told that it's all about 'social dominance.' That is; establishing who is the alpha dog in the area.

While this is true, the behavior can mean other things as well.

For instance, an older dog might mark the pee of a younger puppy in the middle of housebreaking. I noticed Sophie,

our much older, smaller dog doing this as Stanlee was being potty trained as a pup. Even though Stanlee is now three years old, she still does it.

Another reason for 'overmarking' as it's called can be because of competition for females. A boy dog might use his pee to cover up the urine scent of a female dog to try to keep knowledge of the girl dog from any other males in the area.

"What Can I Do?"

This is standard doggie behavior, so there isn't much to worry about or correct. There are a couple of exceptions to consider.

1. If you have an overly anxious dog, he might mark more frequently and/or with greater amounts of pee. There are things you can do to reduce his anxiety, such as considering the location where he's crated or contained when left alone, more exercise, physical contact, and treat balls.
2. Another exception would be if a new puppy has accidents in your home while housebreaking and your older dog pees to cover it up, the bigger issue would be the housebreaking of the puppy.

Why Does My Dog Puke?

Like the iconic *Jaws* theme, I heard it start. Slowly and softly at first, then gradually increasing in speed and volume: Stanlee retching at the foot of our bed.

“Get him off the bedspread!” my wife called out, forcing me to scramble into action—I picked up my dog and carefully deposited him on the bedroom floor while my wife and I watched helplessly.

As we watched, my wife asked, “Did he eat anything he shouldn’t have today?”

“Not that I know of,” I answered. I felt bad for my poor little guy, knowing how awful I feel when I get sick.

“He’s done,” my wife said.

I sighed as I went to retrieve some paper towels.

At least I have another topic for my book, I thought as I went downstairs.

The truth is dogs may vomit for any number of reasons.

He may throw up because he ate his food way too fast.

He may throw up because he ate too much food. I find this one interesting because it seems to fly in the face of the advice that many dog experts give—only setting your dog's food out at specified times of the day.

I find this curious because this would seem to encourage a dog to overstuff himself. After all, he realizes food is only available for a short time each day.

For what it's worth, my wife and I don't do that. We always leave our dogs' dry food out. Rather than gorge themselves as many experts suggest will happen, our dogs nibble on some amounts of dry food throughout the day. They self-regulate their food quite easily.

Our vet usually praises us for keeping our dogs at the proper weight for their breed and size... although they have been known to get a little pudgy when I am too generous with certain treats.

And yes, he may throw up because he ate something he shouldn't have, such as a toy he tore apart or something out of the garbage can.

Other causes might be:

- Eating things that don't agree with his tummy, such as a new brand of dog food
- Car sickness - our dog Stanlee is prone to this, and always looks a little woozy when we drive to the vet
- Heatstroke
- Viral infection or another ailment

“What Can I Do?”

The most frustrating thing about trying to deduce what’s going on with your pet is the fact that he can’t simply tell you how he’s feeling, so it can turn into a bit of a detective game.

Look at your pet’s behavior surrounding the vomiting. If he is eating and pooping normally, an isolated incident of vomiting may not be a cause for concern.

However, if the vomiting persists on a more frequent basis, it’s always best to be proactive and see your dog’s vet.

Your vet will probably ask you about your dog’s behavior: Is he lethargic? Dehydrated? Eating normally or loss of appetite? Is his poo normal or softer than normal?

Again, as I will repeat over and over in this book, I am not a pet expert. If you have any concerns about your furry friend, go consult a vet right away.

Why is My Dog's Nose Wet?

As I held the teeny Milk Bone treats in my hand, Stanlee sniffed at my closed fist eagerly, trying to get my hand to open so he could gobble up the tasty treat. He pressed his muzzle in between my fingers, spreading his nose wetness all over my hand.

"Fine," I said. "Eat it so you don't 'slime' me anymore."

I had always heard that if a dog's nose was wet that it indicated good health. But I wondered exactly what was it that was good about a wet nose?

As it turns out, a wet nose means your dog's sniffing capability is much better. Most good dog owners know that a dog can smell anywhere from 1000 to 10,000 times better than people.

Here's the neat part: a wet nose means scent particles have a better place to stick to, meaning a wet sniffer is more effective. Mystery solved!

The importance of a dog's nose is much more than just for sniffing, however. In addition to panting and the pads of their feet, dogs also release some heat through their noses.

I found all this interesting, but I wondered how exactly dogs kept their noses so wet.

First, a dog's nose produces mucus, which is designed to keep it wet. Next, most dogs constantly lick their noses, not only to keep them wet but also to taste some of the scent particles that have collected on their noses. Finally, because dogs are constantly sniffing, their noses often get wet in their daily investigations of the world around them.

“What Can I Do?”

Don't panic if your dog has a dry nose. Some dogs just have a drier nose. Additionally, a dog's nose can become chapped and drier as they age.

As with so much of doggie health, it's best to look at everything the dog is doing rather than make a snap judgment based on one aspect of the dog's behavior. In other words, if your furry buddy has a dry nose but is otherwise acting normally, he's probably doing just fine.

On the other hand, if he's listless, it may be time to visit the vet.

A more precise thing to keep an eye on is the overall condition of your dog's nose: Is the skin of the nose cracked or red? Are there sores? In those cases, go see your vet.

Conversely, if your dog's nose is wetter or more 'mucus-y' than normal, that may also be a cause for concern.

Why Does My Dog Scratch His Paws in the Grass After He Poops?

“Well, that’s just rude!”

The rudeness in question came from my late dog Frodo. It’s one of the stories my wife and I laugh about now that Frodo is no longer with us.

We were walking Frodo and Sophie one day. Both dogs began sniffing near a tree in preparation to go potty. Frodo, who was almost twice the size of Sophie, finished his business and immediately began kicking dirt in Sophie’s face with his back feet.

The whole scene caused me to flashback to my childhood and reading those ridiculous ads in the back of comic books with the weakling kid getting sand kicked in his face by the bigger bully.

For years, I just assumed that Frodo was just a bully!

As I prepared the topics for this book, one of the suggestions was for the very same practice of a dog digging and kicking with his back feet after going potty.

I was surprised to learn that dogs do it to mark territory, showing who is the alpha or top dog in an area. Many times, a dog who has never done this bizarre post-poopy kicking dance in a household will suddenly start doing it when a new dog arrives.

Most surprising, however, is the fact that dogs have glands in the pads of their feet that release pheromones to assist in this territorial marking.

This 'backward kicking,' as it's sometimes called, also helps spread the scent about, expanding the reach of the dog's calling card.

Dogs never cease to amaze me. Even the most innocent or goofy behaviors have deep meaning in the dog world.

“What Can I Do?”

While this is perfectly acceptable behavior in the world of dogs, some people, especially the owners of very large dogs, might be concerned about their beautifully manicured lawns being dug up by an overzealous dog marking their territory.

The solution? Take your dog for long walks away from your property.

We have three acres of property and very small dogs, so I just let them do what they do.

Is My Dog Ticklish?

As I scratched Sophie's belly, her rear right foot started gyrating wildly. I stopped the scratching and her foot stopped.

I started scratching again, and once more her foot started its kicking motion.

It certainly appeared that she was ticklish, yet she didn't try to struggle or get away as humans (well, me at least) try to do while being tickled.

My suspicions were correct—dogs are indeed ticklish! Of course, they do not laugh out loud as humans do, but their physical reactions show that they do feel the same physical sensation that causes their limbs to flail about.

This flailing or kicking is more because certain nerves under the skin connected to the spinal cord are being stimulated, so it's an unconscious reaction... unlike when I'm tickled and I start throwing haymakers in a futile effort to escape my tickling tormentor.

Others claim that the tickling sensation causes your dog to feel as though something is burrowing in his coat, such as a flea, causing him to try and scratch at the intruder.

“What Can I Do?”

Pay attention to your dog’s reactions. If he lays on his back and looks as though he’s enjoying the scratching, he probably is. Look for a lop-sided open mouth smile, too—that’s a prime indicator that he is enjoying himself. A dog who eats, plays, and poops normally is probably just fine.

However, if he recoils or tries to get away, it could indicate he doesn’t like that kind of touching. It also may indicate skin irritation or infection, so a trip to the vet may be in order.

Why Does My Dog Rag Doll His Toys?

Stanlee is a weird dog.

He's weird because most of the time he does not initiate playtime until we go to bed. Once on the bed, he excitedly bounces about and grabs the nearest toy and starts 'rag dolling' it that is; shaking the toy vigorously from side to side.

The weird part? That he does this mostly at bedtime.

I watch him rag doll his toys and think, "Boy, that's pretty aggressive looking."

Domesticated dogs still hold onto some of their ancestors' behaviors, such as hunting. When a dog rag dolls his toy, he is mimicking the action taken by wild dogs—shaking their captured prey from side to side was an action taken to snap the prey's spine, killing it quickly so they could eat it.

Today, with our pet dogs, it's mostly benign, a way to let off some steam and perhaps release some endorphins.

When dogs chew their toys they are releasing endorphins... and as a result feeling pretty good about what they are doing. Some dog behavioralists believe that when dogs engage in aggressive forms of play, such as rag dolling their toys, they are also releasing endorphins, although a comprehensive study on this has yet to be conducted.

Some experts claim the behavior is completely harmless while others warn that if a large dog gets too aggressive in his play, smaller pets or even children could be at risk.

“What Can I Do?”

Most experts agree that if your dog is adopting the traditional play stance (front paws and head on the ground while the hind quarters and back legs remain upright) the play is just that, play.

However, if the dog is upright and any playful growling becomes more aggressive, you may want to work on correcting your dog's behavior.

The biggest piece of advice when dealing with overly aggressive play is simply to ignore it. Once the aggressive play ends, reward your dog.

As with anything surrounding your dog's behavior, look at the global picture and consult a vet if necessary.

Can My Dog See Color?

When I was a little kid, I always wondered why the bull matadors used red as the color of their clothes when in the arenas with the bull. Could the bull discern red at all?

I'd always heard that most animals were color blind and just accepted that as true.

However, when I began researching this book, this question came up rather quickly, so it gave me a reason to find out for myself.

The eye's retinas have two different kinds of cells: rods and cones. Rods detect levels of light along with motion while cones discern color differences.

Humans have more cones, allowing us to see more colors, but dogs have more rods, which means they have the advantage when seeing in low-level light and especially movement. Considering dogs are hunters at their core, having an edge in seeing movement when stalking prey certainly makes sense.

Although dogs' eyes are more rod-centric, they are not colorblind in the sense that most people believe. The old myth of only being able to see in black and white (and shades of grey) does not apply to dogs.

Dogs' capacity to see in color most closely resembles that of a person with red-green color blindness... that is, a person whose vision cannot distinguish between the colors red and green.

While dogs can see certain colors, their spectrum is more limited than humans' sight. For instance, red appears as a dark brown or even black to a dog. The colors yellow, orange, and green all look rather yellowish to your dog. Dogs can, however, pick up blue very readily, although purple also looks blue to your dog.

Other differences between human sight and doggie sight include nearsightedness, which is when an object in the distance may appear crisp to us but blurry to your pup.

The visual advantage is not completely on the side of humans, however. Since dogs' eyes are positioned more toward the sides of their heads, they have a wider field of vision than humans, meaning they can see more of what's going on in the world around them at any given time.

Think of it as your dog seeing in Imax format at the movie theater!

“What Can I Do?”

Don't buy your dog a red and green sweater for Christmas because he won't appreciate the stripes.

Why Does My Dog Drool?

Of all the questions about dogs' behavior in this book, this was near the top of the list in my mind of being straightforward to answer: Dogs drool because of hunger.

Right?

As it turns out, drooling can mean many things.

First, yes, a dog's drooling can certainly mean they are hungry. Many people have heard of Pavlov's experiments with dogs. The Russian physiologist Ivan Pavlov was researching the saliva response in dogs when they were being fed.

Pavlov discovered that while the smell of the food itself triggered a drool response in dogs because they anticipated being fed, the surprising thing was that the same response was triggered in the dogs even when there was no food present.

He realized that the dogs eventually began salivating when they heard the footsteps of his assistant (who brought the food) approaching, meaning that the dogs had associated

the footsteps of the assistant with the impending arrival of their food.

Because they had been conditioned to link the prospect of food with the approaching assistant, the dogs salivated upon hearing the approaching footsteps.

Dogs salivate when they know, or suspect, yummy food is within their grasp. Pretty straightforward.

However, dogs may also drool when they are sick with infections such as strep throat or tonsil infections, just to name a couple.

Additionally, dogs may drool because of gum disease or excess tarter build-up in their teeth.

Yet another cause of drooling may be something caught in his teeth or throat, such as a sliver of bone or a chunk of a rawhide toy.

Most surprisingly, dogs also drool if they become overly anxious or stressed out!

“What Can I Do?”

If your pup is drooling, look at what is going on in his immediate environment: has he found something tasty but potentially dangerous to chew on? As a rule, it’s always recommended to ‘childproof’ your home to minimize your dog’s chances of getting into anything that may cause him harm.

Inspect his teeth and gums. How do they look? Is anything stuck in his teeth? Does your dog have trouble swallowing?

How is his overall behavior? Does the excess drooling accompany listlessness or lethargy?

Or has someone just walked into your house carrying a big juicy steak?

As with so many facets of doggie behavior, sometimes a dog owner needs to use a little detective work to figure out what's going on with their beloved pooch.

Does My Dog Know His Name?

This question may read as deceptively simple, but it's rather complicated.

I remember years ago, my friend Rodney explained to me, "You know, dogs only respond to their names because of conditioning, the same as when they respond to commands. They don't have a sense of self-awareness."

I found that to be a little sad. Was my fuzzy companion completely unaware of his own existence? With the variety of emotions he displays, there must be something else going on behind that dopey face... right?

In one way, my friend is right.

When a dog learns to respond to his name, he's learning by conditioning. Say your dog's name to him and give him a treat when he looks at you or comes to you upon hearing his name and it means that he's been trained to associate the sound of his name with treats.

That means he doesn't necessarily have a sense of identity regarding his name. It's just a sound he learns to respond to.

Regarding the question of self-awareness, I was delighted to learn of some experiments going on and what they may reveal about dogs and what's going on between those furry ears.

One test that seemed to spell doom for the idea of dogs' self-awareness was conducted with a massive flaw. It involves a mirror test for children.

In this test, young children are marked on their foreheads by a colored streak while they are sleeping and unaware of being touched. These kids are then placed in front of a mirror. If they look at themselves in a mirror and notice the color streak on their foreheads and try to touch it, that seems to indicate self-awareness: *That kid looking at me from this mirror is me. Hey, I've got something on my forehead—better wipe it off!*

For context, most children over the age of three pass the test. Dogs fail.

Remember the flaw I mentioned? A dog's primary sense for processing the world around him is not vision like in humans but rather scent.

With that in mind, another test was designed, one especially for dogs.

In this test, urine-soaked cotton balls are collected from several dogs and sealed to prevent drying out. On test day,

the cotton balls are scattered in the test area. Dogs are set loose to walk around the test area, sniffing the cotton balls.

Because dogs sniff their surroundings to learn about the environment, assess possible threats, and so forth, it would stand to reason that when they encounter their own scent, they would recognize it quickly and move on to more unfamiliar scents.

Consistently, when dogs encountered cotton balls soaked with their own urine, they spend significantly less time inspecting that ball. Often, they ignore their own cotton ball completely.

Since they recognize their own scent, this would seem to indicate that on some level, the dog's mental process is along the lines of *'Oh, that's my own stink. Okay, I can move on to other things I don't know.'*

Happily, to me at least, this seems to indicate that dogs are self-aware.

"What Can I Do?"

This question reminds me of something important regarding our furry pals. If we truly want to improve our communication with dogs, we constantly need to understand dogs on their level.

They don't understand the nuances of our spoken language, only basic tonalities, and associations with a relatively small collection of words and phrases.

The more we can learn to 'speak dog,' the more we can improve our relationship with our four-footed friends.

How Come My Dog Can Hear a Silent Whistle?

The phrase 'silent whistle' certainly seems like an oxymoron: How can something silent be considered a whistle at all? Of course, the phrase 'silent whistle to humans but not to dogs' is way too cumbersome!

Like dogs' sense of smell, their hearing abilities are amazing compared to humans.

In terms of measurement, a humans' range of hearing is around 20 hertz to 23 kilohertz, yet a dog's hearing is about double that.

These higher frequencies are like that of higher-pitched squeaks made by some rodents, a rich food source for wild dogs. Their high-frequency hearing allowed them to pinpoint the location of these rodents as well as hear sounds from much farther away, giving them an advantage when hunting.

Of course, due to evolution and selective breeding, not all domestic dogs have these same super-human hearing

abilities. Some, like terriers, have hung onto these abilities, while others have not.

Additionally, as dogs get older, they begin to lose their ability to hear at these upper ranges.

Regarding the so-called silent whistles themselves, they are most often used when training dogs. The idea is that these whistles will produce a sound that can help deter dogs from barking yet not annoy surrounding people.

The whistles often cause more barking initially as the dog is irritated (although not harmed) by the whistle, yet after repeated training sessions, the dog learns to associate the troublesome sound with the whistle and gradually barks less due to conditioning.

“What Can I Do?”

If you are going to use a dog whistle as a deterrent to your (or your neighbor’s) dog’s barking, experts warn users to never blow the whistle for long periods, or right next to a dog’s head, or to blow the whistle very loudly.

Why Does My Dog Lick?

Both of my dogs love to lick. Whether it's themselves, my pillow, my face, or a cat's butt, it seems as though there is no surface my dogs won't explore with their tongues. Sometimes it's cute, sometimes it's confusing, and sometimes it grosses me out.

Dogs are like cats in that they have a certain degree of desire for good hygiene. They will often lick their paws or even their hindquarters and reproductive areas after going outside, whether it is to go potty or merely play.

Your pooch may also lick their private areas excessively when there is an infection, so if you notice Fido constantly licking his privates, it may mean a trip to the vet is in order.

Other times, dogs lick themselves, especially their paws, out of boredom.

All this licking discussion is of course merely a preamble to the age-old question: Why does your dog lick your face?

Part of it is simply because you taste good! I know that whenever I return home from a job outside, Sophie is all over me, trying to take care of my sweat.

Another reason for Sophie's insistence at all this cleaning up activity is that she sees me as part of her pack and often members of a pack will help clean each other up.

This pack behavior-inspired licking is also a form of communication: It's a dog's way of telling another dog, 'Hey, let's be friends' or maybe 'I submit to you.'

Here's the big answer that many dog owners, especially those kinds of dog owners who call themselves their dogs' 'mommies' or 'daddies' want to know: Do dogs lick their owners strictly because of affection?

According to many dog experts, the answer is a resounding yes—dogs lick their owners because of love. The act of licking will often release 'happy endorphins' that calm and comfort the dogs but often drive pet owners crazy.

"What Can I Do?"

To help curb your pet's boredom-licking, they require several hours a day of some form of mental stimulation, which can take the form of walks, playtime, chew toys, and other devices or activities designed to get your pup's mental juices flowing.

If they are constantly licking their bathroom areas, schedule an appointment with a vet.

Does My Dog Like to Be Petted?

It's obvious that dogs love attention from their humans, but do they like all the things that we assume they do? For instance, do they enjoy being petted?

While I think any loving dog owner already knows the answer to this question, it's interesting to know that scientists study this.

It turns out that while our dogs love to be petted, it goes much deeper than just something they enjoy... they need it.

Petting your dog helps them feel more secure and less stressed out about what will happen to them, much like humans.

Not only that, but it's a simple bonding experience not only for your dog but you as well.

Interestingly, like humans, dogs become depressed and begin to suffer from mental problems when left alone for extended periods.

With all of that in mind, there is some interesting etiquette to follow when petting dogs that are not familiar with you.

First, allow the pooch to initiate contact. Let him approach you and watch his body language. Don't hover over the dog, as that may intimidate him. Turn your body slightly away from the dog and avoid direct eye contact as that can also intimidate the dog.

Remember that when a strange dog first approaches you, he may be looking to merely investigate the new person in his surroundings and not necessarily for affection.

When petting any dog, whether he's familiar with you or not, remember to pet in the same direction in a slow, gentle, rhythmic way as that is what will feel best to him and provide him with the most comfort.

Interestingly, most experts agree that dogs do not like having their heads petted, as they may feel threatened, nor do they like having their tails petted because tails can be very sensitive.

My dogs enjoy having their heads rubbed and in fact will often nudge my hand with their noses to encourage me to do so, leading me to believe the 'no head' rule is a generalized idea, mostly for dogs unfamiliar to you.

“What Can I Do?”

One of the worst things you can do to a dog is to tie him outside and ignore it. Dogs, like humans, are intensely social creatures and there isn't much worse punishment to a dog than isolating it.

Why Does My Dog Bite Me When We Play?

My dog Stanlee and I play a weird game that we sort of invented together: I try to touch Stanlee's back half of his body and he tries to block me, either by scampering out of the way or gently nipping at me with his mouth, or a combination of the two.

Despite having a big mouth for a dog his size and many sharp teeth, I barely feel it when we play. Stanlee knows the right amount of pressure so it's only 'play' and not aggressive behavior.

Stanlee is even in control when we play a game I invented called "Rabid Dog" where I flip Stanlee on his back and he bares his teeth and growls while I rub his belly. It looks like highly aggressive behavior on his part (hence the name of the game), but once more he is very gentle whenever we play.

Gentle biting is a part of doggie education, as pups in a pack nip and play with each other, learning through trial and error what constitutes play that is too aggressive and what is acceptable.

With all that in mind, acceptable mouthing behavior may escalate if a dog becomes fearful or agitated. If two dogs are playing and once starts to get a little more aggressive, things can often escalate quickly.

“What Can I Do?”

If your dog is biting too aggressively during play, there are several simple things you can try to discourage the behavior.

First, turn your attention away from your dog. Cease play, and he may get the message.

You can also guide his behavior toward something more appropriate, such as a rawhide or other chew toy.

Give your dog plenty of exercise. If he’s nipping too hard during play, it may be an indication that he has too much energy and needs a way to burn it off.

Finally, don’t encourage your dog to mouth during play when you bring him home as a puppy. It sure beats trying to unlearn a bad habit later!

I know my wife can’t stand it when my dog mouths me because I encourage it as part of his play, but I always know when to stop and as a well-adjusted dog, so does he. Most people don’t enjoy that kind of behavior from their dog, so the best thing to do is establish acceptable behavior from day one.

Why Does My Dog Go Nuts After a Bath?

If you are a new dog owner or are just considering getting a dog, this question might not make sense, but anyone who has ever owned a dog for any length of time is reading this and thinking, “Yes! My dog goes completely bonkers after a bath! What’s happening with him?”

As it turns out, quite a bit is going on.

One of the biggest reasons why your pooch might go nuts after a bath is simple relief: He’s glad it’s over. He lived through it, it’s finished, and now he’s burning off a storehouse of nervous energy that started building up as soon as you started coaxing him toward the bathroom. Now, he’s so happy it’s done that he just has to run around in pure relief.

Another thing a dog usually does after a bath that is closely related to, or maybe even a part of the post-bath insanity flight through the house, is he will start rolling around on the floor, digging at the carpet, flopping around, and trying to bury himself in any available blanket, cloth, or pillow.

While dogs don't think in words as we do, his thought process during this chaotic period of activity could be roughly translated to *'Oh no, I gotta get this horrible stink off me! What did they do to me? This is horrible, gotta get it off right now!'*

While people do not particularly enjoy doggie scent as a rule and spend billions of dollars a year on pet-friendly shampoos, your dog does indeed enjoy his own scent and is frantically rubbing himself on any available surface in a determined attempt to remove that lilac odor that you may love but he thinks is foul beyond belief.

"What Can I Do?"

Some dogs have a very tough time with baths and suffer greatly from anxiety. Here are a few things you can do to ease your pooch's mind.

First, if you are in the habit of bathing your dog outdoors, move bath time inside immediately. Why? That hose water is cold, and while many people like to think of their dogs as hardy, sturdy animals, the fact is cold water shocks their system just like it does people. Moving indoors when bathing your dog means you can adjust the temperature so he won't be as physically uncomfortable.

Second, make sure that wherever you bathe your furry goofball that there is a safe non-skid surface for his feet. If he is slipping and sliding throughout the whole ordeal, it's going to make an already confusing and unpleasant experience (for him) even scarier.

Third, consider giving him something to focus on during bath time. Smear some peanut butter on the floor of the tub to give him something to lick up. Yes, smearing peanut butter on the floor of the tub might seem bizarre, but who cares? You are going to wash it away anyway.

Next, skip the running water altogether. The sound of the running water might be too loud on your dog's ears. Remember, compared to humans, your doggie's hearing is superhuman. Try filling up some buckets and bath your buddy that way.

Finally, try some good old-fashioned positive reinforcement. Before the bath, give your dog some super-yummy treats just for willingly heading into the bathroom. Give more yummy goodness to him for approaching a dry bathtub and give him the whole jar of treats for willingly getting into the tub. Okay, the 'whole jar' would be too much, obviously, but the point is to build up to the bath using positive reinforcement so perhaps the entire experience won't be something like a Friday the 13th movie to your sensitive dog.

When all else fails, take your dog to a professional groomer, one with a good bedside manner.

Why Do Dogs Fart?

In the first draft of this book, I titled this chapter “Do Dogs Fart?” I changed it simply because I think anyone who has ever owned a dog knows the answer to that question.

Yes. Dogs do indeed fart.

There are times when my dogs fart and I think I’m going to pass out. How can something so horrifyingly bad come out of something so cute and tiny?

Writing about dog farts was one of the first things I thought about when planning this book. Farts are funny and farts are a fact of life.

My dog Stanlee once farted and upon hearing the noise, he turned his head around to look at where the intruder was coming from. Then he growled.

Yes, my dog growled at and tried to intimidate his own fart.

Our Pomeranian dog Molly, when she was very old, used to fart as she tried rolling over from her back to a standing position.

I'm sure everyone reading this book who has ever owned a dog has similar amusing stories.

With that thought came the realization that there was no way in the world my experience was in any possible way unique in this regard.

With absolutely zero scientific data to back up my claim, I am 100% convinced that every dog owner on the planet knows that dogs fart.

Therefore, I decided to focus this section more on the 'why.' Specifically—why dog farts are so eye-wateringly *bad*.

First, the easy part: Dogs fart for many of the same reasons that we do. Dogs fart because of a build-up of gases in the intestine and colon.

What causes this gas build-up? Plenty of things. Maybe your pooch eats too fast and in his hasty gulping also takes in air.

Another reason why your dog may fart is that he might be eating the wrong kinds of foods.

This gets to the heart of this chapter: If it seems as though your dog is trying to use chemical warfare to gas you out of your own home, you may need to make some adjustments in your hound's diet.

“What Can I Do?”

Your pup might have an allergy to a particular brand of dog food, so you may need to change the brand of food he eats.

Along the same lines, many cheap dog foods may not sit well with your doggie's digestive tract, so consider spending more so your dog is happier from a tummy standpoint.

Beware: A sudden diet change, even a good one, might be enough to throw your dog's system out of alignment for a while, so keep an eye on his poo and look for tell-tale signs of digestive trouble that can include runny, extremely soft, or discolored stool.

Here's the big one: Avoid giving your dog table scraps. Yes, he loves them and has probably spent many hours when you are not around fine-tuning his begging technique, but the fact of the matter is that most human food is simply not good for dogs.

I have an elderly woman as a neighbor and from day one all they ever fed their dogs was table scraps. The poor dogs always looked like fuzzy, swollen, Goodyear blimps with little stubby legs. They were so fat and unhealthy that it broke my heart.

For the good of your pooch, don't give in to the begging when he's eye-balling your leftovers on your plate. Treat him with dog-friendly treats and he will be much healthier... and his intestines will thank you.

Finally, if your dog farts a lot, he might need more exercise, so consider taking your pal out for more walks and help increase his health.

Why Do Dogs Like to Play Fetch?

My former dog Frodo used to drop his toy that we dubbed “Mr. Squeaks” in my lap and stare at me and the toy attentively, mouth open in what unmistakably looked to me like a big smile. When I finally threw the toy, he’d go bounding after it with unrestrained glee.

He’d grab the toy, rag doll it for a moment, settle down and nuzzle with it, bring it back to me, and we would start the whole process over. It was one of his greatest joys.

While my current dogs Sophie and Stanlee enjoy playing fetch, neither of them enjoy it as much as Frodo did.

Sophie, though, was exceptionally easy to teach to fetch. Initially, the activity baffled her. We would be playing ‘tug’ with a toy and in my early efforts to encourage her to play fetch, I would toss the toy away. She would look at me, then the toy, then back to me with an expression that seemed to say, *‘Why would you do such a thing?’*

However, not long after, she got the idea and would scamper off to get her toy like most other dogs I had met in my life.

Long before I had the idea to write this book, I'd wonder why on earth do so many dogs enjoy playing fetch so much?

Approximately 15,000 years ago (give or take a few years) when people first began trying to domesticate dogs, one primary desire for owners was for dogs to retrieve items when hunting—a downed bird, small animal, whatever—and as those traits began to manifest themselves readily in certain dogs, selective breeding helped pass those tendencies on to future generations.

What is interesting about fetch, as opposed to other behaviors that humans try to train their dogs to do, is fetch comes naturally because of selective breeding. This means that when playing fetch, your dog feels good doing something that comes naturally to him as opposed to a learned skill like 'shake' for example.

Additionally, playing fetch is a great form of exercise and bonding for you and your dog, so get some toys out and play fetch with your furry goofball!

“What Can I Do?”

A few things to consider when playing fetch. First, a good game of fetch should be high intensity but brief: Because of the way your dog lands when playing fetch, the game can strain his front legs.

Next, this is a great opportunity to bond with your doggie, so put down your phone and engage with your dog. It will mean much more to both of you.

If there is a real downside to fetch, it is that some dogs can become 'fetch obsessed,' which means pretty much what the term implies in that your pooch doesn't function normally if he can see his ball or toy that he plays fetch with. This means he ignores everything else going on around him, doesn't stop to pee, eat, or drink, or may become aggressive when guarding the toy from other dogs or humans.

If this sounds like your dog, you may need to hide his toy to prevent this negative behavior.

Positive reinforcement of good fetch etiquette, such as politely releasing the ball to their owner when playing fetch, can help curb some negative fetch tendencies.

For severe cases, it's best to seek the advice of an expert trainer.

Why Do Dogs Rip Open Their Toys?

“Oh, no,” my wife moaned from the kitchen.

“What’s wrong?” I called out from my spot on the couch in the living room.

“A fresh kill,” she sighed.

I went to the kitchen to inspect the carnage. There were hunks of white fluff all over the kitchen floor. Frodo was ignoring us as he was preoccupied with pulling any remaining bits of fluff from the outer shell of the dog toy he had just murdered.

In the days that followed, Sophie took ownership of the emptied husk of the dead toy, ultimately reducing it so just the empty cloth head remained.

Anytime I went to throw this little flap of cloth away, my wife would admonish me: “Don’t you throw away Sophie’s skin! That’s her favorite!”

Why did my dogs take such delight in slaughtering a helpless toy? Was it hunting behavior? I set out to find the answer.

To my surprise, while the whole ‘hunting prey’ thing is indeed a probable cause for many dogs’ homicidal behavior toward their toys (and to gut the toy to find and make that incessant squeak noise *stop*), it is not the only cause.

Aside from the hunting instinct, dogs will often learn to shred their toys because of positive reinforcement from their owners. I know my wife and I were guilty of this with Frodo.

“Kill it, Frodo! Make it dead!” was a common phrase repeated in our house whenever my beloved yet deeply disturbed dog went on a killing spree. As a result, we inadvertently reinforced his murderous behavior, causing him to get even more joy from extinguishing the life of a helpless toy.

The biggest culprit that seems to induce the bloodlust (or should that be fluff-lust?) in dogs seems to be one of boredom. The dog settles upon ripping the toy open out of boredom, and as a result; finishing the job becomes a quest.

“What Can I Do?”

If you are going to use toys to occupy your dog while you are at work or away, it’s important to consider using the right kind of toy.

A cute plush bunny with a thin cloth covering that is the only thing separating the soft fluffy innards from your

canine's sharp, well, canines will not keep your dog occupied for very long.

Consider some of the hard rubber treat dispensing toys as a better option to occupy your pooch while you are away.

Sophie and Stanlee look forward to their Kongs. Kongs are a sort of cone-shaped rubber toy with a hole in the top where you can stuff treats inside.

I fill their Kongs with teeny training reward treats along with a peanut butter-flavored doggie treat from a can that has the consistency of whipped cream. I load up the Kong with layers of the peanut butter and treats and then freeze it for several hours so it takes longer for the dogs to worry out the tasty goodness inside.

They appreciate it, it gives them something to do to occupy their minds, and it's safer for them too.

Why Do Dogs Chew Things?

I always loved watching my dog Frodo chew his chew toys. With him, it was like clocking in for a shift. He'd work that toy for what seemed like hours.

Sophie would chew too, but not nearly as long. And Stanlee? Just for a few minutes at a time.

Most of the time, our dogs chew appropriate chew toys or snacks, like Nyla bones or Kongs. However, like many dogs, they would also chew other things: cat toys, shoes, TV remote, and my underwear. Weird dogs.

But why do dogs feel this compulsive need to chew?

Reasons vary depending on a dog's age or state of mind. Puppies often chew to relieve the pain of teething as their new teeth come in. Older dogs may chew because they're bored or to strengthen their jaws. Overly aggressive dogs may chew to relieve that aggression.

“What Can I Do?”

All in all, chewing is normal and natural for dogs. However, to prevent them from chewing things they shouldn't, there are a few things you can do.

First, determine the cause. Pinpoint when and where your dog chews. If he chews things when you're not home, it may be a sign of separation anxiety or a desire for more attention or play.

Second, divert their attention from what they shouldn't be chewing. Give them a long-lasting chew toy, one that is flavorful and tasty.

Third, praise positive behavior. When your pup chews things he's allowed to, be sure to shower him with praise and tell him what a good dog he is.

Why Do Dogs Shake Themselves?

Every dog owner has seen it. Their dog wakes up and immediately gives themselves a good shake.

I was always fascinated when I saw my dogs shake, especially when they're dry. Why do they do that?

One day as a young kid, I decided I wanted to shake myself like a dog. So, I shook my head vigorously, only to feel like I was going to pass out. Turns out this shaking thing really is just for dogs.

Shaking themselves after a bath makes sense. They're trying to dry themselves. After waking up made a little sense. But just for what appears to be random shakes throughout the day? I was baffled.

Dogs shake for a few reasons. Sometimes, they are cold and shake themselves to warm up. Other times, dogs shake to get attention from their people.

Dogs will also shake to clean their coats. While they do lick themselves, they don't use licking to clean themselves.

That's more of a cat thing. Instead, by shaking, dogs get rid of dirt and other things stuck to their fur.

If your dog has an ear infection, he may shake in response. Ear infections may feel itchy to dogs. They may cause dogs to feel off balance. Shaking, as it turns out, relieves those feelings, even if only for a moment or two.

Another reason? Dogs shake when they wake up to get their muscles ready. Since dogs are active creatures, they want to get their muscles ready to deal with whatever life presents.

Finally, dogs may be shaking off their stress. If they are in an uncomfortable situation, they use it to lower their tension. It's sort of a neurological reset. And it's probably where we got the expression "shake it off."

"What Can I Do?"

As always, get to know your dog's healthy behaviors. Learn what their day-to-day routines look like. This is important, as knowing their habits will help you notice when something is 'off' about him.

Is he shaking his head a lot? That may be an indication of an ear infection. Make an appointment with your vet and have him checked out.

What about your dog's home environment? He may be shaking to relieve stress. Other indicators of stress might be walking around gingerly. His head may hang low. His ears may droop. As I've mentioned throughout this book, know your dog's healthy behaviors. If he's not feeling well

or is stressed, his behaviors will change. Dogs are always communicating. It's up to us to learn to speak their language.

Why Do Dogs Hang Their Heads Out Car Windows?

If you've ever seen a dog hang his head out the window of a car, you've seen a dog that is happy and enjoying life. It's not the safest thing for your pet to do, but why do they do it?

For a dog owner, the answer is obvious. They do it because it's fun. Dogs get to experience and take in any number of sniffs, allowing them to get updates from Doggie Sniffbook at a dizzying pace.

Other times, dogs do it simply because they enjoy the feeling of the wind against their faces. They just love it.

Because dogs feel emotions, a sensory overload like this is joyous to them. Remember, dogs' sense of smell is so much more developed and acute than ours. Being bombarded with a vast array of smells is a wondrous experience for them.

Interestingly, not all dogs enjoy putting their heads out the window. And some prefer to do it with their mouths open

so the wind makes their lips flap about. Others like doing it but with their mouths closed.

This is a fascinating insight into dogs' behavior. They don't all do the same behaviors in the same way. Like people, dogs have their own likes and dislikes, things they enjoy doing and things they don't. As I've mentioned countless times in this book (and will again), dogs are more complicated than many people realize.

"What Can I Do?"

Unfortunately, letting your dog hang his head out the window while you're driving isn't good for him. The reason should be obvious.

As the wind is whipping by your dog's head, he could get hit by sticks, dirt, rocks, insects, and other random objects.

These objects could hit him in his eyes, ears, mouth, and nose, causing any number of injuries.

While some dog owners buy doggie goggles for their pets, it's best if you don't let your dog do such a dangerous activity.

Why Does My Dog Pant?

I was a weird kid growing up. I had (and still have) a very active imagination.

One image that stuck in my head was the thought of people panting like dogs.

I thought it would be funny to see a classroom full of fourth-grade children all panting in unison as they sat at their desks, listening to their teacher give lessons.

I have no idea why I thought this would be funny.

Of course, people don't pant like dogs. Dogs also don't sweat like humans. Interestingly, dogs do have sweat glands on the underside of their paws and inner ears. However, these sweat glands don't do much to cool a dog off.

Dogs pant to cool themselves off. Dogs also pant if they are dehydrated. Panting helps moisture evaporate from the surfaces of their tongue, lungs, or mouth.

Any good responsible pet owner should know enough to always keep fresh cool water available for their dog.

However, simple heat and lack of water aren't the only reason your dog may pant.

Dogs may also pant because they are stressed or uncomfortable. Panting because of anxiety may be combined with:

- yawning
- tucked tail
- overly clingy behavior
- trembling
- dilated pupils
- ears flattened
- hiding

“What Can I Do?”

When your dog pants because of stress, consider his environment. Are there more loud noises than usual? Our dog Molly used to tremble and pant when there were severe thunderstorms. About the only thing we could do was cuddle with her.

Are there many guests in your home? Your dog may be overly stimulated because of the extra activity.

Consider what usually calms your dog down. Does he have a bed or crate he can retreat to? He may feel more secure there. Offer him his favorite toy. Chewing does help some dogs relieve stress.

If your dogs are panting and there don't appear to be other stress triggers, consider other causes.

If it's not hot outside, he may be dealing with a severe health issue. He may also be experiencing some unknown trauma.

Monitor your dog's health and daily behaviors. If he suddenly starts panting for what appears to be no reason, it may indicate a major health issue.

Listen for a raspy sound in his panting that normally isn't there. Watch his body for signs of exertion as he pants. Is it heavier than normal? Is he straining to pant?

If he's showing any of the signs of unhealthy panting, take him to see a vet immediately.

Why Does My Dog Dig?

Each night when I take Stanlee to bed, he runs around the bed while my wife brushes her teeth. Eventually, he starts digging at the bedspread and I have to distract him with a toy or by playing. He does the same thing on the couch. He'll just start randomly digging.

Like much of a dog's behavior, there are roots to their pre-domesticated history. A dog may start digging for any number of reasons.

One common reason a dog may dig is that he's bored or lonely. Dogs, as I continue to mention throughout this book, are task-driven animals. They like having things to do. They get bored easily and may dig simply to occupy their time.

If your dog is very young or even still a puppy, he may have pent-up energy. Digging is simply a way to burn off excess energy.

Still, other dogs might start digging simply because they saw you working in your garden and they just want to join in the fun!

Dogs also may dig if it's hot. They'll dig a hole to get to the cooler ground underneath, giving them a more comfortable place to lie down.

Another reason dogs dig? To root out pests. Dogs are natural hunters and if they think there's a rodent or other infestation, they may dig to hunt down invaders to their den, which coincidentally is your home. Some dogs, like terriers, were specifically bred for this purpose.

“What Can I Do?”

If your dog is tearing up your yard in random places, most likely he's bored. There are several things you can do to help him.

First, walk your dog at least two times a day. They need and crave exercise and stimulation.

Next, increase your dog's people time. Engage your dog with active toys and playtime. Not only is it good for his mental state, but playtime is great for bonding between a dog and his owner.

If your dog must be left in the yard for any length of time, include plenty of toys so he has something to do. Provide doggie-safe toys that he can chew.

Does your dog dig holes in the same location in your yard? That's a sign that he's trying to root out rodents or some other kind of pest. Use humane methods to trap the rodents and remove them from the area. Fido won't be as tempted to dig without pests to tempt him.

Does My Dog Dream?

Watching my little Sophie as she sleeps gives me endless pleasure. She's so cute and innocent. Often, she will sleep on her back with her front paws folded together. But my favorite times are when she starts doing things while she sleeps.

During these times, she will start moving her front paws just like she is dog paddling. Sophie is frightened of just about everything in the world outside of our house, but she loves swimming.

The first time we ever saw her swim was on a camping trip. We were all at the edge of a lake and Sophie and Frodo were both on leashes. Frodo, who was a cross between a poodle and cocker spaniel, had zero interest in going in the water. I found this funny because both cocker spaniels and poodles were bred to be water dogs.

Sophie, the dog afraid of everything, marched right into the water and started swimming. She paddled around us in a circle, happy as we've ever seen her.

Ever since that day, we try to take her to a lake a few times every summer so she can swim.

Seeing her paddle her little feet as she sleeps, I was convinced that dogs dream. Watching dogs engage in distinctly dreamlike behavior, I simply could not conceive of the possibility that dogs don't dream. Once I started writing this book, it was one of the first questions I wanted to answer.

I was right. Dogs do indeed dream.

Scientists believe that dogs go through similar stages of dreaming just like humans. The deepest part of their sleep is REM sleep. REM means Rapid Eye Movement, which is when a dreaming human or dog will track what they "see" in their dreams with their eyes.

What do dogs dream about? Depending on the dream, dogs might be dreaming about something from the past. Most often, they probably dream about their current lives. Maybe he's dreaming about super-yummy food. Or taking a walk.

A lot of the time, your dog is probably dreaming about you. When I first learned this, I felt a glow inside me. Knowing my dogs dream about me was the most heartwarming thing I had ever heard. Just like people, dogs dream about what is most important to them.

"What Can I Do?"

Just like humans, dogs seem to have good dreams and bad dreams.

My dog Stanlee had a dream so bad that he woke himself up. The four of us were in our king-sized bed: My wife Libby, Stanlee, Sophie, and me. Libby and I were watching TV and snuggling. Both dogs were fast asleep.

Suddenly, without any warning, Stanlee leaped to his feet and ran around the bedroom, before stopping in the middle of the room. He looked at us with a bewildered expression on his face, trembling the entire time. I can only imagine he was having a nightmare.

From time to time, I do hear my dogs whimpering as they sleep. It's hard to tell what kind of dream, good or bad, they are having based on these little yips. Of course, I'm tempted to wake them up during these times.

However, experts recommend not waking up your dog if he appears to be having a bad dream.

First, the experts explain, the deep sleep associated with REM sleep is important to their health. Second, if your dog really is having a nightmare, as they wake up, they may lash out, potentially injuring you or someone near you. They do this because of disorientation; not knowing where they are.

However, if you absolutely, positively feel like you must help your dog because of a bad dream, do so with caution.

First, stay out of reach. If he wakes up confused, even the mildest mannered of dogs can wake up snarling if they are not sure where they are or what's happening. For context, think back to times when you've been yanked out of deep sleep and how grumpy you've felt.

Second, use only your voice to wake your pet. Adopt a soothing tone in your voice. If you're only trying to comfort him in a bad dream, the tone of your voice may be enough to help him transition out of the nightmare without waking him up completely.

But once again, experts recommend not waking up your dog. As the old saying goes, it's best to let sleeping dogs lie.

Does My Dog Think?

When I was a teenager, I was still living with my parents. At one point they were dog-sitting a beautiful golden retriever named Winston. One night, we were getting out of the car, and Winston, who still had his leash on, trotted along ahead of us. As he walked up the front steps, his front paw stepped on the leash, preventing him from continuing up the rest of the steps.

He tried twice to continue walking, only to be prevented each time by the leash under his paw. Suddenly he stopped for a moment. Then he lifted his paw, bent down with his head, and bit the leash and lifted it so the leash was no longer touching the ground. He then walked up the rest of the steps without further incident.

My parents and I were both astounded. Did Winston use cognitive thought to work through the problem? Years later, my beloved Frodo caused me to revisit this idea.

One of my fondest memories of my dog Frodo was of him as a puppy. I'd be in my office doing any number of things—at the time, the office in question is where I stored

all my magic equipment. As a professional full-time magician, I had a lot of tricks and equipment to deal with—and Frodo would sit quietly and stare at my gear, almost as if he was trying to figure things out. It was adorable and reminded me of what I believed was another example of Frodo's intelligence.

Years later, my wife and I were sitting on our couch watching TV one afternoon. Frodo, who was normally a loud, boisterous dog, walked quietly into the kitchen and out of view. He had just been outside, so I wasn't worried about him going potty in the house. A few moments later, he walked back into the living room and went behind the couch to lie down.

Neither of us gave the incident a second thought. Then he went back in the kitchen a few minutes later and after a few moments, came back into the living room and went behind the couch. Again, we ignored it.

When he did it a third time, my wife suddenly said, "Do you hear that? It's crunching sounds."

We decided to investigate what Frodo was up to. Frodo was behind the couch with a small pile of his favorite doggie treats, happily munching away.

"Frodo, where did you get those?" my wife asked the dog. As I sat down to write this story, I wish I could write, 'And Frodo said...' but alas, my pup remained silent.

I got up from the couch and went into the kitchen. "Aha!" I announced. "I found the answer."

When we lived in this house, we kept the dog treats in a lower cupboard, right in reach of the dogs. While the door was usually shut, on this day, my enterprising little dog had used his nose to open the door.

Inside, he'd found a bag of treats, opened it, and every few minutes he'd gone to replenish his supply.

While that alone made for a funny story, my wife and I were both baffled by his stealth-like behavior to avoid detection. Did Frodo understand the consequences of being too loud with his treats?

Years later, when I sat down to write this book, I set out to find the answer.

My research has turned up a lot of interesting facts about canine thought processes. First, dogs do not think as we do. They don't think in words.

However, dogs are keen observers of behavior. As animals adapting to living with humans, they learn rather quickly how things work in our world. They watch us and understand that while they may not be able to reach or open a cupboard door, we can.

They then figure out how to communicate with us in our way. They may start scratching at the cupboard door where the food is to let us know they are hungry. If they sit in front of us but we ignore them, they may bark to get our attention.

That's certainly better than the old, antiquated view of dogs as "dumb animals," pardon my use of the archaic term.

But dogs are more like us than we may realize. Dogs have goals and desires, just like us. They want and need shelter. They need and want food, play, and affection. Dogs have the desire to learn new things.

Some scientists estimate a dog's cognitive ability to be like a two- or three-year-old human child. Dogs are much smarter than many people give them credit for.

One only needs to look at Chaser, the border collie known as the "World's Smartest Dog" to see just what dogs are capable of and how much dogs enjoy learning. Raised by Dr. Pilley, a Psychology professor at Wofford College in South Carolina, Chaser (named because she loved chasing after just about anything that moved), eventually learned more than 1000 proper nouns.

After rocketing to nationwide fame, Chaser earned the label of "the most scientifically important dog in a century" by Brian Hare, author of the book, *The Genius of Dogs*.

Did Frodo really 'know' that by being quiet he'd have a better chance at getting away with his theft? Did Winston figure out that getting his leash out of the way would make it easier to walk up the stairs? I'll never know for sure. But the science seems to indicate that yes, my pups were much brighter than I had ever considered.

"What Can I Do?"

Dogs need mental stimulation, period.

Most doggie experts agree that one of the best things you can do for your dog is let him sniff. They glean so much

detailed information from a quick sniff. When we get to the chapter about doggie sniffing habits, you'll understand why earlier in this book I referred to something called Doggie Sniffbook.

It's not just about sniffing, either. As I've mentioned many times in this book, dogs are task driven. They want and need mental stimulation.

Give your dog pet-safe treats and toys that are designed to make him work to access the tasty treats. It gives him something to do. Having to 'work' to get treats out of these pet-safe toys is a wonderful way to give your pup a task to keep him occupied.

Remember the power of a walk, too. Not only does it give Fido much-needed exercise, but it gives him more opportunities for mental stimulation. Take your dog for at least two walks a day to give him things to explore and investigate.

Keep in mind that your dog has many of the same needs that you do.

Why Does My Dog Drag His Butt on the Ground?

Sophie looked right at me and began dragging her butt across the carpet.

Well, I thought, that isn't right.

In Sophie's case, she had just been groomed. The good folks at her local doggie spa gave her a short clipper cut to reduce tangles and matted fur. It looked as though she shaved a little too close to Sophie's bottom, causing irritation.

Nevertheless, my wife and I scooped her up to check things out. With dogs, you just never know until you take a closer look.

Most of the time, a dog drags his butt across the ground to relieve pressure. His anal sacs are probably full, and the pressure Fido feels is painful.

The anal sacs are two little scent glands in your dog's bottom. These scent glands produce a scent that lets the

world know all about him. Think of this scent as your dog's social media profile.

Why do a dog's anal sacs fill up?

There are many reasons why this happens. The most common reason is when there is not enough pressure to empty the sacs, such as after your pup has diarrhea. Without enough pressure during the execution of normal bathroom duties, the anal sacs can fill up.

The entire reason for the scent glands is to add your dog's unique signature to his poop. When he goes potty, the pressure forces some of this stinky scent liquid out. So, his poop has his social media profile included. This scent lets other dogs know this is your guy's territory. There are also other kinds of information other dogs (and other animals) can glean from a quick sniff. Your dog's age, sex, whether she is in heat, and many more details are available.

In essence, when your dog sniffs another dog's poo or pee, he's getting status updates on what I call Doggie Sniffbook. It's like Facebook but without the technology, GIFs, or political arguments.

However, anal sac issues are not the only cause of doggie butt-scotting.

Other causes of butt-scotting include:

- **Allergies** - The second most common reason for dogs dragging their butts across the ground is an allergy of some kind. It may make your dog's skin on his bottom itchy or irritable.

- **Parasites** - Another distasteful cause of butt-scotting? Parasites, especially tapeworms. They too can irritate your pup's bottom. A tell-tale sign of tapeworms is what looks like white rice in your dog's poo. Other tapeworms keep their presence hidden so your dog's butt-dragging is often the only sign of something being wrong.
- **Painful pauses** - Surprisingly, pain from the hips or lower back can cause some pooches to drag their butts.
- **Skin infections** - Bacterial or yeast infections can cause the skin around your dog's anus to become itchy and have burning sensations.
- **Behavioral problems** - Some dogs develop odd or unusual problems such as butt-scotting after certain surgeries and may not appear related to something specific that happened to your dog.

“What Can I Do?”

As always, if your dog's behavior changes, it may be a sign that something is wrong. In the case of him dragging his butt, watch him closely. If he licks that area or if you see swelling, pus, or even blood, take your furry buddy to the vet immediately.

Filled or blocked anal sacs are serious business. Not only is this extremely painful for your dog, but if it's not caught soon, your dog may need surgery.

If your dog is suffering from allergies or parasites, your vet will have the proper medications to treat your ailing pooch.

All in all, most vets advise taking your dog in for an exam if he drags his butt more than a couple of times a day over 48 hours.

Why Does My Dog Roll in Stinky Stuff?

Most dog owners know how dogs love rolling in smelly patches of awfulness on the ground. But Frodo brought it to a new level.

On the fateful day in question, Frodo came in from a trip to the backyard to go potty. When he came into the living room, his ears were hanging low, his head was down, and if I didn't know better, I'd swear he was feeling guilty.

My wife immediately shrieked, "Oh my GOD, what is that STINK?"

During all of this, Frodo just stood in the living room, looking pitiful.

"Honey," I said. "I think it's Frodo."

Sure enough, Frodo was the cause of the unearthly stink permeating our living room. Frodo had rolled in something bad, and we could even see bits of things stuck to his fur.

The stink wasn't from a skunk. It wasn't even poo from another animal. We never did find out what the source of

the trouble was. It was also the first and only time Frodo had ever willingly submitted for a bath without complaint.

Frodo had always enjoyed rubbing himself in the yard. When he was a puppy and started doing it, I thought it was incredibly cute. On that day, however, Frodo had gone too far and got something stuck to him that was so bad even a dog had to admit it smelled putrid.

My wife, who has owned more dogs in the past and had a better idea of what he was up to, told me why he was doing it and made sure I knew to stop it in the future.

Oddly, none of our dogs since Frodo had ever shown any interest in the whole lay-on-my-back-and-roll-in-smelly-stuff routine. Sophie never did. Molly never did.

Stanlee came close a few times. On our walks, occasionally, Stanlee would stop, sniff at something in the grass, and start to dip his head, turning to the right, as though he was getting ready to rub the left side of his face on the grass,

Each time, he'd stop and look at me, as though he was asking, "Am I supposed to be doing this?" As though his DNA was driving him to do something that he didn't want to do.

But why do dogs enjoy rolling around in stinky stuff?

Like many doggie behaviors, this one is rooted in dog ancestry. Dogs would roll in the grass and dirt to get other scents on them for hunting purposes, it was a form of camouflage.

Because so many people believe that dogs are just doing things because of instinct, the masking-a-scent idea is as far as many armchair ‘experts’ take the rolling behavior.

Dogs will also roll around on their backs to self-groom. They will loosen dirt and debris on their back, and even scratch that pesky itch they’ve been feeling. But that’s still not all.

Now we know dogs don’t do it just to accomplish some purpose or only because of instinct, many do it simply as an expression of joy, happiness, or playfulness. They may roll on their backs when playing with other dogs or just because it feels good.

“What Can I Do?”

There’s nothing dangerous in and of itself when dogs roll and wiggle on their backs. If your dog rolls indoors, let him go nuts and have fun.

Outside is a different story. Before you let your dog roll around in your yard, at a park, or anywhere outside, be sure he’s up to date with his flea and tick protection.

And the stink? Not everything your dog rolls in will have a strong smell. In addition to animal pee or poo, there are dangerous pesticides and herbicides to remember. After a good outdoor roll, it’s a good idea to give your dog a good bath or at least a good rinse.

How Does My Dog Decide Where to Poop Outside?

I've owned dogs most of my adult life. I've studied their quirky personalities, learned what their different barks meant, and do my best to understand what they try to communicate.

But sometimes their behavior baffles me.

As I've mentioned previously, one of my motivations for writing this book was to satisfy my curiosity.

One of the bigger questions I've had regarding doggie behavior is what goes into the process of deciding where to poop.

If you're a dog owner, you've undoubtedly encountered this yourself. One day, your pup poos right away. Other times, it seems as though he's going through an intense series of equations to calculate the best possible location to leave his calling card.

The first, easiest, explanation of this careful poo distribution decision is simply territorial. Dogs often poop

to let other dogs know this is their territory. Their poo will give other dogs a vast array of information. One quick sniff will let other dogs know whether your dog is a friend, foe, female in heat, and what they've eaten recently.

Dogs also enjoy searching for the perfect poo spot, especially if they poo on walks. They might be looking for what they feel is the perfect spot for maximum canine communication. You can almost think of it as a dog's way of searching for the most bars on their doggie WIFI!

And if your dog takes a long time to poop? While he may not have the urge, he might also be waiting to extend his time outside with you.

Dogs are incredibly intelligent and adaptive. If you bring your dog inside as soon as he's finished pooping, he will quickly adapt and hold onto his calling card until he's good and ready to go back inside.

Another reason why your dog may take a long time to decide where to poo? It might have something to do with the magnetic fields of the earth. Sounds impossible, right?

Maybe not. Some German and Czech researchers wanted to find out how dogs decide where to do their business. In a two-year study involving over 70 dogs and 37 different breeds, these scientists found that dogs seem to want to line up with the magnetic fields of the earth.

After nearly 2,000 poos and nearly 6,000 pees, these folks found that dogs seemed to prefer to line up with the north-south axis. They preferred to avoid the east-west axis entirely.

Why? No one knows. But cattle and foxes exhibit similar poo decision-making processes.

While I'm personally skeptical (it was only one study with just 70 dogs), it certainly is intriguing and makes for interesting conversation topics.

“What Can I Do?”

If you walk your dog to go potty, always give yourself plenty of time. On those days when your alarm clock broke or your power went out and your alarm didn't go off at all, you're running late, and you just want your dog to do his business so you can rush out the door and make up for lost time... Guess what? Your pup doesn't care. He doesn't understand time as we do. He won't comprehend what all the fuss is about. Yelling at your dog to “hurry up and go” won't do anything other than confuse him, stress him out, and probably cause him to take even longer to do his business.

Think like a dog and adapt to his ways of understanding the world. It will make your interactions with your furry friend a lot more enjoyable and fulfilling.

Why Does My Dog Lift His Leg When He Pees?

Most dog owners know that dogs like to mark things. Part of their motivation for marking is territorial. He's letting everyone else who may happen to wander past know this is his turf. Lifting his leg allows him to add his scent to communicate with other dogs in the area.

I've always been fascinated by male dogs lifting their legs. Weird statement, but true. But some dogs lift their legs just enough so casual observers can see what's going on. My dog Stanlee is like that. He lifts his leg, but he's not aiming high.

My former dog Frodo, however, would lift his leg so high I thought he would topple over.

Frodo was a small dog and not very confident. When he was about one year old, he and I were attacked by a Pitbull that broke out of its house. Ever since that horrible incident, Frodo was afraid.

As it turns out, that's also the reason for his high leg lift. He was trying to appear more intimidating to other dogs and

even other animals. It's a trait many small dogs have. The littler the dog, the bigger the attitude.

It also explains why Stanlee, who is roughly the same size Frodo was, doesn't lift his leg very high. He does not feel the need to intimidate other animals very often.

Boy dogs of all sizes lift their leg to pee, and they aim high to be closer to the nose level of other dogs/animals. Dogs also mark their territory more often during mating season, which is normally the fall.

My dog Stanlee often does what is called the "raised leg display." When he has already peed during our walks, he will continue to sniff and attempt to mark things as he sees fit. This leads to him raising his leg in a futile attempt to mark a spot.

"Dude, your tank is empty," I'll often tell him. But it doesn't matter. If he comes across something that needs marking, he will try it every time.

If a dog is neutered, statistics reveal that around 60% of such dogs will stop lifting their leg. But a dog may stop leg lifting for other reasons.

If a dog is more submissive and not as driven to protect territory, he may not lift his leg. Other dogs don't lift their leg simply because it's not comfortable. And some dogs stop doing it for reasons we cannot determine.

Interestingly, despite popular convention, some female dogs lift their leg too, but not as many or often as males. If a female lifts her leg, it may be tied to mating season and her drive to let male dogs in the area know that she's in heat.

“What Can I Do?”

If you're looking to prevent your dog from lifting his leg, one of the best ways is to have your dog fixed. As I mentioned earlier, about 60% of dogs who are neutered stop lifting their leg.

If your dog is neutered and continues to lift his leg, there are other options:

- **Train your dog with positive reinforcement.** Each time your dog goes potty without lifting his leg, praise him and reward him with a tasty treat.
- **Clean the area.** If your dog marks where he's not supposed to, scrub the area thoroughly with a 50/50 mixture of vinegar and water. This will help get rid of the scent, so he's not reminded of a potential long-term pee spot.
- **Take the lead.** Some dogs mark because they feel a need to show or test for dominance. If you take a firm leadership position during walks and feeding times, your dog will feel more comfortable and not feel the need to be the leader.
- **Introduce new items.** Your dog may mark a new piece of furniture or another item simply because it's new. He may sniff it, not recognize it, and think, “Well, I don't know who this thing thinks it is, but I'd better show it who the boss is.” While your dog doesn't think like THAT, by properly introducing your dog to new items with your guidance, he'll have an easier time getting used to anything new.

Why Does My Dog Wag His Tail?

Tail wagging. We've all seen dogs do it, even if we don't own a dog ourselves.

Most people assume that a dog wagging his tail must be happy. While it may be the popular opinion, tail wagging is much more complex than many people realize.

Tail wagging conveys a variety of different emotions, ranging from happiness, fear, apprehension, and many more.

Research done in 2007 indicates a tail wagging to the right is generally conveying positive emotions but a wagging to the left means the dog is probably feeling a negative emotion.

When I first began researching tail wagging for this book, the idea that dogs wag their tails even when feeling unhappy didn't surprise me. And it's because of Sophie.

Sophie, as I have mentioned, is very small for a purebred Bichon. From day one she's always been a nervous dog. That's probably due to her being separated from her

mother at around six weeks. Most experts will tell you a dog should stay with its mother until ten weeks.

Little Sophie is also unique in that she is the only dog I have ever met who doesn't enjoy her walks. We have always been gentle with her, used positive reinforcement, used treats to reinforce the leash as a good thing, and praised her, all to no avail. If Sophie sees the leash come out, she runs and hides behind the couch.

When she must be leashed up, whether it's for a trip to the vet or just for much-needed exercise outside, Sophie will put her head down and frantically wag her tail to the left. It's a clear sign she's in distress.

The left and right indicators of tail wagging have to do with the brain's hemispheres. The right brain controls the left side of the body. The left side of the brain controls the right side of the body.

The right side of a dog's brain is paired with negative feelings such as fear. Sophie tries telling us she's not into this leash thing. The left side of the brain is tied to positive feelings.

But what about height?

If a dog's tail is in a neutral position, it means he's feeling at ease. The challenge, though, is the neutral position is different for different breeds.

When a dog's tail is held very high and is wagging furiously, that's a sign a dog is happy and excited.

Dogs are incredible at conveying what they are feeling with nonverbal cues.

“What Can I Do?”

A good dog owner learns his or her dog’s cues. Since dogs can’t speak, it’s up to us to learn what our beloved pooch is saying to us.

If you’re a first-time dog owner, read a good book on your dog’s specific breed. If your dog is a mix, read books about every part of his DNA.

Sometimes, in the heat of the moment, it can be difficult to tell what your dog is trying to tell you just by wagging his tail. Fortunately, dogs wear their hearts on their sleeves, as the saying goes.

Learn your dog’s body language. If your dog is feeling at ease, happy, or stressed out, he will give you more clues than just the wag of his tail.

When encountering other dogs, be sure to avoid the mistake that many people make; don’t just go running over and start petting the person’s dog. Talk to the owner. Ask them questions about their dog. Let their dog approach and sniff you. Keep your movements very slow and relaxed. Avoid staring into the dog’s eyes.

Show him through your actions that you’re not a threat. Respect his space. If he’s comfortable with you petting him, he will let you know.

Why Does My Dog Bark?

In an earlier chapter, I covered why dogs bark at their owners when they come home. However, dogs also bark for any number of reasons.

While not based in science, I think I can tell the difference between Stanlee's bark for food and his bark for a walk. Each evening, Stanlee and Sophie split a can of wet dog food for dinner.

As I'm dishing up the wet food, I have the dogs sit quietly while I'm preparing their dinner. Well, the *goal* is for them to sit quietly. It's something I only recently started, so the whole 'sit quietly and wait for dinner' thing is very much a work in progress.

I will stop dishing up the food if the dogs start dancing about. I'll correct them with a firm "No," followed by the "Sit" command once again. When they sit, I'll praise them, then transition to a "Stay" command.

Depending on how excited they are, I can usually get their entire dinner dished up after only one "Stay" command, so

they're making a lot of progress, unlike in the beginning when they'd break the "Stay" four or five times.

Some days, even while sitting, Stanlee will bark at me a couple of times. It seems to me he's trying to get me to hurry up with dinner.

When we go for a walk, I'll say to him, "Go for a walk?" His ears perk up and he excitedly runs toward the back door where the walk awaits. He will occasionally bark, and I swear I can hear a difference in the two barks.

Then there's his "Intruder Bark," when he sees the mailman, the Amazon delivery guy, or (God forbid) Gus, his nemesis. Gus is a small dog who is walked by his owner past our house every afternoon.

Like so many other doggie quirks and habits, I wondered how much of what I believed about dog behavior was true and how much I was making up in my head.

As it turns out, with a dog's bark, I was pretty much spot on. A dog's bark is used for all kinds of communication. A dog may bark because:

- He's trying to communicate with other dogs
- He's stressed out or anxious about something
- He doesn't want to be left alone
- He's trying to get your attention
- He's protecting his territory
- He doesn't feel good or he's injured
- He's surprised, as with a single bark

In short, dogs simply don't "bark for no reason." If it seems like your dog is barking for no reason, it's only because you don't know what it is yet.

"What Can I Do?"

As always, when dealing with your pooch, it's important to look at everything surrounding the behavior you are trying to correct.

If your dog barks too much, look at his life. Is he bored? Lonely? Suffering from separation anxiety? Change his environment and daily life to see if that helps.

You can also help curtail his excessive barking with positive reinforcement and praise. If he barks, turn around and ignore him. Once he's quiet, turn around and praise him, followed by a treat.

Gradually lengthen the amount of time he needs to be quiet before he's rewarded with a treat.

The one thing you DON'T want to do? Yell at your dog. It starts a cycle. If your dog is barking and you yell at him to stop, he's going to take your volume and agitation as a cue to elevate even more. Essentially, yelling at your dog to stop barking will probably cause him to bark more.

Why Does My Dog Growl?

Even though he's been gone over three years at the time of this writing, I can still hear Frodo growl in my mind.

Like many dogs, he growled for several different reasons. But the growl that was cute and positive was his growl to go potty.

He'd sit in front of me and start growling very softly. When he got to the end of the growl, the sound would sort of rise at the end, almost like his growl ended as a question. "Grrrrrr...?"

As any dog owner knows, dogs growl for many reasons. Your dog might be growling because there's a threat to his territory. Or he might be scared. Or angry.

A dog might growl because he's feeling possessive of a toy, his food, or even a person.

Some dogs growl when they play. When Stanlee and I play "Rabid Dog," he's growling the entire time. This happens even though he's adopting the classic "butt in the air, head

on the ground' stance dogs will adopt when they want to play.

Through experience, I know the tone of his growl and I'm aware of his body language the entire time.

Understanding what's going on around your dog before and during his growling will help you get to the cause of it much faster.

“What Can I Do?”

Often, a pet owner will ask, “how can I make my dog stop growling?” They're asking the wrong question. They should ask, “Why is my dog growling?” Remember, a growl means something is going on that needs to be addressed.

By incorrectly thinking the growling is the only issue, some owners create a very dangerous potential problem. They may correct their dog's growling, training them to never growl. Doing this means taking away a dog's natural tendency to warn before he attacks.

Find out why your dog is growling and deal with the cause.

Watch your dog's body language carefully. Often, a dog starts growling if his other body cues aren't respected. People don't always notice or pay attention to other signs. If a dog starts growling, it may mean he's escalating his signals to let you know how he's feeling.

Watch for flattened ears, hard eyes, and lowered head. Usually, dogs will adopt defensive or aggressive postures before growling.

Is your dog injured? He may growl if he's hurt. What was your dog doing before he started growling? Is he limping or favoring a certain body part?

While at the vet, your dog may growl in part due to his sickness or injury and because the veterinarian is poking and prodding at him. Your dog is injured and confused and just wants it all to stop.

Warn your vet about your dog's aggression, especially if your vet is new to your dog and unfamiliar with his personality.

If your dog is growling at another dog during a play session, keep watch over his body language. Some play sessions can turn into a dog fight if aggressions escalate.

When playing tug of war with your dog using a favorite toy, you'll probably hear your pup growl. In most cases, he's just being playful. If he nips at your hands, lunges at you, or the sound of the growling intensifies, it's time to end the play session.

If your dog habitually growls and you can't pinpoint the cause, take him to your vet. If your vet determines it's a behavioral issue, consult with a professional dog trainer.

Why Does My Dog Howl?

Some dogs howl more than others.

I remember the only time Frodo howled. We were at the last session of his advanced doggie obedience training. We had taken it because Frodo had a hard time getting along with other dogs ever since he was attacked by a Pitbull.

During the previous class, our instructor asked all the dog owners to bring our dogs' favorite toy to our last session. During the class, you could hear 20 or so squeak toys as the dog owners tried to capture the attention of their dogs.

While Frodo certainly had his favorite toys, he never heard a squeak toy he didn't like. Each time he heard the familiar squeak of a toy from a different direction, he would whip his head in the direction of the toy's sound. I was holding his collar to prevent him from running off to claim the toys as his own.

This continued for several moments until finally, in frustration, he threw his head back and howled. I had

never seen him so despondent as that day where 20 other squeak toys went sadly unclaimed.

Frodo howled that day from either frustration or sadness. He was a weird dog.

Why do most dogs howl?

- **Most dogs howl in response to other sounds.** If they hear certain high-pitched sounds, they will howl in response. Many dog owners are familiar with a dog's howl when they hear a police siren, fire alarm, or even certain musical notes.
- **Other times, a dog might howl in response to another dog's howl.** When this happens, it's the dog's way of letting the other dog know they're ready to join in the fun. Howling in response to other dogs comes from their ancestry and is a bonding experience.
- **For some dogs, howling is a way to claim territory.** Just as your dog might pee in several of the same spots in his neighborhood (that yellow spot on the grass in your front yard), he might howl to let other pups know that he's master of his domain.
- **Your dog may howl because of separation anxiety.** If your dog is a nervous pooch, he might howl if he's left alone or is away from you. Although I only heard Frodo howl once in his life, I was told he howled a few times when left at a kennel.
- **Isolation anxiety is an issue for all dogs.** Dogs are packed animals. They don't enjoy being left alone and may howl in distress. You may have even come

home from a long day at work only to see your dog has destroyed a piece of furniture. It's his way of acting out against his isolation.

“What Can I Do?”

First, try not to leave your dog alone for long periods. They don't enjoy it and will let you know.

Second, be sure your dog receives plenty of exercise. Physical activity is a great way to relieve stress and help your dog feel better. They are nomadic animals and most enjoy a great deal of walking.

If your dog's howling is not related to those issues, try ignoring the howling when you are home. It might be his way of trying to get your attention. Responding to it only reinforces the behavior.

By teaching your dog a “Speak” command with positive reinforcement, you can also teach a “Quiet” command to reduce his howling.

Once you've ruled out emotional distress and responses to ongoing sirens or other specific outdoor sounds, you should bring your dog to his vet. Dogs will often howl if they are sick or injured.

Another option, if your vet finds no medical reason for the behavior, is to reach out to a certified professional dog trainer to get help with your dog's howling.

Do Dogs Pee Out of Defiance?

Molly looked right at me and peed on the living room floor. For context, Molly was a well-trained 10-year-old Pomeranian. Before I came into the picture, my wife Libby paper-trained her to go potty on newspapers in the bathroom when she wasn't around to let her go outside.

When my wife and I moved in together, Molly let me know in no uncertain terms how displeased she was by my presence. Against my wishes, Molly slept in the bed with us. On more than one occasion, she would roll over and brace herself against my wife's back and kick me repeatedly.

Over the next few months, we finally began to get along and even developed an affection for each other. But those first few months were rough.

At the time, I was convinced Molly would look at me and pee out of sheer defiance.

Now, four dogs later, I have learned that's not the case.

If a normally well-trained dog pees where he is not supposed to, it's usually a sign that something is wrong. He has certain needs that are not being met or there is something wrong physically.

Dogs are not defiant. That is a label that would apply to humans and their way of thinking and feeling. Dogs are merely trying to communicate.

Urinating is more than relief to a dog. It's a way of establishing territory, emotional states, medical issues, and much more.

“What Can I Do?”

When you bring a new dog into the house, begin housebreaking him immediately. Housebreaking a dog is about consistency more than anything else.

Once your dog is properly trained, look at other circumstances in his life.

- Is your dog spayed or neutered?
- Is he feeling neglected?
- Is he being left in his crate for too long?
- Is he getting enough exercise?
- Is he in a new home (and suffering from stress?)
- Are there new people in your home?
- Is there a new pet in your home?
- Did you bring new stuff into your house?

An “unfixed” dog is much more likely to mark where he shouldn't.

Setting the neutered or spayed issue aside, start by looking at what's going on in his life. He may not be having his needs met, such as exercise and attention.

When new people or new pets come into his house, he may pee to establish his territory to show dominance over what he sees as an intruder.

If he's stressed, peeing is also a way to alleviate stress. He may mark, again, to establish territory. It may look like defiance to you, but he's just engaging in normal doggie behavior.

New shopping bags from grocery or department stores might trigger a need to mark over these new and unfamiliar scents.

Once your dog has peed in a particular spot a few times, his smell might prompt him to continue using that spot.

There are a few things you should never do when trying to correct your dog's peeing behavior.

- One thing you should never do? Rub his nose in it. It doesn't work, is cruel, and will only teach your dog to fear you.
- If you walk into a room and see your dog has had an "accident," don't yell at him. He won't connect your yelling with his peeing.

There are several things you can try to stop the marking behavior.

Start by making those areas inaccessible to your dog. If he can't get to them, he can't pee on them.

If that's not possible, change the significance of those areas. If you suspect he's peeing there because of stress or a need to mark territory, you can try playing with him in those areas or feeding him there.

Is your dog peeing because someone new moved into your home? Have that person make friends with your dog. They can begin by slowly and gently feeding your dog, playing with him, or brushing him.

Another thing you can do to help curb your dog's behavior is to try spraying the pee area with a 50/50 mix of vinegar and water. They don't like the smell of vinegar so spraying the area may prevent further incidents.

If your dog is well socialized, gets enough exercise, and is not isolated for long periods, your dog may have a medical issue. When a dog pees where he shouldn't, it may indicate:

- **Urinary tract infections** – Our dog Frodo would get these from time to time. A quick visit to the vet along with some medication was enough to clear them up.
- **Bladder stones** – Vets will most likely strongly urge you to continue with surgery to prevent the stones from causing a urinary blockage, which can result in death in just a few days.
- **Kidney disease** – Acute kidney disease, which can happen quickly, is easily treatable, but the chronic disease is irreversible and may happen slowly over a longer period. Both are serious and require immediate attention.

- **Bladder inflammation** – This can lead to your dog's bladder rupturing and can be fatal if not treated quickly.
- **Arthritis or age-related incontinence** – Either of these indicates your dog physically can't get to his proper pee spot in time.

As always, any troubling or abrupt change in your dog's behavior warrants an immediate trip to the vet.

Why Does My Dog Tilt His Head?

Dog owners love it when their canine pals cock their heads in a quizzical manner when they hear a certain noise. It's such an endearing quality that Doc Brown's dog even did it early in the movie *Back to the Future*.

Of course, all my dogs have done it. High-pitched sounds, low pitch sounds, it seems completely unpredictable what will trigger that response.

As a Pomeranian, Molly added another layer of cuteness when she cocked her head. Her ears, as any Pom owner knows, are not floppy but instead stand straight up. She had a great deal of control over the direction of her ears, too. Depending on the sound, she may turn her ears so both faced the direction of the sound, like little fuzzy radar dishes.

We know dogs cock their heads in response to certain sounds. The question is simply... why? What purpose does the head-cocking serve in doggie land?

Part of the reason dogs cock their heads is simple. By turning their heads, they are trying to get their ears aligned with or closer to the source of the sound. This will, in theory, allow them to hear the sound better and presumably unlock its mysteries. Again, all in doggie land.

A dog's ear flaps also partially block sound transmission. A dog like Molly, whose ear flaps block the sound coming toward the back of her head, has less trouble. Dogs like German Shepherds, Poms, and similar breeds with perky ears that stand straight up have an easier time than dogs with floppy ears. Cocker Spaniels, for example, have ear flaps that block sound from every direction. It appears that those loveable floppy ears come with a price.

Humans, despite having more limited hearing compared to dogs, do not need to cock their heads. Because our hearing is more omnidirectional, we can hear sounds equally all around us. Dogs, however, have a more directional hearing. As a result, they have to compensate to tune into certain sounds.

So why does a dog tilt his head if he's facing you? Dogs often study their owners intently. Tilting their head is their way of letting you know they are concentrating on you and hanging on your every word. Dogs are so considerate!

There's also a visual aspect to this whole head tilting behavior, too. Dogs want to see details in your face as it's not only the sound of your voice but also your expression that helps inform your dog of your communication.

Because dogs want to look closely at your face, they often must tilt their heads to see you properly. This stems from

the length of their snouts, which can sometimes inhibit their vision. Dogs with shorter snouts such as pugs do not need to tilt their heads as often to aid their vision.

Dogs also tilt their heads because we encourage it. By giving them praise with the tone of our voices and physical affection such as a good head rub, dogs can quickly learn that a good head tilt will get them positive attention from their owners.

“What Can I Do?”

As with so much of a dog’s behavior, if it persists, it may indicate a need to see the vet. Beyond just the occasional cute head tilt we all love, a persistent tilted head held to one side may mean the dog has a medical problem. This problem could be neurological, such as a vestibular disease. Or it could mean your dog has an ear infection, due to yeast or bacteria. Such an infection may cause him a lot of pain. He may try to deal with it by scratching his ears and tilting his head.

Fortunately, your dog will let you know they have a problem if you’re paying attention. If your dog persistently cocks his head and there does not seem to be an auditory trigger, take him to his vet.

Why Does My Dog Eat Cat Turds?

Stanlee jumped on the bed next to me chewing on something. The way he worked his doggie lips and jaws, I could tell the item in question was rather chewy.

“Look out,” my wife warned too late. “Stanlee grabbed a kitty fritter.”

‘Kitty fritters’ is the term we use for cat poo in our house. Currently, we have three cats and three litter boxes. To keep the dogs away from these tasty treats, we keep a baby gate at the bottom of the stairs. Upstairs, there’s a litter box in my office, my wife’s office, and my mother-in-law’s bedroom.

When it’s time to go to bed, one of us lifts the baby gate and follows both dogs to keep them headed right toward our bedroom. No sense in taking any chances. But some days, one of the pooches finds an opportunity to run off and grab a quick bite before we realize what’s happened.

Coprophagia, the eating of poo, is the scientific name of something that humans find stomach-churning. Why do

dogs like something so disgusting? As with so much of doggie behavior, it helps to understand the psychology of dogs, especially before they were domesticated.

Dogs are scavengers and in the wild used to live a nomadic existence. They were used to foraging for food. They were also used to long periods of not being able to find food. As they say, beggars can't be choosers.

When a dog finds something with a strong, pungent smell, he will usually dive right in and start eating. I know it's true in my house. When I'm cooking dinner, if something hits the kitchen floor, both dogs come running, hoping for a goodie of some kind.

Curiously, neither dog will eat onions. That's a good thing, as dogs are allergic to onions. But they will eat other foods known to be poisonous or at least very harmful to dogs.

Case in point: my former dog Frodo once got a bag of Hershey Kisses and ate most of the bag before one of us realized what happened. The bag, as it turns out, was too close to the edge of the kitchen counter. Because chocolate is bad for dogs, I spent several hours worrying about my pup, but he came out of it just fine.

But why cat turds? They're disgusting. Well, disgusting to us. To dogs, they smell just fine. Because dogs have such amazing sniffers, they can separately mark out the scent of whatever the cat has eaten. They can smell the food in the poo separate from the poo itself. And because cat food smells great to dogs, they have no problem diving in.

“What Can I Do?”

Do as we do in our house. Keep baby gates or other deterrents up to prevent your dog from eating cat turds. If you find that neighborhood stray cats are pooping in your yard, you’ll want to do a sweep of your yard to collect any of those unexpected “gifts” before turning Fido loose in the yard.

While the poo of a healthy cat *may* not be harmful to a dog in a vacuum, you never know if the cat has any kind of parasite, harmful bacteria, or other creepy crawlers that could harm your dog. Some bacteria can even be transferred from your dog to you! And because the kitty litter sticks to poo, well, eating litter surely is not good for dogs.

And that’s probably the most disgusting passage I’ll write in this entire book. You’re welcome.

Why Does My Dog Sniff Butts?

I remember the late great comedian George Carlin talking about overzealous dogs creating awkward situations for visitors. The visitor walks in and along comes the family dog who promptly starts sniffing the visitors' crotch.

"Yup, he's a crotch hound," Carlin said.

We've all seen it. Maybe we've experienced it ourselves. Maybe we've been embarrassed when our dogs sniff a visitor's butt or crotch.

But why are dogs doing it?

We know that dogs are sniffing there to get a sense of who they are dealing with. There is also a major social interaction aspect to this sniffing business, too. In doggie etiquette, you allow other dogs to sniff you. You also sniff them. It's considered polite, much like people shaking hands.

Many dog experts don't view a dog as socially competent unless he "gets" letting other dogs sniff him. And he needs to know how to sniff, too. Dogs who don't get it may have

been separated from their mom dogs at too early an age. Or maybe the dog was an only dog with no brothers and sisters to learn all this important doggie behavior stuff from.

In addition to the social aspect, a great deal of information is conveyed by one quick sniff.

It makes sense, as a dog's sense of smell is 10,000 times greater than ours. Humans only have 6 million scent sensors compared to dogs who have up to 300 million scent sensors!

Dogs also have a special gland located in the roof of their mouth that helps them process smell. Nicknamed the Jacobson's organ, it's connected to the scent-processing part of a doggie brain and is roughly 40 times bigger than the equivalent part of a human's brain.

In short, dogs' main superpower is their sniffing ability.

When a dog sniffs your crotch or butt, he's saying hello and he's learning about you. And he sniffs those private areas (both yours and another dog's) because of sweat glands, specifically apocrine glands.

Pooches have these glands all over their bodies. But in dogs, the ones near the butt and crotch are in the highest concentration. In humans, these glands are in the crotch or armpits. Since Fido can usually only reach your crotch, that's where he goes to say hello.

By sniffing a dog's privates, your pup can learn about another dog's age, sex, mood, and whether that dog is ready to mate. When a dog sniffs a person, they can find

out if the person has recently given birth, is menstruating, and other pieces of information.

Regardless of whether a dog's owner is male or female, it explains why dogs also steal underwear!

I can recall countless times when I've been in the shower, my dirty clothes crumpled on the floor, and the bathroom door unlatched. Next thing I know, here comes little Sophie. She will grab my underwear and run off with them.

Dogs, as Carlin used to say, "are a constant source of amusement."

"What Can I Do?"

Let's say that for whatever reason, you've decided you DON'T want your dog to sniff your visitors' crotches when they arrive (crazy idea, I know). There are a few things you can do to curb your pooch's invasive sniffing.

First, instruct your guests to present their hands or fists to your dog to investigate. While not as information-filled as the crotch, a person's hand will still provide a lot of interesting information to your dog.

Second, teach your dog to sit when visitors arrive. As always, reward positive behavior with praise and treats.

What is My Dog Sniffing Outside?

Little Molly stopped at the base of the tree and sniffed. And sniffed.

Minutes later, she was still sniffing.

I asked my wife, "Is her sniffer broken?"

It's no secret dogs love to sniff. Most dog owners understand just how important sniffing is to dogs. But some people might look at a dog sniffing and not understand what the big deal is. To us, it looks like he's just sniffing dirt. But to a dog? So much more.

Part of the reason why a dog sniffs so much outside is instinct. Maybe he's trying to ferret out a food smell. Maybe he's just interested in whatever it is. Part of sniffing is for a dog's mental stimulation. They need to keep their little brains active to stay healthy.

Your dog might be sniffing the urine of another animal. Such a scent lets your dog know who's visited your neighborhood. What was their sex? Their mood? Or their age? Is this a territory issue?

In my head, I look at all the sniffing your dog does as Doggie SniffBook. Just as we go online to check out our social media feeds to see what our family and friends are doing, so too are dogs getting updates from the world around them.

One fascinating aspect of a dog's sniffing investigations is his ability to separate scents. I alluded to this in an earlier chapter, and it bears repeating. When a dog sniffs something, he's taking in one scent at a time.

This means if he sports an old piece of pizza on the ground that has moldy cheese on it and it's wet from another dog marking it, a dog will sniff it all one at a time. First the mold, then the cheese, then the urine (and all the information packed into that), and so on.

Dogs are incredibly talented with their sniffers, so letting them do their thing is part of helping a dog stay healthy, mentally active, and happy.

“What Can I Do?”

When taking your dog for a walk, realize it's not just about exercise. While that is important, stimulating his mind matters just as much. Give him time to sniff. Keep an eye on him while he sniffs.

Some sniffing might be a sign of anxiety or nervousness, so watch your pooch's body language, too.

Keep his safety in mind when selecting locations. A wide-open meadow or a field is a great place to let your pup exercise his nose. While a botanical garden might seem like

a great choice for your dog to sniff, the possibility of insect bites or stings is a threat.

Remember, your dog doesn't realize he only has five minutes to sniff. Time means nothing to him. Once again, yelling at him to "hurry up" will only stress him out and confuse him. Plan his walks accordingly and remind ourselves why you have a dog—to be his companion just as much as he is yours.

Why Does My Dog Chase His Tail?

My dog Stanlee still chases his tail at three years old. But he only does it in bed at bedtime.

I always assumed tail-chasing was just a puppy thing, but adult dogs do it too.

Puppies chase their tails mostly to burn extra energy. As puppies chase their tail, they often don't realize it's even a part of their body. It's like a baby waving his hands in front of his face without realizing they are part of his body.

Adult dogs also sometimes chase their tail if they become bored. And chasing their tail is sometimes a way to get their owner's attention and start playing with them. Dogs never fail to find creative ways to get our attention!

However, senior dogs may start chasing their tails as their cognitive awareness fails. They don't realize what they are chewing on.

“What Can I Do?”

One thing to remember is dogs, if bored and seeking attention, will accept any attention, even if it is negative. This means that yelling at your dog to stop a given behavior may only encourage him to do it more. Any behavior modification attempts should always be based on positive reinforcement.

If you find your dog is chasing his tail frequently, the best thing you can do for him is exercise him to deal with his excess energy. Take him for longer walks. You should also play with him more; try throwing balls or other activities that help him use his muscles.

Your dog likely also needs more mental stimulation. Tail-chasing is sometimes a dog’s way of letting you know he’s going stir crazy because he is tired of the same old same old.

Try giving your dog treats frozen in a Kong or some other method that requires time and effort on his part to get to the tasty goodness that he wants. A Kong is a cone-shaped rubber-ish chewable toy that is hollow. Kibble and other dog-safe chewables can be stuffed into the Kong, giving dogs a somewhat difficult task in getting the goodies out.

Peanut butter (and other similarly textured dog-safe treats) can be squirted or scooped into the Kong. Freeze it for several hours and it will then take your dog even longer to work all the yumminess out, giving him valuable mental stimulation.

Tail chasing can turn into a compulsion. If your dog does it constantly, it may indicate a behavioral or neurological problem. If so, take him to a vet.

In the area of tail chasing, I can speak from personal experience. One of our previous cats, Parker, suffered from anxiety. As an outlet, she became frightened of her tail. Her condition worsened to the point where she was racing through the house trying to get away from her tail.

Eventually, she started biting her tail so much she chewed all the fur and skin off the last inch or so of her tail, completely exposing the bone underneath. We eventually had to have about six inches of her tail amputated.

Like people, animals can develop neurological conditions that can cause them to self-mutilate themselves. It's a sobering thought.

Why Does My Dog Eat Grass?

Occasionally on our walk, Stanlee will stop somewhere in our large yard and start pulling up grass and eating it. It doesn't happen often, and there seems to be no location, time of day, or other reason behind it.

I had always heard dogs ate grass when their tummies were upset. Was it true?

Surprisingly, the idea of dogs easing a stomachache by eating grass does not seem to hold much weight. Some experts' studies show only 25% of dogs eat grass before throwing up. The other 75% eat grass and are just fine. Only 10% of dogs show any signs of sickness or illness before eating grass. So, the stomach thing is out.

Another theory was that dogs eat grass to fulfill some missing nutrient requirements. However, a good commercial diet of dog food can fulfill a dog's nutrition needs. So that is likely out, too.

A likely cause is a dog's need for roughage in their diet. Grass is a fantastic source of fiber, so dogs might eat grass

to aid digestion. Without enough fiber, dogs have trouble pooping, so grass may help to ‘smooth things out.’

While I assume some people reading this book may skip around to get the answers to the questions they want (which is completely fine), I am hoping many people will read it cover to cover. If that is you, then it will not surprise you to learn this late in the book that eating grass is something dogs may do because of their emotions.

A dog may eat grass because he’s bored. Or he’s upset at being left alone for too long. Some dog experts compare a dog’s eating grass to a human’s nail-biting.

There may also be an instinctual reason for grass-eating. Dogs’ ancestors were not strictly carnivores or meat-eaters. Nor were they omnivores (meat and plant eaters) in the strictest sense.

In the wild, dogs were scavengers. They would eat anything that would help satisfy their nutritional needs. Yet examining wolves’ poo samples show that they eat roughly 10% of grass as part of their diet.

“What Can I Do?”

Above all else, my research tells me dogs need mental stimulation. They get bored and try to figure out things to do to keep themselves amused.

If your dog eats grass regularly, give him healthier things to do. Give him a Kong or other treat container that allows you to fill it with treats or snacks. The task of trying to get the treat out will give him something to do.

Dogs also crave human interaction. Without it, they become unhappy, anxious, or sad. Spend more time with your dog. Walk him more often or for longer periods, or both. Some dogs also benefit from more vigorous and intense playtime.

With all that in mind, if your dog gets enough mental stimulation, exercise, and human interaction, his occasional grass eating is probably just a by-product of his instincts. If an overly worried pet parent tries to use behavioral modification, it would probably interfere with the pooch's instincts.

Does your dog have proper parasite prevention? Grass pesticides might cause your dog serious harm without such protection. If he is protected, the occasional grass nibble is likely not anything to worry about.

Finally, if your dog does eat grass, keep an eye on the rest of his behavior. Is he acting normal? Is he listless? How is his appetite? If your dog has signs of intestinal issues, take him to a vet right away.

Does My Dog Like Being Around Other Dogs?

Our former Pomeranian dog, Molly, was very social and generally enjoyed the company of her fellow dogs. While my wife and I were away on our honeymoon, my wife's sister accidentally let Molly out while dog sitting. Molly promptly wandered off in search of us.

After two days and a lot of frazzled nerves, newspaper ads, and fruitless searching, we received a phone call from a lady who had found Molly at the local mall. As we pulled into her driveway, we saw Molly sitting quite content next to the family's Doberman which outweighed little Molly by around sixty pounds.

According to the lady who found her, Molly, in two days with these people, established herself as the alpha over the family's Doberman.

On the other hand, Sophie, our little Bichon, doesn't like other dogs much. My mother-in-law Beth was dating a woman named Kathlene. She bought a large Golden Retriever who was much larger than average and brought the dog to our home.

This large dog, named Dexter, happily chased Sophie behind the couch to play with our dog. Horrified, Sophie just wanted to hide and wanted to be left alone.

Before the Dexter Incident, Beth was one of Sophie's favorite people. After the Incident, Sophie rarely gets close to Beth.

And Stanlee? When we need to board the dogs at the kennel, he is shy and withdrawn, trying to stay away from all other dogs. However, while it takes him a day or two, he eventually warms up to them and plays eagerly.

We dog parents are always told how social our dogs are. Tails wag when they see other dogs, barking, pulling against leashes...

But then other times dogs see others of their kin and snarl, snap, and seem to be exhibiting all the signs of wanting to fight the dogs they see.

What's the truth?

Because dogs are individuals, there is no hard and fast rule. If a dog is healthy and well adjusted, they often do indeed enjoy the company of other dogs. Dogs are highly social creatures and do not like being isolated.

Some dogs are more withdrawn than others, preferring to spend time alone with their owners. Still others are more social. And some pooches don't like being around their kind because of fear. Maybe they were attacked by another dog, like Frodo. Or they were separated from their mother too young, like Sophie.

Dogs have their own little personalities, so when your dog is approaching other dogs, be cautious.

“What Can I Do?”

Watch your dog’s body language. How are his ears? Are they flattened or up? Is his fur standing on end? Is he exaggeratedly licking his lips? Does he try to hide when other dogs are around? Does he whine when around other dogs?

Any of those behaviors may indicate he’s afraid of other dogs. While there are things you can do to socialize your dog and help him overcome his fear, it’s beyond the scope of this book.

To help your dog overcome his fear, you’ll need to seek the help of a professional dog trainer. Don’t try to help your dog “face his fear” unless you have professional training.

In the meantime, when walking your dog, tell any strangers walking their dogs to respect your space.

This is something that bothers me about oblivious dog owners. They will allow their dogs to invade my dog’s space, ignoring the fear signs my dog is exhibiting. They’ll say, “Oh, it’s okay, my dog just wants to play!”

Meanwhile, I try repeatedly to get them to listen to me as I tell them that my dog is afraid. But they don’t listen. Grrrr! Drives me nuts.

If your dog is a cheerful, happy, outgoing dog, please be observant of other dogs and notice their body language.

Respect their space. Ask the owners if it is okay for your dog to approach.

What about aggression? Look for lunging, snarling, barking, and other signs. While aggressive dogs get a bad reputation, many experts estimate over 90% of aggressive dog behavior stems from fear.

Whether fear or aggression, respect your dog's feelings until you can get him the help he needs. There is hope for all dogs to be rehabilitated, even aggressive ones.

Does My Dog Have Emotions?

To any dog owner who pays even a few seconds of attention to their dog, this might seem like a silly question. Of course dogs have emotions, right?

The question becomes, 'What kind of emotions do dogs have?' I had been told growing up that dogs didn't have feelings like us. The belief was dogs, like most animals, simply reacted to what their environments presented them.

And that reminds me of the schoolbooks we had to read in my primary grades that said some dinosaurs, like Apatosaurus, were so heavy they had to live in lakes and swamps because their bodies were so heavy they would crush their legs.

Ridiculous!

Dogs do indeed have emotions. You've seen the joy on the faces of dogs as they play, greet their owners, or do any number of other things. Stanlee and Sophie jump for joy (literally) when we return home.

Dogs show fear. Every dog owner has seen their dogs become scared. Indeed, our dog Molly used to shake with fear during thunderstorms. My wife would ask me to comfort Molly if she had to go to work while it was raining.

As I have mentioned elsewhere in this book, dogs have the cognitive ability of about a two- or three-year-old child. While that may not sound like much, it's incredible when you think just how dumb people used to believe dogs are. Their emotional capacity is also on that same level.

Dogs reach their emotional maturity at around six months, although that may vary slightly depending on the dog breed. Your pup may not have the emotional complexity that you do, but they still have a surprisingly wide range of emotions.

In addition to joy and fear, dogs feel envy, although it's often mistaken for jealousy. In short, if you have two dogs as I do and you give one dog a treat, you can bet the other dog is feeling something that could be translated to "What about me?"

Dogs can also feel disgusted. Stanlee has developed this weird habit of enjoying water with ice in it. I typically have a glass of ice water with at least a half dozen ice cubes in it sitting next to me on the table next to our couch.

One day Stanlee climbed up on my lap and stuck his nose in my glass, lapping up the cold water. My fault because I wasn't watching him.

Ever since then, he likes to stick his face in my water. Most days I simply put a piece of paper over my glass or simply tell him "No" and he leaves it alone. But occasionally, I'll let

him drink out of my glass. While any good dog trainer would surely shudder at that, it makes me laugh.

Here's the funny part. Occasionally, when Stanlee sticks his muzzle in my water, my ice cubes have melted, and the water is close to room temperature. Upon discovering this, Stanlee will often chuff and turn away from my glass without taking a drink.

My guess? He's disappointed by the lack of ice and the chuff shows his disgust at the situation. Again, I think it's funny.

Other emotions your dog may feel include curiosity, anger, and sadness. Dogs are always investigating their environment, so curiosity is no surprise. Sadness is hardly unexpected when you consider how dogs stare at the front door waiting for your return.

And anger is something every dog is familiar with. While I mentioned aggression is usually a byproduct of fear in an earlier chapter, anger itself manifests in dogs in different ways.

On a camping trip with Frodo and Sophie several years ago, my wife and I set up the tent, arranged our sleeping bags and blankets, and made our dinner. Neither Frodo nor Sophie was all that thrilled with the outside business.

When it came time for bed, both dogs scurried into the tent ahead of us. As my wife and I settled in, we noticed Sophie was missing. At one point, I poked my pillow, wondering if she was hiding under it.

Sure enough, my pillow growled at me.

I poked the pillow again and it growled at me once more. Sophie had buried herself under my pillow to shield herself from the horribleness of the great outdoors and refused to be budged from her spot.

“What Can I Do?”

We know dogs have emotions, and we know they don't understand us in the ways humans communicate. The answer, then, is to respect your dog's emotions by doing things he will understand.

First, never yell at your dog. He won't understand why. And especially don't yell his name in anger. Dogs don't have the same way of self-identifying as people do. As a result, his name is simply a trigger word to him. Yelling this trigger word will send the wrong message.

If your dog doesn't seem to “get” something, don't get frustrated with him. Keep trying. And if you are teaching him a new trick, remember that a dogs' attention span in training sessions is usually a maximum of fifteen minutes.

Other ways you can respect your dog's emotions include remembering his hearing is more acute than yours. Talk to him in a gentle tone. Not only can dogs learn to recognize over 2450 words (give or take) but the tone of your voice says even more.

Show him further respect by letting him sleep without disturbing him. Dogs look so adorable while sleeping that it may be tempting to pet your dog while he's sleeping, but this unexpected petting may startle him.

Finally, always remember it's your responsibility to care for him. There is so much in the human world that dogs don't understand. And there are so many things that can harm your dog. It's up to you to keep him safe.

Why Does My Dog Spin Before Laying Down?

While I have seen many dogs spin before laying down, Stanlee is the master of it. He seems to be trying to find the exact perfect position before settling down for a nap. To people who have never owned a dog, it looks as though the pooch is simply being super-fussy.

When dogs do their spinning-before-laying-down thing, it's because of instinct. Part of their search for the perfect place to plop down is just that: They are trying to make their place comfortable. It comes from their ancestors' habit of making sure their sleeping place was free of sticks, rocks, and other debris.

This is closely related to the dog habit of scratching and digging at the ground. While all it appears to be doing is messing up your blankets, your furball is simply trying to make sure he's comfortable.

The spinning behavior is also related to a safety protocol, too. His spinning before laying down is also a call back to wild dogs'; behavior of making sure they were laying down

in the best position possible in case they needed to fend off an attack by another animal.

“What Can I Do?”

When a dog spins to lay down, it’s an easily recognized behavior for any dog owner. However, another kind of spinning may indicate your dog has a balance problem. If your dog keeps spinning for no reason, he may have a problem with his vestibular system.

Other times, your dog may spin for very specific reasons. Our dog Molly would spin a couple of times whenever someone said her name.

When Molly went missing during our honeymoon, we immediately put an ad in the paper describing her and the fact she knew her name as “Molly.”

The folks who rescued her told us that was how they knew she was our dog. They saw the ad in the paper, looked at Molly, and asked her, “Are you Molly?” Little Molly immediately began spinning with joy.

Dogs may spin a couple of times like Molly on certain occasions. Or they may spin compulsively. Just like humans, dogs can develop habits that can quickly spiral out of control.

If your dog spins compulsively, you can try interrupting the behavior by distracting your dog. The key is to do so without accidentally rewarding the behavior. Dogs learn quickly and any behavior that gains your attention is

something they are likely to repeat to get you to engage with them.

A key thing to remember is to never punish your pooch for what he's doing. That punishment is a form of attention, and it may cause him to do it more. If he's not harming himself, you can also try ignoring the behavior. When he stops, reward him for stopping.

Experts also recommend structuring your day so your dog knows what to expect as they prefer routines. Pay plenty of attention to your dog, too. Spinning can sometimes be the result of boredom.

As always, if you have questions about your dog's behavior, schedule a visit with your veterinarian.

How Do Dogs Learn Commands?

We brought Stanlee home when he was about eight weeks old. About three weeks later, my wife Libby had successfully taught him to shake. That was about three years ago as of this writing.

Until Stanlee learned to shake, I was under the impression learning to shake was one of the tougher commands a dog can learn simply because many dogs I have met don't enjoy having their feet touched. Because he learned that command so quickly, I am convinced Stanlee is a smart dog. But he's hardly unique.

As I've detailed elsewhere in this book, dogs are smart. Much smarter than many people give them credit for. Dogs learn commands very rapidly and can learn over 200 words easily, giving them a deep understanding of our intentions and the human world around them.

Dogs learn commands easily for several reasons. First, they pay close attention to our vocal tonality. They can easily pick up our emotional state by how we talk to them. If you yell at your dog, he knows you are angry at him for

some reason, even if he doesn't know why. Conversely, speaking softly and gently to your pup will help him understand you are pleased with him. So vocal tonality and volume matter quite a bit.

Second, dogs can learn commands by observing a combination of vocal tonality, the specific words or phrases used, and hand signals. Dogs learn to recognize and become familiar with all these things. When used in combination, they can learn even faster. Using the same consistent tone of voice along with the same hand motion helps your dog become familiar with a given command even faster.

Finally, your dog will learn to associate rewards with a command. Called positive reinforcement, this long-accepted way of learning helps your dog (and people!) learn and retain things faster when rewarded in some fashion.

Dogs love all kinds of rewards. A few simple words of praise are a good reward. To ramp up the speed of learning, many dog trainers and owners reward their dogs with treats of some kind.

It's a pretty simple process. When the pooch does (or stops doing) a certain action, if he gets rewarded with something yummy, he will quickly learn to do (or not do) that action even faster as he will want more of the yummy treat.

Some dogs are more food-motivated than others. My former dog Frodo would do practically anything to get his treats. Sit, stay, lay down... if there were treats present, he would run through all his commands in the desperate hope

that one of them, any one, would result in being given a treat.

This was no more apparent than when he developed glaucoma in one of his eyes. He was misdiagnosed initially and outside of surgery the only treatment was to give him two kinds of eye medication three times a day. We weren't looking forward to this.

At the time, I was traveling a lot for my career. When I came home after a few days on the road, Libby showed me something I felt was amazing.

"Watch this," she said. "Frodo, sit." My dog Frodo immediately sat and waited eagerly for his treat. While he waited, Libby put two separate kinds of eye drops in each eye. The entire time, he didn't move or flinch once. Then Libby gave him his treat, which he gobbled up happily.

I can understand a dog learning to sit or even shake quickly. But in just two days, Frodo had learned to sit still while someone put stuff in his eye.

I don't know if *I* could have sat quite so still while someone squirted stuff in my eye.

"What Can I Do?"

Although this book was never intended to be a training guide, I'll offer some basic tips from dog training experts.

First, realize that training sessions must be kept short. As I mentioned earlier, no longer than 15 minutes for adult dogs. For puppies, five minutes is probably pushing it.

Next, keep the sessions positive and happy. Patience, especially when your dog doesn't appear to "get it," is critical.

Be consistent and use the same word or phrase each time. Eventually, your dog will learn to associate the command with what's expected of him.

Also, always end on a positive note. If your dog is having a rough day where he just doesn't seem to listen to you much, finish up with something he does know, praise him, and finish the session on an upbeat note so next time, your pup will be in a receptive state.

Why Do Dogs Burp?

Stanlee looked at me and burped.

That may not sound like a big deal, but I had never heard a dog burp before. To me, it was the funniest thing I had ever heard.

I have noticed Stanlee burps more often when he can get past me to the cat food.

Each evening, our three cats each get a tablespoon or so of wet canned cat food as a treat and to supplement their diets. I bring three small dishes to the second floor of our house where the cats all congregate to eat their dinner.

Access to the stairs is blocked by a baby gate so the cats can eat in peace without getting “Stanlee’ed.”

When bedtime comes, either my wife or I will remove the baby gate and go upstairs. Most nights we can keep the dogs behind us as we ascend, but occasionally Stanlee will squirt past us and head for the cat bowls.

I hurry to catch up and tell Stanlee to stop eating any leftover cat food, but until I tell him to stop, he hurriedly

wolfs down as much food as he can, sometimes even picking up the bowl in his mouth and running to our bedroom with it.

While he is a well-behaved dog and knows his commands, he's figured out he doesn't have to stop eating the cat food until I tell him to. On those nights, Stanlee usually burps.

Unsurprisingly, dogs burp for the same reason humans do: to release extra air from their stomachs.

If dogs gobble their food quickly, there is a chance they could accidentally swallow some extra air, which is released later.

Dogs may wolf down their food quickly if there are other dogs present. They do this to prevent other dogs from being able to have some of the food. The faster the food is eaten, the more likely it is for a pup to swallow air.

Flat-faced pooches, like pugs and bulldogs, burb more often. The shape of their snouts results in them burping more air.

So that's it. Dogs burp like humans.

Not so fast. Like many behaviors that a casual observer might find cute or endearing in dogs, burping may reveal something that needs to be addressed.

If your dog burps a lot, it may indicate a few different things:

- **The Shape of Dog Food** - Certain shapes in dog kibble will cause them to burp more often, particularly donut-shaped food.

- **Dog Food Ingredients** - Dogs may also burp more often if they are allergic to ingredients.
- **Poor Quality** - Dog food that is of poor quality may cause gastrointestinal issues.
- **Garbage** – A dog who eats garbage or digs through the trash may burp up liquids or suffer from diarrhea

Your pup, as it turns out, is just as sensitive to low-quality food as you are!

“What Can I Do?”

Monitor your dog’s behavior. The occasional burp is fine, but habitual burping means his food may be causing some issues.

While investigating the ingredients of his food is a good first step, if he’s been on a given food for a long time (years) and suddenly starts having gastrointestinal issues, it may indicate an illness.

Gastric dilation volvulus, also called bloat, is an illness where the dog’s stomach fills with air, but he can’t get rid of it because there is a twist that blocks the dog’s gut.

This is a life-threatening illness, so if your dog burps a lot, be on the lookout for vomiting as well.

Even the smell of your dog’s burps can give key information. If your dog’s burps smell ‘fishy,’ it might mean your dog’s teeth are bad. Or he’s been licking his anal glands. A burp that smells like sulfur is the calling card of a

protein-rich diet. If your dog eats raw meat, prepare for some super-stinky burps!

Is your dog burping a lot? As I've mentioned many times in this book, any unusual behavior means a trip to the vet is in order.

Why Do Dogs Snore?

All our dogs snore. I found it incredibly cute. Before I was a dog owner, it didn't occur to me that dogs snored. I thought it was just a human thing.

Our little Pomeranian Molly would snore only when she slept on her back. Same with little Sophie. But Frodo and especially Stanlee can snore in almost any position as they sleep.

But do dogs snore exactly like humans? In some ways, yes. Like people, lack of airflow in a pooch's nasal passages or throat causes them to snore.

Some pet owners may wonder if snoring is cause for concern. Several factors come into play. First, what kind of dog breed do you have? Dogs with large skulls and short snouts (I'm looking at you, bulldogs and pugs) are much more likely to snore.

Does having a dog with a longer snout (like a collie) automatically mean you won't have to worry about your dog snoring? As it turns out, no. The position is a big deal.

Some dogs like to sleep on their backs. When this happens, their tongues partially block airflow to their nasal passages.

Another factor influencing your dog's snoring? Allergies. You might have dust in the air that bothers your dog. Do you smoke? Secondhand smoke can cause dogs to snore too.

There are a couple of causes of snoring that require surgery. Sleep apnea, though rare, does occur in dogs as it does in humans. A factor that may surprise you is the possibility of an abscessed tooth. If it makes its way into the nasal sinus passages, this too can cause snoring.

"What Can I Do?"

If your dog sleeps in bed with you and their snoring bothers you, many vets recommend trying a humidifier. They increase the amount of moisture in the air and can help both pups and their people snore less.

Next, consider your pooch's weight. Just as with people, a dog that is overweight may be prone to snoring. A chubby pooch may have extra fat that collects around the throat. That can cause snoring, too. Look into the optimal weight for your dog's breed. If your pup is too heavy, work with your vet to develop a plan to bring your dog's weight down.

Finally, hypothyroidism is often a cause of snoring in dogs. This condition happens when a dog's thyroid gland does not make enough of the metabolism-controlling hormone.

Diagnosing it is easy—a blood sample is analyzed to find out if your dog's thyroid levels are low.

Happily, vets consider this an easy and inexpensive fix. Your dog will require a medication tablet for the rest of his life. With these tablets, the problem goes away easily and quickly.

If your dog sleeps on his back and snores occasionally, you probably don't have much to worry about. In a similar vein, vets say that if your dog has always snored but is happy and active you probably don't have anything to worry about.

The biggest concern? When a dog suddenly starts snoring a lot out of the blue. While it may end up being nothing, turn to your trusted vet just to be sure.

Why Do Dogs Sleep So Much?

What we call “Stanlee-O’clock” comes very early in the morning during the summer.

We have large windows in our bedroom and the sun comes up a little after 5:00 am. Most days, Stanlee waits until 6:30 am or so to wake us up.

He’ll usually try me first. It starts with him wiggling his head underneath one of my hands because he likes to have his head scratched in the morning.

If that doesn’t get me up, he then starts his ‘chuffing’ routine, followed by smacking his front paw on my bed, my head, or even my face. Those mornings get me up rather quickly.

If I’m sufficiently buried in my blankets and determined to ignore him, he will start his routine with my wife. She’s normally an early riser and usually doesn’t mind getting up early as she wants her coffee fix.

Once the two of them get up, it’s just me and little Sophie in bed. Most days, she will start her routine around twenty

minutes after my wife and Stanlee leave. It starts with her rolling around on the bed, maybe a few digs with her front paws. Then she throws herself against me and exposes her belly.

With this “exposing belly” routine, I’m never quite sure if she wants me to rub her little belly or if she’s trying to tell me, “Hey, I’m full. See? I gotta go potty.” If that doesn’t get me up, she then starts jumping crazily on my stomach, doing what we call her “little billy goat routine.” Her final trick to get me up is to give a few short, shrill barks.

I get up and she paces impatiently while I put my clothes on. I often wonder if dogs are puzzled by us putting new fur/skins on every day? I’m weird.

Both dogs will usually sleep through the night without any issue. Occasionally, one will want us to get up to take them potty if they have an upset tummy but both dogs are on a fixed nighttime sleep schedule and our nights pass peacefully.

Because they sleep so much during the evening, I often wonder why dogs sleep so much during the day. It boils down to REM sleep.

REM, short for Rapid Eye Movement, is the deepest level of sleep. This is the level of sleep our bodies need to rejuvenate completely. As the name suggests, this is where your eyes follow the actions of your dreams. Watch someone in REM sleep and you’ll see their eyes are very busy even under the eyelids during this stage.

Like humans, dogs require REM sleep to completely rejuvenate themselves. Unlike humans, dogs typically only

spend around 10% of their sleep in a REM cycle, compared to a human's 25%.

Dogs have irregular sleep patterns and wake up quickly and are at 'high alert' moments after waking up. As a result of changing sleep patterns, and less REM time while sleeping, dogs require more sleep than humans.

They will often also fall asleep out of boredom or simple inactivity, so they sometimes sleep even when they don't need it.

As far as how much sleep a dog needs, well, that comes down to each specific dog. In general, puppies and senior dogs need more sleep than dogs in the middle of their lives.

"What Can I Do?"

When you bring a new puppy into your home, it's important to establish a sleep schedule. Like human babies, puppies want to explore their surroundings and play. They will keep on going until they collapse out of sheer exhaustion right into sleep.

To determine how long your puppy can wait to go potty, a simple rule is to factor one hour of age per month old, then add one hour to that total. For example, if you have a six-month-old puppy, he can wait roughly seven hours before he has to potty. A nine-month-old dog can wait ten hours before going potty.

What if your pup has been sleeping right through the night without any issues for years and then starts having

accidents? You need to find out if there's a new medical issue or it comes down to behavior.

Older dogs may need to go to the bathroom more frequently. Or a dog that starts to have accidents out of the blue may have a urinary tract infection. That's an indication something has changed with his health. It is time to schedule an immediate appointment with your vet.

Why Do Dogs Play Tug?

I don't think I've ever seen a dog who didn't enjoy playing tug. Every dog I've ever had plays tug differently.

Frodo used to growl softly while we played. Sometimes Frodo and Sophie would play tug and that was always so much fun to watch. Sophie was at least a third smaller than Frodo with much shorter legs. As a result, their tug of war play always looked like a mismatch.

Sophie would put up a heck of a fight though. She'd growl and pull and dig her little feet into the ground. Frodo would usually resort to playing dirty. His first trick was to ragdoll the toy they were playing with, which would sometimes pull the toy out of Sophie's mouth. His next trick was to simply pie face Sophie, which was easy because his legs were so long.

When Sophie and I play tug, she growls very loud and crazily, sounding like a teeny psychopath. Stanlee plays tug but is eerily silent the entire time. Even our dainty little Molly used to play tug, or at least that's what my wife claims as those days were before I came into the picture.

Dogs play tug for a few different reasons. First and foremost, it's a call back to their time as a predator. They also enjoy the physical and mental stimulation. Finally, dogs enjoy playing tug with their owners as it's a great way to further the human/canine bond.

Playing tug can be wonderfully fun for both of you, but to do it safely, take a few precautions to keep things from going overboard.

“What Can I Do?”

You'll want a way to prevent things from escalating. Dogs can sometimes turn a game of tug into something beyond a mere game. An easy technique is to establish a release command. Use something simple, like “drop it.” Once your pup understands this simple phrase, you can play tug knowing you can keep things safe.

Next, pick a spot to play far away from any breakables. Although tug shouldn't get that far out of hand, it's best to be prepared. When Stanlee and I play, sometimes he will release the toy and run around the house for no reason. After a few laps, he comes back, and we resume our game. Stanlee is a weird dog.

Pick a toy that is long and durable. Playing tug with a small plush bear is not a good idea. That kind of a soft toy will likely get torn in half very quickly. And playing tug with a small toy is an easy way for you to get accidentally bit by an overzealous dog.

As you play, monitor your dog's behavior. A bit of growling is fine and to be expected but watch his body language. Is he still wagging his tail in the same manner? Is he adopting a more aggressive stance?

If he gets too excited or aggressive, drop the toy and take a break. Give him thirty seconds to calm down. Run him through his basic commands like sit and stay. Resume play when he's calm.

You can let your dog win a game of tug from time to time. It's a great way to boost his confidence. Just remember that you're in charge and he needs to follow your lead.

To remind him of the rules, use your release command a few times during the game. It's a simple, easy way to keep things from getting out of hand.

Can Old Dogs Learn New Tricks?

I was an avid fan of the first version of MythBusters when it starred Adam Savage and Jaime Hyneman. One episode tackled the myth of whether you can teach an old dog new tricks.

Very early in the episode, the myth was busted as a senior dog they were working with quickly learned new commands. It was, as Savage said, one of the show's "most cuddly episodes."

But where did this old chestnut get started? Like a lot of "truisms," a direct starting point can't be pinpointed. But it may have something to do with the aging process in general. More on that in a bit.

Dogs are naturally very curious, task-driven animals. They enjoy learning new things and having something to do.

Some experts even claim that teaching an old dog new tricks may be even easier than teaching a puppy new tricks. Puppies, as everyone knows, are bundles of energy.

They also have more difficulty focusing for long periods than older dogs.

Senior dogs, on the other hand, have longer attention spans. They also have the same degree of curiosity and task-driven mindset compared to younger dogs.

One issue that may make teaching older dogs new commands tougher? They may have old habits that get in the way of the new thing you're trying to teach them. Puppies, being so young, are often more of a 'blank slate' without as many annoying habits to de-program.

Another challenge facing senior dogs is their possible pain. Because of aches and creaks in their bones, they may not be able to practice sitting for long periods. Depending on their physical condition, their hips may not be up for the task of long training sessions. Same thing with a lot of commands. Repeatedly training an older dog to lay down may be harder simply because the pooch has a difficult time getting up or down.

Finally, the aging process means the older dog might not comprehend your instructions completely. If his hearing or vision (or both) is going bad, keeping track of what you're asking him to do may be a problem.

But as far as his mind goes, teaching a dog a new trick is as easy as teaching anything to a younger dog.

"What Can I Do?"

The most important thing to keep in mind when working with a younger dog? Patience. Be sure you understand

your dog's aches and pains. With regular vet appointments, stay current in your understanding of his hearing and vision. Know what his limitations are.

When teaching a senior dog anything, use both hand and verbal signals. By doubling up on your commands, you will be helping your dog comprehend what you're asking him to do.

To keep his mind active, work with your dog on commands and tricks that are less physically strenuous. Here's a short list of commands your older dog may enjoy learning. Each is also easy on him physically.

- Speak
- Shake
- High Five (Stanlee loves this one!)
- Cover Up (with a blanket)
- Kiss
- Walk Backward

No matter his age, he'll enjoy bonding with you and working on new commands together.

Do Dogs Have a Sense of Time?

I remember how much Frodo would whimper when my wife and I returned to the kennel after vacation. We were usually gone for 10-12 days. Frodo was always so happy to see us. He would squeak, whimper, and nuzzle us for several minutes while we paid the bill and gathered his toys (and Molly) to go home.

Stanlee and Sophie get excited when we pick them up too, but not as much as Frodo. They both have fewer separation anxiety issues than Frodo ever did.

There are some days, however, when I noticed my dogs getting just as excited when I return home after thirty minutes as when I'm gone most of the day. Like many pet owners, I wondered if my pups had a sense of time?

Surprisingly, dogs can perceive the passage of time. Like many things they have in common with humans, it's much simpler in dogs. Dogs are aware that time passes. They can smell the passage of time, too! As heat rises over a day, dogs can smell it, noticing the differences.

Dogs perceive time as it is tied to very simple memories. When you leave for work in the morning, dogs have memories of you leaving. That's why a family member who stays home can see your dog camped out by the front door, waiting for your return.

One thing dogs cannot do is plan for the future. They very much live in the moment, so planning the next day's activities isn't something they can do.

Because a pooch's sense of time is so much more simplistic than ours, it doesn't do any good to tell your fuzzy pal, "Don't worry, I'll be back in an hour." That doesn't mean anything to them. But I know it makes me feel better when I do it.

In a very basic sense, dogs can tell a small amount of time has passed vs longer periods. Dogs can perceive the difference between thirty minutes and two hours, but to them, there doesn't seem to be much difference between two hours and four hours.

"What Can I Do?"

The biggest side effect of dogs being left alone is a lack of stimulation. They get bored and may act out. For a short time, I had a large rottweiler named Dinky. He got bored very easily. When I returned from work, Dinky was sitting happily in a pile of chewed-up bamboo... right where my Papasan chair used to be.

Dogs may also suffer from separation anxiety from their owners, especially if they are left alone. To keep your dog from going stir crazy, there are several things you can do:

- Give him a safe chew toy to work on while you're gone.
- Give him a puzzle treat, the kind where he must work to get the treats out, like a Kong.
- Hide his kibble in little bits throughout the house or wherever he stays when his people are away.
- Consider having two dogs. They can keep each other company and play while you're away.

Why Does My Dog Look at Me While Pooping?

This entry came late in this book's writing. My wife was the first to point the question out to me. Do dogs watch their owners while they poop?

I had never noticed this with Stanlee or Sophie. And my feeble memory doesn't remember if Frodo or Molly did it when they were alive.

Many dogs, however, lock eyes with their owners while doing the deed.

The reason? While pooping, they are in a vulnerable position. They are looking to you to let them know if a predator or something else that is dangerous is coming their way. You are a member of their pack, so they look to you to help keep them safe.

I know this is a very short chapter, but I thought it was so curious and frankly heartwarming that it deserved its own entry. Yes, I find the idea of a dog looking at his owner to keep him safe heartwarming.

How Can I Tell What My Dog is Trying to Tell Me?

In a way, it's fitting this is the final chapter in this book.

My dog Stanlee has a lot of unusual behaviors that don't line up with what experts say. At the time of this writing, Stanlee is about three years old and some of his behaviors still baffle me. And I can't recall how or when some of them started.

When Stanlee wants to go for a walk, he will sit near me and place one paw on my chest or arm. If I ignore him, he will repeat it with more force each time. If I continue to ignore him, he adds his chuffing sound, almost as if he's getting frustrated with me.

I've written before about a strange game Stanlee and I invented that I call "Rabid Dog." Stanlee and I will start playing when he ducks his head down, his butt high in the air, tail wagging happily. I start the game by vigorously rubbing his head. Then I gently grab at his hindquarters while he tries to prevent me from doing so.

At some point, I flop him over on his back and rub his tummy. He will start growling, teeth bared, looking to an outside observer like he's going to rip the skin off my hand. But he doesn't. His touch is very gentle. Then he bounds to his feet, and we go right into another round.

It's the most bizarre game I've ever seen with a dog. And it seems to contradict what a lot of experts say about dogs.

How behaviors like "Rabid Dog" and his smacking me with his paw started, I have no idea.

Sophie will whine and whimper if she wants something. If I ignore her, she barks once, very loudly. If I continue to ignore her, she barks repeatedly, very loudly. This barking behavior started right around the time I started giving the dogs nightly treats. Some nights it's a Greenie chewie, other nights it's their Kongs filled with a mix of dog treats and peanut butter-flavored "stuffin'," a sort of whipped cream-like stuff out of a can.

Another contradiction with my dogs compared to what experts say involves their dry food. In an earlier chapter, I mentioned how Stanlee and Sophie (and Frodo and Molly before them) don't gobble up all their dry kibble at once.

Early on as a dog owner, my wife would always leave a bowl of dry food out for Molly. She quickly learned she did not have to eat all the food at once, but that food would still be there for her later.

Libby and I have done this with every dog since Molly. Our dogs will get a mouthful or two of kibble when they are hungry, but a bowl of food can last a day or two at our

house, depending on how hungry the dogs are at any given time.

This flies in the face of what every dog expert I've ever researched says about food and dogs. Am I suggesting that you ignore the advice of dog experts everywhere? Definitely not.

I only point out my dogs' weird and seemingly contradictory behaviors to highlight just how much dogs are individuals.

Your dog likely will not do the same things that Sophie and Stanlee do. Your pup has his or her own weird little idiosyncrasies. It's up to you to figure out what your dog is trying to tell you; and to me, that's amazing. Dogs are so adaptable they are constantly altering their behavior to better communicate with us.

Start by studying the behaviors in this book. Consult with experts. Listen to your vet. Hire a dog trainer. Then observe your dog's behaviors. Keep them safe, and along the way look for things they do consistently that you can use to determine what's going on in their fuzzy little heads.

"What Can I Do?"

More than anything else, love and respect your dogs. Show them that love and respect by doing things dogs will understand and appreciate. People show affection by hugging, but dogs just tolerate it because they love us. Learn instead to do things they will enjoy and love.

Give them discipline because they expect to be shown what to do. Give them tasks to keep them physically and mentally busy. Give them your time because that's what they want and need more than anything else.

Conclusion

As I reach the end of writing this book, I am amazed at some of the things I learned! My intent was always to simply answer some questions I have had about various dog behaviors and along the way hope that readers would enjoy the journey.

What I've learned is that dog communication is far more complex than I could have ever imagined. While it is often a mystery trying to figure out what a pet may be trying to get across to you, the fact is that your fuzzy goofball is indeed communicating, often in complex ways.

For me, this has helped me appreciate my little guys even more than I thought possible. Not long after my dog Frodo passed away due to old age, and I was still a bit of a mess emotionally, a friend of mine, a fellow dog lover, told me, "People don't deserve dogs."

That may sound like a strange thing to say, but what he meant was that pets give us so much and ask for so little in return. Too many people fail to consider their pets' emotional states, thinking (incorrectly) that if the pet has food and water, then that's enough.

It is not enough, and I feel that unless you're willing to devote a considerable amount of time, effort, and love to a pet, you probably shouldn't have one.

My little goofballs have enriched my life in ways I could never have predicted, and while it was always my decision to bring them into my life and take care of them, they have each given me so much more in return.

If you have enjoyed this book, I invite you to check out my previous works. I have two other books that I have published: *Super Science: Unleash Your Superpowers with These Fun Experiments* and *Virtual Magic: Amaze Your Friends with Fun Tricks You Can Perform Online*.

Both books can be found at the same place you found this book. If you check them out, I hope you enjoy them as much as I enjoyed writing them. If you have any fuzzy goofballs of your own in your life, whenever you look at them, realize that they are indeed communicating with you. It's up to you to learn their language.

And don't forget to visit

www.HousebreakMyDog.com

When you visit that site, just enter your name and email to get your FREE copy of my special report, "*How to Quickly & Easily Housebreak Your Dog.*"

I am also hard at work on additional books aimed at young readers. When you sign up for access to the housebreaking report, you'll be added to an email list, and I will notify you when my additional books are complete.