

Darling Dog

For Dog Lovers, By Dog Lovers

FEBRUARY 2025

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In the not-so-distant past, I had a nickname that stuck around for a little while: the Dog Whisperer! As flattering as that may sound, it was really to poke a bit of fun at me due to an incident in which an unfamiliar dog came out of the back of a truck and sent me to emergency surgery in the middle of the night!

I have always trusted dogs, even dogs that I am not familiar with. This usually results in a new dog friendship! That isn't always the case. I have been bitten, to my recollection, by four different dogs. A neighbor's Doberman got me as a child while I was pedaling down my Meme's street. Fortunately, I didn't fall off and made tracks up the front stairs of her house and inside before it could eat me alive! She happened to be hosting bridge that day (I can still see the cloud of cigarette smoke and smell the Jack Daniels), and I distinctly remember having to pull my britches down in front of eight old ladies and show them the teeth marks on my left cheek!

I don't want to get too far in the weeds with some of the other stories, but I will say that the most recent incident involved my friend's English Mastiff, Dax. We happened to be at his old house looking at the recent work he had done when he specifically warned me about his

dog. Being the trusting guy that I am, I petted him anyway. All was fine until his human turned the corner in the hall out of sight. He snapped at me so fast I could hardly see it! Fortunately for me, his aim was just off, and he only got my shirt sleeve. I got out of there and didn't see him again until his human bought the house across the street. Yes. Across the street.

With my first impression, I judged Dax to be a monster that would scare kids and other dogs. But then I sat back and thought about why he snapped at me. It wasn't because he was a mean dog. He just didn't know me, and when his human was out of sight, he probably got a little scared. With his new proximity to my family (I have 3 preteen children), I decided the best route would be to make friends with him. It turns out that he is just a big baby that loves people and getting his head and belly scratched . . . and bacon.

I guess the moral of the story is that most dogs are playful and loveable when you treat them with the same respect! On that rare occasion that you see a nervous or enraged dog, don't try to calm it down . . . give it some space!

Beau Boyd
Editor, DarlingDog.com

“What’s Up With My Pup?”

Hello and welcome to What’s Up with my Pup? I will endeavor to answer your most burning questions about your dog, their behavior, and how to get the most out of your relationship together. Be sure to write in with any issues you are experiencing with your precious canine companion.

Question: For today’s question, I will share my best piece of advice for early puppy training.

ANSWER: Okay, you’ve gotten your new furry housemate home and have had all of the fun: puppy kisses, petting that very soft fur, maybe even cleaning up the first little puddle. Now, the inevitable question is “Where should I start with training?” Here’s my advice:

I have found the best way to begin serious training with your puppy begins at the food bowl. Food, after all, is a powerful motivator.

When preparing your pup’s meals, be sure to work on sit and stay by reiterating the commands and demonstrating them to your pal a few times. (Yes, it’s ok to gently push their bottom to the ground while you are teaching sit). After pouring out food into their bowl, it is time to start working on stay.

Your dog’s natural instinct will be to plow right in, but this is where you will begin to exert your dominance. Every time your little pup makes a beeline for the bowl, gently push them back a step or two and repeat the sit and stay lesson. Keep in mind that, at first, your dog will probably only give you a few seconds of obedience, but be sure to recognize this with praise and then give them a release signal that it is okay to now eat.

By repeating this lesson at every feeding, you are doing several things: 1) teaching two very valuable

commands (sit and stay), and 2) solidifying your position as the Alpha Dog . . . the bringer of food.

You will find that much of your future training will go more smoothly once this relationship is established.

Remember, if there is no Alpha Dog role established, your puppy will be happy to step in and take on the responsibility. 🐾

Need Advice?

Go to [DarlingDog.com/Advice](https://www.darlingdog.com/advice) to submit your questions!



MEET LEN SILVERMAN

Len Silverman has lived with animals his whole life. From a young age, there was always a cat on the prowl around the house, but he discovered his true love when his folks brought home their first dog, Poncho, who was a mess. Very lovable but completely untrained. Now with his family in Nashville, Len enjoys having a golden retriever around and finds that they are always ready to show you some love. He has discovered that when dogs understand their role in the family, everyone is a lot happier. In his spare time, Len likes to paint, but he hasn’t quite gotten the hang of animal portraits . . . not yet.

BITCH, PLEASE

The Life Of Mae, A Boykin From Mobile

INSTALLMENT III

Happy New Year, readers. Do you take on New Year's resolutions? I sure as Hell below and Heaven above do. Each and every year, I aspire and attain my objectives—to be naughtier and more entitled than the year before. Do not

assume all too pervasive and so-called health and lifestyle bullshit do not enter into my vision, though. They do, only in the sense of obtaining my ultimate goal of world domination. I am a very active creature, you know. Like most spaniels, I like to be on the go and on the move. Walks are my favorite times of the day. My daily meanders (and bowel movements that are a part of them) shape the schedules of multiple people. Here ensues an account of how exercise structures my life and the revelries thereof.

My love of cardio is not completely a result of genetic predisposition. My big fat human loves running and walking. He hoped that I would be

a running companion. Our shared experience of running was brief. The joker placed me on a lead and started running, so I chased that giant squeaky toy. Tripping him to the pavement, I looked down with satisfaction and begged him to start again so I could watch him fall on repeat!

On account of my wanting to chase the rounded one on his runs, my human runs alone in the morning. While he engages in this activity, I lounge on beds (not my own but the human's and those in the guest rooms), sofas, settees, chairs, and the occasional tabletop. You have to keep life varied. The fatso greatly enjoys his morning runs. When he returns from his daily cardio, the man-servant comes in all sweaty, driven, and at peace. I milk that bitch for all he's worth and then some during the post-run period. Firstly, I show how excited I am to see him. Having major separation anxiety issues, I think that if the fatso leaves me for a minute, he might never return. I wiggle my caboose, pogo

on all four legs, and then go all Rockette upon sight of him. The graying one finds the display endearing. I get hugs and treats. This bitch does not do tricks unless she gets treats in return.

When we lived in our first home, I would be let out into the side yard while the human showered and dressed. The old house was the epicenter for multiple colonies of lizards. Being a mighty huntress and the guardian of my household, it was and remains among my responsibilities to eradicate the existence of this population. I am a determined stalker. My time in the side yard allowed for considerable honing of my predatory instincts and skills. I take considerable satisfaction with showing off my conquests, which I torture at length before taking them out of their misery. One day, after fatso had completed a long run and was in the shower, I wanted to gift my human one of my latest conquests. With the only mildly injured reptile hanging out of my chops, I popped my head in the shower. My big fat human told me to bugger off. I was rightly insulted by his behavior. I am a lady, after all. In my disgust, I lost hold of the lizard. It lunged at my human's privates, as did I. The ensuing battle royal involved the fall of the human, the lizard climbing up and down the shower wall, and my darting in and out of the shower. Dogs can laugh. I did so with delight. My human was screaming like a banshee. His profanity reached a new level of offensiveness. The episode, of which I was the mastermind, was hilarious.

The human has his morning run. I have walks throughout the day. Morning, midday, afternoon, and evening walks are equally distributed across the day. Ranging from ten to twenty minutes in duration, I relish my outings. My walks are utilitarian and recreational in nature. Some days, I get long walks. As my human has run almost every day for approaching twenty-eight years, he is finally wising up that he needs to give his body breaks. Once a week, he takes me on an extra-long walk. I take on the streets of midtown and downtown Mobile with gusto. We have no set route. The residential streets of Old Dauphin Way, Leinkauf, and Oakleigh are beautiful. I like them a lot. Huge oak trees

"People and the places they inhabit are far from the only attractions of my long runs."

and houses of all sizes and appearances provide lovely backdrops for our progress. I remember every property where my human has stopped to speak to someone. They usually admire, play with, and offer me treats. I try to trot up walks and jump onto porches so as to let them know my cute self is back! My human reins in my lead. That bastard is trouble!

People and the places they inhabit are far from the only attractions of my long runs. Sights, sounds, and activity are in every direction, even at six o'clock in the morning. Birds, squirrels, dogs, and cats cause me to drag my human this way and that way. Some mornings we see opossums and raccoons. The latter intrigue me greatly. A rarer sight are the bald eagles that live in a huge nest a few blocks from the Bungalow. They are majestic creatures. I jump on all fours when I see them. Sometimes the adolescent male eagles come to our house where they perch in the branches of the big sycamore tree to the side of the house. I bark like a mad dog. They eye me. My human eyes them. There is no danger of them carrying me off, as I am a full-figured lass. Tubs watches them all the same.

Several parks and squares pepper our route. Washington Square in Oakleigh is just a block from our old house and often along our cardio path of a given day. There is a large cast-iron sculpture of deer near which I like to relieve myself, and a big fountain that I have always wanted to take a swim in. Large putti atop dolphins (that look more like catfish) ring the basin of that all-too-of-dreamed-of watering hole. Cooper Riverside Park along the Mobile River is my favorite public space. I can see lots of water there. There are steps and ramps and even more sculpture. Not only are there pigeons but also seagulls. The two species have altercations. I insert myself right in the middle of those conflicts. All birds in my sight must perish!

Downtown sidewalks often have grates. I freak out over perforated walking surfaces. My human never knows whether I will either engage in acrobatic feats or stop dead in my tracks when interacting with them. He ends up stumbling regardless of my mood about the grates. Tripping him up calls for amusement for me and possible passersby. Lots of grates can be found in the blocks surrounding Bienville Square. That park is another favored spot on long walks. There is another fountain there and lots of huge trees. The biggest draw are the squirrels. I am no fan whatsoever of said tree rats. The juicy specimens in Bienville Square are the size of cats. I am licking my chops just thinking of them. On one occasion, a squirrel stole a pimento cheese sandwich from my human while he was lunching with a friend in Bienville Square. Boy, I wish that I was with him on that day. I would have eaten the sandwich and the squirrel. You know, I give them a run for their money, pimento cheese sandwiches and squirrels. Pulling the human on the lead while pursuing tree rats is the only time my human gets his wish of a canine running campaign. Expectation and reality differ greatly.

Long morning runs always involve a walk up either Old Shell Road, Dauphin Street, or Government Street. These thoroughfares are among Mobile, Alabama's, most evocative thoroughfares. My human is often distracted by the buildings and trees. It is nice to see him in his element. We move at a clipped pace, but both of us are very observant when it comes to what interests us. For him, it is architecture and nature. I am all about the nature, too, only as prey!

Culinary offerings can often be found along streets and on sidewalks, as well. I dig (not in the literal sense) street fare. My human has to keep a close watch on me in that regard. I will eat anything, and I mean anything. It is a regular occurrence on our walks that I dart off in pursuit of a particularly enticing morsel. One year, right after Easter, I pulled my human into a yard with a nice clump of monkey grass. In the monkey grass was a brightly painted

Easter egg. I ate it whole, winking at the fatso as I did it. I was potent for a day or two . . .

By the time the human and I reach our own yard after one of our long walks, I am thirsty and tired. My human would likely benefit from a stronger drink than water after having been put in his paces by the likes of me! The day is young, though. I lap water out of my bowl and drip it all over kitchen before sitting on my favorite rug, the best in the house. Walks are such fun, just exhausting in a good way.

As we enter into a New Year, I will continue to take my walks, long walks and other ones. My New Year's resolution of further honing my crafty ways is a given. This lady never disappoints, unless she does, and then it is a hoot! Contemplating the New Year, my mind wanders to all that I will be up to in 2025. Buckle up, loves! 🐾

Maesel the Boykin



MEET CART BLACKWELL

Cartledge Weeden Blackwell III, "Cart," is a historian and a curator. Blackwell was born in Selma, Alabama. He obtained an undergraduate degree from the College of Charleston and his graduate degree from the University of Virginia. He authored *Of People and Of Place: Portraiture in Alabama (1870-1945): Reconstruction to Modernism* for the Alabama Chapter of the National Society of Colonial Dames of America (NSCDA). His second book, *Of Color and Light: The Life and Art of Artist-Designer Clara Weaver Parrish*, is to be published by the University of Alabama Press in the winter of 2025.

Blackwell has penned scores of articles for magazines and numerous essays for exhibit catalogues. An eighth-generation Alabamian, Cart loves his native state. When not found on his family's farm in Wilcox County, he is on the Gulf Coast. Regardless of where he finds himself, Mae, his crafty spaniel, is always by his side!

Love In Every Lick

DENTAL HEALTH FOR YOUR DOG

February is the month of love, and while we humans might exchange chocolates and flowers, your dog expresses love with every wag, snuggle, and sloppy kiss. But let's pause for a moment—how's your dog's breath? If it's less than rosy, it might be time to focus on your pup's dental health.

Dental care is essential for your dog's overall well-being. Neglecting it can lead to bad breath, gum disease, tooth loss, and even serious health problems like heart, liver, or kidney disease. This month in Dogster's Corner, let's explore how to keep your dog's teeth healthy and sparkling.

THE TRUTH ABOUT DOG TEETH

By the age of three, most dogs show signs of periodontal disease, which is caused by a buildup of plaque and tartar. Signs include bad breath, red or swollen gums, and difficulty chewing. If left untreated, dental disease can cause pain and lead to infections that spread throughout the body.

The good news? Regular dental care can prevent or reverse these issues.

BRUSHING BASICS

Brushing your dog's teeth is the gold standard for dental care, and it's easier than you might think:

- **Start Slow:** Use a dog-specific toothbrush or a soft child-toothbrush and dog-friendly toothpaste. Never use human toothpaste—it can be toxic to dogs.
- **Make It Fun:** Start with short sessions, letting your dog taste the toothpaste, and praise them throughout the process.
- **Build A Routine:** Aim for daily brushing, but even a few times a week can make a big difference.

DENTAL CHEWS AND TOYS

If brushing isn't feasible every day, dental chews and toys can help. Look for products approved by the Veterinary Oral Health Council (VOHC).

These chews can reduce plaque and tartar while giving your dog something fun to sink their teeth into.

THE ROLE OF DIET

Diet can play a role in your dog's dental health. Specialized dental diets are designed to reduce plaque buildup. Even regular kibble has a slight cleaning effect compared to wet food, but every dog's needs are different—consult your veterinarian to find the best diet for your pup.

REGULAR CHECK-UPS

Annual dental check-ups are as important as brushing. Your veterinarian can perform a thorough oral exam and recommend a professional cleaning if needed. Professional cleanings involve removing tartar both above and below the gum line, where your toothbrush can't reach.

SIGNS IT'S TIME TO SEE THE VET

Watch for these warning signs that your dog might have dental issues:

- Persistent bad breath.
- Drooling or difficulty chewing.
- Red, swollen, or bleeding gums.
- Broken, loose, or discolored teeth.

If you notice any of these symptoms, schedule a veterinary visit.

LOVE STARTS WITH CARE

Taking care of your dog's dental health isn't just about fresh breath—it's about ensuring they live a long, happy, and pain-free life. With just a little effort, you can keep their smile healthy and their love bites sweet.

Have specific dental questions about your furry Valentine? Reach out to your veterinarian—we're always here to help. 🐾

MEET DR. MAX HARPER, DVM

Dr. Max Harper, DVM, is a practicing veterinarian with a passion for educating pet parents about all things canine. He believes every dog deserves a long, happy, and healthy life.



Great Getaway

ALEX, SOPHIE, AND CHARLIE'S TRAVEL ADVENTURE

As the summer sun dawned bright and clear, Alex, Sophie, and their parents packed up the family car, ready for their eagerly anticipated vacation to the Lakeside Retreat. Charlie, wagging his tail in excitement, seemed to sense the adventure ahead. This was the family's first vacation with a dog, and while the siblings had meticulously planned each detail, they were sure to pick up a few tricks for traveling with Charlie along the way.

PACKING ESSENTIALS FOR CHARLIE

Sophie took charge of packing a travel kit specifically for Charlie, ensuring it included all the essentials: his food, water bottles, bowls, his

favorite toys, a comfortable travel bed, and his leash. She also packed a first-aid kit with items tailored for dogs, including tick removal tools and a small supply of his regular medications. Alex remembered to bring extra towels—just in case Charlie got too enthusiastic about the lake.

THE JOURNEY BEGINS

With the car loaded, they set off. The family had planned the driving route to include several pet-friendly rest stops. Alex had mapped out these locations beforehand, ensuring there would be ample space for Charlie to stretch his legs and relieve himself. They learned quickly to never skip a planned stop—even if Charlie seemed fine, it was better to stick to the routine they had set.

“They agreed that not only was preparation key but also flexibility—adapting to Charlie’s needs and making adjustments on the fly had made their vacation enjoyable for everyone.”

HYDRATION AND COMFORT

Traveling in the heat of summer meant keeping everyone, especially Charlie, well-hydrated. Sophie had frozen a few bottles of water the night before to ensure they had cold water available throughout the trip. They also placed a sunshade in the car windows where Charlie’s travel bed was set up to keep him cool and comfortable during the drive.

KEEPING CHARLIE ENTERTAINED

To keep Charlie calm and entertained during the long drive, Alex packed a mix of chew toys and treat-dispensing toys. This not only kept Charlie busy but also helped reduce any travel anxiety. The siblings took turns sitting next to him, offering cuddles and reassurance, which helped Charlie settle down and enjoy the ride.

REGULAR UPDATES

Sophie had the thoughtful idea to use a pet GPS tracker, which they attached to Charlie’s collar. This device gave them peace of mind, allowing them to monitor Charlie’s location in real-time. They shared the app with their parents, so everyone could feel secure knowing where Charlie was, even during stops when he might wander a bit.

ARRIVAL AND ACCLIMATION

Upon arriving at Lakeside Retreat, the first thing they did was to walk Charlie around the area to acclimate him to his new surroundings. This walk helped Charlie burn off some energy and settle more comfortably into the vacation environment. They made sure

to introduce him slowly to other dogs and guests, respecting his space and pace.

SETTING UP A HOME BASE

Once settled in their cabin, Alex and Sophie set up a dedicated space for Charlie, complete with his travel bed and toys. They learned that maintaining his routine, even in a new place, was crucial. They designated a specific area for feeding and placed potty pads on the porch, just in case Charlie was hesitant to go outside at night.

ENJOYING THE VACATION

The siblings had planned activities that they could enjoy with Charlie. They brought a floating dog toy for some fun in the lake and a new hiking harness for their planned trails. Each evening, they shared stories of their day’s adventures, proud of how well Charlie was adapting and how much fun they were having together.

REFLECTIONS ON THE JOURNEY

As their vacation drew to a close, Alex, Sophie, and their parents reflected on the valuable lessons they had learned about traveling with Charlie. They agreed that not only was preparation key but also flexibility—adapting to Charlie’s needs and making adjustments on the fly had made their vacation enjoyable for everyone. Sophie decided to jot down their experiences in her dog guide journal, hoping to keep their learned tricks for future vacations. Meanwhile, Alex thought about their next trip—now that they knew the ropes, the possibilities were endless. 🐾

Notthin' Special

"Lucy is the sweetest dog. She looks like a small black lab, and she will smile for you all day long."

If you've come this far, I assume that you have read about my dog Annie. If not, she was a wonderful white lab that my kids spent all of their younger years with, and she was the best dog. She had a very easy temperament, and frankly, she laid around a lot. Kind of what you want in a dog. One that

will just lay around, bark at noises, and come when called. Nothing more, nothing less.

Annie had been around for several years, and we had acquired a second child, the old-fashioned way. It wasn't that hard. I could get you pregnant over the phone. My wife and I had the conversation about how many children we wanted. We both decided we

didn't want a basketball team, but one just wasn't enough. Because as you know, 1 kid is 1 kid, 2 is 7, and 3 is 468 children. So, no. We decided on two because number one is gonna need somebody to fight with to get her ready for the streets.

I decided we needed another dog for Annie to play with. I had also devised a plan to gift it to my wife who was mad at me 78% of the time anyway. I'm smart. I had formed the thought that we should get a new dog, and seven minutes later, a post on Facebook offered lab mutt puppies for sale. I thought the Lord wants us to have a puppy. The poster said she would have the puppies in the church parking lot the next day for pickup. It was a sign. I love it when a good plan comes together.

The next day, I left work early to check these puppies out. Upon arrival, I noticed a girl with a box beside her car. She didn't look particularly methy, but I wouldn't rule it out. She said she needed a \$30 rehoming fee. I asked which one was the most docile, and she said, "Oh that's easy." She grabbed the runt in the corner and placed her in my hands, and I was shot. I gave her the money and we were on our way. I had been told this dog was two-thirds lab and one-third Catahoula. Up until that time, I thought the Catahoula was a river in Tennessee. Hell, it may be. I did know one fact about dogs that still holds true in my mind today. A lab mutt mix is the best-behaved dog in the whole wide world. And this dog's momma was obviously a party girl, so we were sittin' pretty.

I gifted the sweet puppy to my wife in front of my kids in case things got physical. I could tell by the look on her face that she would rather have received a gift certificate for a colonoscopy. I said, "I'll house-train it." Her response made me believe she wasn't falling for that lie. I gave the kids the honor of naming her, and somehow, they came up with the name Lucy. OK, that's a whole other story for later.

Lucy is the sweetest dog. She looks like a small black lab, and she will smile for you all day long. Once a man with a ridiculous beard came into the back yard unannounced. I caught Lucy mid-air by her collar just before she was able to dismember this gentleman. So she is either very protective or she doesn't like beards. We still don't know which. She is always guarding the bathroom door, protecting me when I'm not in a position to defend myself. And she always loves on the babies. When company comes over, I tell people, "Don't worry about Otis [my Great Dane], but make friends with that black one or you might lose a finger."

Lucy doesn't sleep in the bed with me even though she's been invited many times. She hangs out in the bathroom a lot and dares Otis to come in there. She will approach you for some obligatory scratches and stay for as long as you will provide them. If my math is correct, Lucy is about 13 years old, and she moves a little slower and barks a little less each day. When her time is up, I'm sure it will rock me. Lucy girl is a good dog. So that puts her ahead of about 98% of the people I know. I hope that one day you too are lucky enough to get a dog that is "nothin' special." 🚫



MEET MARK WOODSON

Born in Selma, AL in 1973, Mark is the owner of a local restaurant living alone with a Lab/Catahoula mix named Lucy, a Great Dane named Otis, and 3 cats...Sam, Charlie, and Eddie B. He claims to hunt and fish as his hobby, but he mostly scrolls through reels on his phone and binge drinks in his free time. His favorite pastime is developing disorders his physicians have to Google. He has 2 daughters, Bonnie and Molly, who enjoy volleyball and spending their inheritance early.

The Only TIPS FOR TRAVELING With Your Dog That You'll Ever Need



Every time I glance at my suitcase, my dog starts wagging his tail with enough force to generate a small breeze. It seems he knows we're about to embark on yet another adventure together. Traveling with your furry companion can turn a simple trip into an obstacle course of snacks, squeaky toys, and strategic bathroom breaks. So, as a seasoned traveler with a pet passport thicker than my own, let me share some tail-waggingly good tips to make your journey smoother. From securing the right gear to navigating pet-friendly accommodations, I've got the inside scoop on how to roll with your four-legged co-pilot!

1. PACKING POOCH ESSENTIALS

Always pack a bag just for your dog, making sure to include their regular food to avoid any tummy troubles. Don't forget a favorite toy or two to keep them entertained, and a blanket that smells like home to help soothe any travel anxiety. Water from home can also prevent stomach issues that local water might cause, ensuring a smoother trip for everyone.

2. SAFETY FIRST

Safety should never take a backseat, especially for your dog. Invest in a good-quality travel crate or a vehicle restraint system like a seatbelt harness. This ensures they're secure and safe during the ride, reducing the risk of injury in case of sudden stops or accidents.

3. CHECK HOTEL POLICIES

Before booking your stay, confirm that the hotel not only allows pets but welcomes them warmly. Some hotels offer special amenities for pets, including beds, bowls, and treats. Knowing your dog will be as valued as any human guest can provide peace of mind.

4. PLAN YOUR PIT STOPS

Long drives can be hard on your dog, so plan for regular pit stops every couple of hours to let them stretch their legs and relieve themselves. It's a great way to keep them comfortable and avoid any accidents in the car, making the journey pleasant for both of you.

5. KEEP A DOGGY DOSSIER

Carry a folder containing your dog's medical records, recent vaccination proof, and any other important health information. This is especially crucial if you're traveling across state lines or internationally, as some places have specific health requirements for pets.

6. PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

If your dog is new to traveling, start with short local trips to get them accustomed to being in a vehicle. Gradually increase the duration of these trips to help build their confidence and comfort level, which can make longer journeys much smoother.

7. ID TAGS AND MICROCHIPS

Make sure your dog's ID tags are up to date with your current contact information, and verify that the microchip registration is current as well. This can be a lifesaver in case your dog gets lost, making it much easier for them to be returned safely to you.

8. EARLY BIRD GETS THE WORM

Arriving early at the airport or train station can help alleviate the stress of rushing and gives your dog a chance to become acclimated to the busy environment. Use this time for a walk or a potty break, setting a calm tone for the journey ahead.

9. PACK A PET FIRST AID KIT

A basic pet first aid kit should include supplies like bandages, tweezers, antiseptic cream, and the contact details for a 24-hour veterinary clinic. This can handle minor emergencies until professional care is available, ensuring your dog's health and safety are always a priority.

10. STAY CALM AND TRAVEL ON

Dogs are highly sensitive to the emotions of their owners. Maintaining a calm demeanor can reassure your pet and help them manage their stress levels. If they see you enjoying the trip, they're more likely to relax and enjoy it as well.

BONUS TIPS

1. FAMILIARIZE WITH LOCAL VETS

Before you travel, research and make a list of local veterinarians and 24-hour emergency clinics near your destination. Having this information handy can drastically reduce panic and response time in case your dog needs medical attention unexpectedly. It's like having a safety net, ensuring you're prepared for any health issues that might arise during your trip.

2. BRING COMFORT ITEMS

Just like humans, dogs can feel homesick too. Pack a few extra items that will make

your dog feel at ease, such as a favorite blanket, a well-loved toy, or even an item of clothing that smells like you. These familiar scents can help soothe your dog and make unfamiliar hotel rooms or rental homes feel more inviting and less stressful for them.

3. HYDRATION AND NUTRITION

Keeping your dog hydrated and well-fed during travels is crucial, especially on long journeys. Bring a collapsible water bowl and a bottle of water whenever you venture out with your dog. Also, stick to their regular feeding schedule as much as possible to avoid gastrointestinal distress, which can be triggered by changes in diet and routine. If you're traveling across different time zones, gradually adjust their feeding times to align with the new schedule to ease their transition.

And there you have it! Whether we're dodging drool on the dashboard or convincing a skeptical hotel clerk that yes, my dog is indeed a VIP (Very Important Pup), traveling with our furry friends is always an adventure. With these paw-some tips in your travel kit, you and your dog can explore the world with ease and perhaps a bit of fur on your clothes. Remember, the journey is all about making memories—so pack those treats, fasten that leash, and let's hit the road. After all, every good story deserves a wagging tail at the end! 🐾



MEET NATALIE SMITH

Hey there! I'm Natalie Smith, a 24-year-old born in Crescent City, California, who now calls Bend, Oregon, home. If you've never been to Bend, let me tell you—it's basically the dog capital of Oregon. I'm pretty sure dogs outnumber people here! My love for animals (especially dogs) and writing has been with me since I was a kid, and now I get to share that passion through my articles. Oh, and I just became a mom to a baby boy named Milo, which means my hands are officially full—with diapers, dog treats, and coffee! Life feels complete, and a little chaotic, but I wouldn't have it any other way. Stick around for some helpful dog tips and maybe a few parenthood laughs along the way!

MY DOG IS MY CO-PILOT

The Road Trip



I don't know how she knows it, but she knows it. A road trip is coming. Even before my suitcase comes out, Winnie Lew knows someone is going on a trip. Her fur becomes Velcro and she is stuck to me. But as soon as the suitcase is taken out of the closet, she goes from needy to possessed. She is on my case with ungodly whining like you have never heard, coming from deep within her. It is a guttural, "Do I get to go? Do I get to go? Do I get to go?" Once I assure that, yes, she is going too, she breaks into her Tik-Tok dance moves and gyrates throughout the house. It is actually a joy to see any living being dance with such abandon. She doesn't care if no one is watching or the whole world is watching—moves will be made.

Road-tripping with Winnie Lew has evolved since our first car trip, which was to bring her home from the shelter. It was during the pandemic. I had moved to a new town, was isolated, and my companion Ruthie, the puggle, died unexpectedly. I was alone, and a friend wisely told me to get another dog quickly. He found Winnie Lew (then named Twinkle) at a shelter and told me to make the 5-hour drive to adopt her, which I dutifully did and I am forever grateful. At that point, Winnie Lew's belongings consisted of her shelter paperwork, an orange collar with jack-o-lanterns on it, and an old blanket. She was so unsure of what was going on that I don't think she made a peep the entire 5-hour drive back to Selma. My, how times have changed.

I am a light packer and try not to take more than I think I will need. Winnie Lew's packing—that's a different matter. We plan for everything that she could possibly need. At Thanksgiving, we made the 5-hour trip home. I think the five hours in the car was matched only by the five hours it took to pack. Her highness' packing list included but was not limited to her bowls (she won't eat out of just anything), food (with appropriate toppings to promote kibble consumption), assorted treats (everyone needs variety in their life), a weighted blanket (in case of a thunderstorm), a raincoat (in case of a rainstorm), a travel water bottle (which actually is kind of cool), and her favorite toys (the hedgehogs, the Yeti, the moose, and the lamb), Pepto-Bismol and Benadryl tablets (and a jar of smooth peanut butter to make the pills go down in case either are needed). The packing list changes seasonally, but these are the must-haves whether we are traveling for a week or a weekend.

Once the items are packed and in the car, it is time to get going. One last potty break and we are on the road. Winnie Lew jumps into her car seat on the passenger side and lets me strap the seatbelt to her harness. I made the mistake of not strapping her in only one time. She tried to jump out of the window to go after a squirrel. Winnie Lew lost her freedom at that point. I roll the car window down, crank up the podcast, and our journey begins. For the first two-and-a-half hours, we drive mostly on two-lane roads and encounter several stop signs. The window must be rolled down again at each stop so that Winnie Lew can get her bearings. We do this even when it rains, although for a much shorter time. As we reach Tuscaloosa, we make our obligatory stop at Chick-fil-A where we get the nugget combo meal that we share for lunch. After lunch and further down the road, traffic has slowed a bit. Winnie Lew and I both spot a young woman outside her car, crying and talking on a cell phone. It is only then that I see the dog lying further off the road. I don't know if she hit the dog or if she

has found her lost pet. We only go a bit further when I get the nagging feeling that regardless of what happened, I couldn't leave her there by herself. We turn the car around, but by the time we return, a young man is already there comforting her—perhaps her boyfriend. I made the decision to turn back around and continue. I still see the scene in my mind.

When we get to the interstate, Winnie Lew falls asleep and is out for the duration until right before we arrive at my parents' home. My mother loves all animals, but especially dogs. My parents no longer have a dog of their own and they miss the companionship. Mom is now in a wheelchair and her thoughts aren't always linear. But when she gets confused or agitated, all I have to do is talk about Winnie Lew and she is right back in the conversation. Mom often seems more excited about Winnie Lew visiting than me. I know the week will be filled with my mother feeding Winnie Lew things she shouldn't have (hence the need for Pepto Bismol). I dutifully remind my co-pilot that her one responsibility is to love on her grandmother early and often. We arrive and my dad starts to help me unpack the car. Winnie Lew's job is to entertain my mother until the task is finished, and she is up for it. Mom has worn her favorite socks—the ones featuring Winnie Lew's face—for the occasion.

As we enter the house, Winnie Lew bounds straight for my mother, her tail wagging furiously. Mom's face lights up, her eyes sparkling with joy as she reaches out to pet Winnie Lew's. "There's my girl! The girl with the softest fur!" she exclaims, her voice filled with genuine delight. Winnie Lew, ever the charmer, jumps in Mom's lap and starts licking her face.

Dad and I continue unpacking the car, bringing in our bags and Winnie Lew's extensive collection of necessities. I can hear Mom chattering away to Winnie Lew in the living room, telling her all about the new bird feeder Dad installed on the patio and how the squirrels have been trying to outsmart it.

As I arrange Winnie Lew's bowls in the kitchen, I hear Mom call out, "Do you think Winnie Lew would like for your father to grill her a hamburger tonight? Or would she rather have a cheeseburger?"

I smile and shake my head, knowing this is just the beginning. "Mom, remember what the vet said about human food?" I respond gently, knowing this is a battle I will not win.

"Oh, pooh," she waves her hand dismissively. "A little won't hurt her. It's a Thanksgiving break for her too, you know." I decide to pick my battles and let it slide for now. After all, it's only the first night.

Dad finishes bringing in the last of our bags and joins us in the living room. He settles into his favorite chair, and Winnie Lew immediately trots over to him, placing her paw on his knee to say hello. He responds, "I guess I'd better get that grill fired up, Miss Winnie Lew. Cheeseburger, ma'am?"

After a quick circle dance, Winnie runs back to jump in Mom's lap. Mom just smiles at Winnie Lew and, in a voice she doesn't think we hear, says, "It's good to have a dog in this house." I couldn't agree more, Mom. 🐾



MEET AMY GEORGE

Amy George is an Episcopal priest in Selma, Alabama, where she shares an office with her volunteer pastoral care assistant, Winnie Lew. When not doing God's work, you can find Amy doing Dog's work—vacuuming a never ending supply of dog hair, chauffeuring Winnie Lew, and being the provider of endless dog treats. Amy feels blessed to have no fear of ever being attacked by squirrels, UPS delivery people, or small lizards.



Dogs Around The World

RECENT HEARTWARMING AND INTRIGUING DOG STORIES FROM ALL OVER:

1. SENIOR DOG ADOPTED AFTER 13 YEARS IN SHELTER

Vito, a senior dog who spent 13 years in shelter care, found his perfect adopter in Casey Black at Best Friends Animal Sanctuary in Utah. The two now share a strong bond, enjoying travels and wilderness walks together.

people.com/slug-placeholder-8763247

2. RING CAMERA CAPTURES HEARTWARMING AND HILARIOUS MOMENTS

Ring released a compilation of the top 11 moments captured on their doorbell cameras in 2024, featuring various heartwarming and funny incidents involving dogs and their owners.

nypost.com/2024/12/19/lifestyle/the-funniest-sweetest-moments-caught-on-ring-cameras-in-2024

3. MLB PITCHER MAX FRIED'S LOVE FOR HIS DOG

Atlanta Braves pitcher Max Fried made headlines for expressing his affection for his dog, highlighting the special bond between athletes and their pets.

si.com/mlb/fans-loved-max-fried-choice-first-purchase-yankees-contract

4. DOG MAYOR OF NEW YORK CITY BRINGS JOY TO COMMUNITY

Simon, a beloved dog, was elected as the Dog Mayor of New York City, bringing joy and positivity to the community. His owner plans to use this platform to promote dog adoption and support local rescues.

people.com/meet-dog-mayor-of-nyc-simon-exclusive-8748203

5. WOMAN REUNITES WITH DOG SHE FOSTERED YEARS EARLIER

Katelyn Severt reunited with Nacho, a dog she fostered four-and-a-half years ago after he was found as a stray. She has now permanently adopted him, and their heartwarming reunion has garnered significant attention online.

people.com/woman-permanently-adopts-dog-she-fostered-years-ago-exclusive-8731320

IN LOVING MEMORY OF MABRY



It is with heavy hearts and fond memories that we say goodbye to Mabry, a golden retriever who brought joy, laughter, and love to everyone he met during his eleven wonderful years of life. Mabry was more than just a dog; he was a cherished member of his family, a loyal friend, and a beacon of sweetness and fun wherever he went.

Born with a golden coat that seemed to shine as brightly as his personality, Mabry grew to embody everything that makes golden retrievers so beloved. He had an undeniable zest for life, coupled with a laid-back charm that made him impossible not to adore. Mabry had a particular fondness for life's simpler pleasures: long naps on soft beds, belly rubs from anyone willing to oblige, and an insatiable love for treats—perhaps a few too many, which only added to his adorable, roly-poly charm.

Mabry was a master at bringing smiles to those around him. Whether it was his playful antics, his signature goofy grin, or the way he'd wag his tail so enthusiastically that his whole body seemed to follow, he had an innate ability to make even the hardest days feel a little lighter. He loved greeting visitors as though they were long-lost friends, often with a toy or his leash in his mouth, as if to say, "Let's go on an adventure together!"

Despite his fun-loving nature, Mabry also had a wise and tender side. He seemed to know just when someone needed a gentle nuzzle or a comforting presence. His family often marveled at how he could sense when someone was feeling down and would quietly sit by their side, offering his unwavering support.

One of Mabry's most memorable quirks was his absolute obsession with water. Whether it was splashing in a lake, chasing a garden hose, or simply lying belly-deep in a kiddie pool on a hot day, Mabry's joy was infectious. He also had a hilarious habit of snoring so loudly during naps that his family joked he could wake the neighbors. He even let the kids ride him like a horse! These moments, along with countless others, made up the rich tapestry of a life well-lived.

Mabry's passing leaves a profound void, but his memory will forever remain a source of warmth and joy. He taught those who loved him to embrace life with an open heart, to find joy in small moments, and to love unconditionally. Though he has crossed the rainbow bridge, Mabry's legacy of love and laughter will live on in the hearts of all who knew him.

Rest easy, sweet Mabry. You were, and always will be, deeply loved and forever missed. 🐾

Bark-Worthy Bites

Recipes For Your Pup



Treat your furry friend to some homemade snacks with these easy, healthy, and bark-worthy recipes! These widely shared recipes are simple to make and use ingredients that are safe and delicious for dogs.

1. PEANUT BUTTER & BANANA BISCUITS

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 ripe banana, mashed
- 1/3 cup natural peanut butter (ensure it's xylitol-free)
- 1 cup whole wheat flour
- 1/2 cup rolled oats
- 2–3 tbsp water

DIRECTIONS:

1. Preheat your oven to 325°F (165°C).
2. In a large bowl, mix the mashed banana and peanut butter until combined.
3. Gradually stir in the flour and oats. Add water, one tablespoon at a time, until the dough comes together.
4. Roll out the dough on a floured surface to about 1/4-inch thickness.
5. Use a dog bone-shaped cookie cutter (or any shape) to cut out treats.
6. Place on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper and bake for 15–20 minutes or until golden.
7. Cool completely before serving.

2. PUMPKIN & OAT CHEWS

INGREDIENTS:

- 2 1/2 cups rolled oats
- 1/2 cup canned pumpkin (plain, not spiced)
- 1/4 cup unsweetened applesauce
- 1/4 tsp cinnamon (optional)

DIRECTIONS:

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F (175°C).
2. Blend 2 cups of oats in a food processor to a flour-like consistency.
3. In a bowl, mix the “oat flour,” pumpkin, applesauce, and cinnamon until a dough forms.
4. Add the remaining oats for texture and knead gently.
5. Form small bite-sized balls or flatten them into discs.
6. Place on a parchment-lined baking sheet and bake for 20–25 minutes.
7. Let them cool completely before giving them to your pup.

3. SWEET POTATO JERKY STRIPS

INGREDIENTS:

- 2 large sweet potatoes

DIRECTIONS:

1. Preheat the oven to 250°F (120°C).
2. Wash and peel the sweet potatoes. Slice them lengthwise into thin strips, about 1/4-inch thick.
3. Place the strips on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper.
4. Bake for 2–3 hours, flipping halfway through, until they are dried out but still slightly chewy.
5. Allow them to cool and store in an airtight container.

TIPS FOR PET PARENTS

- **Peanut Butter Selection:** Always check the ingredients in peanut butter to ensure it doesn't contain xylitol, which is toxic to dogs.
- **Custom Shapes:** Use cookie cutters in fun shapes like bones, paws, or hearts to make treats more personalized.
- **Storage:** Store the treats in an airtight container. Biscuits and jerky strips last up to two weeks, while softer treats should be refrigerated and consumed within a week.
- **Test First:** Introduce new ingredients slowly to your dog's diet to ensure there are no allergies or sensitivities.

VARIATIONS

- **For Sensitive Stomachs:** Substitute whole wheat flour with oat flour or coconut flour for dogs with grain sensitivities.
- **Add Extra Flavor:** Incorporate a teaspoon of dried parsley or mint into the biscuit recipes for fresher dog breath.
- **Boost Nutrition:** Sprinkle in a tablespoon of flaxseed or chia seeds for added omega-3s and fiber.
- **For Small Dogs:** Roll dough thinner and cut smaller shapes to suit little mouths. 🐾



Say TREATS!

Hey Paw-Tographers!



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