

Darling Dog

For Dog Lovers, By Dog Lovers

APRIL 2025

Spring Into Fitness

**KEEPING YOUR DOG
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One of the greatest things about being a dog lover is the instant bond we share with others who feel the same way. Whether it's a knowing smile between two people walking their dogs or a full-fledged conversation with a stranger about the joys (and occasional chaos) of life with a pup, dogs have a way of bringing people together.

That's exactly what *Darling Dog* is all about—a place where we can celebrate the unconditional love, companionship, and sheer joy our furry friends bring into our lives. And the best part? The more we grow as a dog-loving community, the more incredible stories we get to read . . .

Next month, we're thrilled to introduce audio versions of some of our favorite stories! Whether you're out for a walk with your pup, commuting to work, or just relaxing at home, you can now listen to the heartfelt, inspiring, and sometimes hilarious tales that make *Darling Dog* so special. We hope this upcoming feature brings our stories to life in an even more meaningful way.

To keep this community thriving, we need your

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help! If you've ever found yourself nodding along to a story in these pages, laughing at a mischievous pup's antics, or feeling a lump in your throat while reading a touching tribute, please share *Darling Dog* with the other dog lovers in your life. Pass along your copy, send a friend a link to our digital edition, or even bring up a favorite story the next time you're chatting with a fellow dog enthusiast at the park. Every new reader means more stories, more shared experiences, and more ways to celebrate our four-legged companions.

Let's not forget—we love hearing your stories, too! The more our community grows, the more incredible tales we get to tell. Whether it's a heartwarming adoption story, a hilarious puppy mishap, or a tribute to a beloved dog who has crossed the rainbow bridge, your stories make this magazine what it is.

So, let's keep growing this amazing pack together. Share *Darling Dog* with friends and family, and keep sending in those wonderful memories and photos. The more we share, the more love and laughter we bring into the world—one wagging tail at a time.

With gratitude and tail wags,

Beau Boyd, Editor, DarlingDog.com

BITCH, PLEASE

INSTALLMENT V



Spring has sprung, loves. Praise be to the Lort! This girl digs all seasons, though. This Winter was something else. My big fat human called it by the name of a very southernly climate. He does not do cold. Down here in Mobile, we had some real cold weather. It snowed over eight inches at the Bungalow back in January. The human eyed my sable-like coat in an all-too-envying-like manner during that Winter Wonderland for me and Wasteland for him. Dude had better not go all Cruella over my fabulous self. He should know better. That manservant should be the one sleeping with one eye open.

Now that the snow has long since melted and we have entered Spring—or at least Spring I, for it could be freezing again tomorrow—my wiggly brown self is ready to be on the road again. As many of you know, one of my favorite pastimes is a good drive. Even though 'Big Teal,' the farm truck up the country, is my preferred ride, the human's SUV has a hold on my affections. The fondness is due almost wholly to that jalopy's rear windshield wiper.

We all have our kicks. I go all freak over the ride's wiper. Interestingly, the fixation is only on one wiper. The front wiper in no way blows wind up my skirt. The rear one brings out all of the emotions. My awareness of this object of focus came very early in my

“As many of you know, one of my favorite pastimes is a good drive.”

life. In reverse version therapy, take a rest on the proverbial Freudian couch, which I envision as the Rococo Revival settee that is my bed, and hear my shit out.

Picture it: July of 2018. I was just a little runt of a thing. Newly rescued by the human, I was only beginning to come into my true self, which is a handful. We were driving up to the family place up the country all of the time, and I was all pumped. From the front to the back of the vehicle I would go. Imagine this on repeat for two hours. Being all into things—by all things, I mean everything—I would attack any sort of object within my reach (and out of it, for that matter) during my vehicular romps. I destroyed duffle bags, hanging clothes, books, and much more on car rides. One time, an orchid exploded. How did that happen? Bark and dirt were everywhere for weeks! For reasons of the aforementioned behavior, along with concern for my safety in case of an accident, I was very early on placed in a travel carrier. I have destroyed five of them. You do not put this babe (said a la Moira Rose) in a box. Now you see why I am mostly all free-range swamp poodle in the jalopy now.

To prevent me from going all 'destroykin' over his goods, the Tubs has to come up with amusements, ruses, and activities for me. Treats like chew sticks, toys, bones, and foodstuffs only entertain me so long, you know. Monogrammed luggage, bound pulp, and ironed shirting beckon. One day, the human accidentally hit the back windshield wiper. Let us just say it was a call to arms. Like a bugler

for hunt in some English county or one calling the troops for battle, the flip of the switch for that wipe—then and now—has me on the move. I lunge across the jalopy, whose name is Edgar by the way, and attack that Bastardo. My wiggly-butt-self moves like a Heisman candidate from one side of the back window to the other. It is all hustle, in a non-slutty type of way. That type of hustle is also in my bag of tricks. Those arts are for another story. Back on topic, my focus is intense. I not only move from side to side but also headbutt the windshield. I bite, lick, and spit on the glass plate. There is no quiet on this wartime front. This bitch does not lose.

You might be wondering why in the living does my human put up with this crazy display of emotions and actions. Recall, reader, what I have allowed: 1) I destroy stuff, 2) I destroy carriers that prevent me from destroying stuff, 3) I cannot sit on the front seat for long-distance travel, and 4) I am bitch. Put these rationales in your rhetorical pipe. I have my joker trained.

You might also wonder why the back windshield wiper. This question is like, 'Why does the Easter Bunny hide the eggs?' (Hell, if I was that freaking rabbit, I would be selling those eggs.) He just does. Nonetheless, my human has developed several theories as to the motivations behind this obsession. Chubs thinks that I perceive the wiper to be a bird. This is plausible. I hate birds. All things that fly are my enemy. The Fatso has also pondered if I think I am protecting him. That, too, is a possibility. Such protective instincts exist in me. I also like to have fun by putting my human in difficult situations. I am very proficient at causing such scenarios. A third explanation the Chauffeur has come up with is that I do not handle idleness well, and at all. My spare human has observed that I have two modes: full throttle in your face or asleep. To take the late great Southern humorist

Lewis Grizzard out of context: if awake, "I am up to something." Sometimes reasons or reason matter not whatsoever. I am occupied, my human's chattels remain in one piece, and all is peace in our little universe.

Well, readers, this has been lovely, just lovely. We are entering peak Southern outdoor weather now. Turkey, crawfish, golf, and more—bring it on, bitches. To quote Ugly Wanda from *In Living Color*, "I am re-tay to go!" The mere thought of being on the go and out in nature again has added more jump to my step. In the next installment of this serialized version of my memoirs, you will learn about some of the other of my many moves. By moves, I mean ways that aggravate my human! 🐾

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!



Chips Obituary

Some dogs leave paw prints on our hearts that never fade, and Chips was one of them. Named for the show that brought us Ponch and Jon of the California Highway Patrol, this beautiful Springer Spaniel was more than just a pet—she was a devoted friend, a vigilant guardian, and a cherished member of the family.

From the moment she came into our lives, Chips made it clear that her greatest joy was being by our side, always watching over us with her intelligent, soulful eyes. She had an uncanny ability to sense when she was needed most, whether it was offering quiet comfort on a tough day or standing protectively near the children she adored. To them, she wasn't just a playmate; she was a steadfast guardian, always keeping a watchful eye to ensure their safety.

Chips had the heart of a protector but the spirit of an adventurer. She loved nothing more than long walks, the feel of the wind in her ears, and the thrill of a good chase—though she was just as content curling up at our feet after a day well spent. Loyal to the core, she never strayed far, always choosing family over freedom, love over wanderlust.

Her presence filled our home with warmth, laughter, and a sense of security that only a truly devoted dog can provide. Though she has now passed on, her memory will forever live on in the stories we tell, and the lessons she taught us about love, loyalty, never pulling your shirt over your head when you enter the yard, and never ever chase your little sister around the yard with a stick!

Rest easy, sweet Chips. You were one of a kind, and you will always be missed. 🐾

Want To Submit An Obituary?
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“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.

I just got a new puppy, and everyone is telling me I need to crate train him. It seems mean to put him in a “cage.” Am I being too soft-hearted? Should I really do this to my sweet little guy?

ANSWER: Your concern for your puppy’s well-being shows that you are a thoughtful pet parent—you’re off to a great start! But let me put your mind at ease—crate training, when done properly, is actually one of the kindest things you can do for your new family member. Think of the crate not as a cage but as your puppy’s personal bedroom or safe space.

Just like how we humans appreciate having our own private retreat after a busy day, dogs naturally seek out cozy, den-like spaces where they can relax and feel secure. I see it in my own guy, Woody. He likes to go into his crate when things get hectic around our house. I can see him visibly relax once he’s in there.

Here’s How To Make Crate Training A Positive Experience For Both You And Your Pup:

CHOOSE THE RIGHT SETUP

Start with a crate that’s just big enough for your puppy to stand up, turn around, and lie down comfortably. If you have a larger crate for your pup to grow into, use a divider to limit the space initially. Why? Because dogs by nature don’t want to poop or pee where they sleep. This also makes a properly sized crate an excellent house-training tool.

MAKE IT COZY

Transform that crate into the most inviting spot in the house! Add a soft bed or blanket, perhaps a favorite toy (supervision required with puppies), and consider covering part of the crate with a blanket to create that den-like feeling dogs love. Be careful though, depending on the breed, young pups love to chew. We have lost several towels and pads as we have learned that lesson.

INTRODUCTION IS EVERYTHING

Never force your puppy into the crate or use it as punishment. Instead, make it a game! Toss treats near the crate, then just inside the door, then all the way in. Let your pup explore at their own pace. Feed meals near the crate, then gradually ask him to wait, seated in the crate until released to eat. Remember, food is a great motivator.

BUILDING DURATION

Start with short periods—maybe just a few minutes while you’re sitting right there. Gradually increase the time as your puppy becomes comfortable. If they whine, resist the urge to let them out immediately (unless it’s potty time). Wait for a brief quiet moment, then release them. This teaches them that calm behavior, not fussing, gets them what they want.

TIMING IS EVERYTHING

Young puppies can typically “hold it” for about one hour per month of age, plus one. So a three-month-old puppy shouldn’t be crated for more than four hours maximum. Even adult dogs shouldn’t spend more than 4–5 hours at a stretch in their crate during the day. Remember, the crate is a resting place, not a storage solution! Once you have figured out the potty schedule, you can make the crate his bedroom for the night. I know, some people love to have their new best friend sleep in the bed with them, but I have never found that to be too relaxing for either me or my dog. Maybe that’s just me.

WATCH FOR SUCCESS SIGNS

You’ll know you’re on the right track when your

puppy starts going into their crate voluntarily for naps or quiet time. Woody will seek out, or very easily go into, his crate during stressful situations like when visitors arrive. That’s a clear sign he views it as his safe space!

TROUBLESHOOTING TIPS

If your puppy seems resistant, slow down the process. Never force them in or use the crate as punishment. We always want the connotations of crate time to be positive—food, rest, and a good night’s sleep. If they’re having accidents in the crate, you might need to adjust the size or their potty schedule. And remember, some whining is normal at first, but excessive distress means you need to back up a few steps in the training process.

With patience, consistency, and lots of positive reinforcement, your puppy will come to love their crate as their own special place in your home. Before you know it, you’ll find them choosing to nap there even when the door is wide open.

Sweet dreams to you and your precious pup! 🐾

Need Advice?

Go to [DarlingDog.com](https://www.darlingdog.com) 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.

Spring Into Fitness: KEEPING YOUR DOG ACTIVE AND HEALTHY



As the days grow longer and the weather warms up, spring is the perfect time to get outside and enjoy some fresh air with your four-legged friend. After a long winter, many dogs (and their owners!) need to shake off the seasonal sluggishness and get back into an active routine. But just like humans, dogs need the right balance of exercise and care to stay fit, avoid injury, and maintain overall health. In this edition of Dogter's Corner, let's explore the best ways to keep your dog active, healthy, and happy.

WHY EXERCISE MATTERS

Regular exercise is essential for your dog's physical and mental well-being. It helps:

- Maintain a healthy weight and prevent obesity-related illnesses.
- Strengthen muscles and joints, reducing the risk of arthritis.
- Improve cardiovascular health.
- Provide mental stimulation and reduce anxiety or destructive behaviors.
- Strengthen the bond between you and your pup.

FINDING THE RIGHT EXERCISE FOR YOUR DOG

Every dog is different, and their exercise needs depend on age, breed, and health condition.

1. For Puppies

- Short, frequent play sessions are best to avoid overexertion.
- Avoid high-impact activities like long runs or jumping until growth plates are fully developed (usually around 12–18 months).
- Interactive games like fetch and tug-of-war help build strength and coordination.

2. For Adult Dogs

- High-energy breeds (like Border Collies and Labradors) thrive on vigorous exercise such as running, hiking, or agility training.
- Low-energy breeds (like Bulldogs or Basset Hounds) do best with moderate walks and gentle playtime.
- Swimming is an excellent low-impact workout for all breeds.

“Swimming is an excellent low-impact workout for all breeds.”

3. For Senior Dogs

- Keep exercise low-impact to protect aging joints—shorter, more frequent walks are ideal.
- Gentle stretching or hydrotherapy can improve flexibility and ease stiffness.
- Mental exercises, like puzzle toys and scent games, keep their minds sharp.

SPRINGTIME ACTIVITY IDEAS

Looking for ways to make exercise fun? Here are some seasonal activities to try:

- **Trail Walks And Hikes:** Explore new trails, but be mindful of ticks and rough terrain.
- **Dog Park Visits:** A great way for social dogs to burn energy and interact with others.
- **Backyard Agility Course:** Use household items like hula hoops or cones to create an obstacle course.
- **Fetch With A Twist:** Try using a Frisbee or ball launcher to add variety.
- **Canine Sports:** Consider activities like dock diving, lure coursing, or rally obedience.

SAFETY FIRST: AVOIDING INJURIES AND OVEREXERTION

While exercise is beneficial, it's important to recognize when your dog has had enough. Keep these safety tips in mind:

- **Watch For Signs Of Overexertion:** Excessive panting, limping, or reluctance to continue are signs your dog needs a break.
- **Hydrate:** Always bring water, especially on warm days.

- **Paw Protection:** Hot pavement, rough trails, or salt-covered roads can be tough on paws. Consider dog booties or paw balm.
- **Prevent Heatstroke:** Avoid intense activity during peak midday heat and provide shady rest spots.
- **Leash Safety:** Even well-trained dogs should be leashed in unfamiliar areas to prevent accidents.

WHEN TO CONSULT YOUR VET

If your dog shows signs of stiffness, limping, or difficulty getting up after exercise, schedule a veterinary check-up. Dogs with pre-existing conditions, such as arthritis or heart disease, may need a customized exercise plan to keep them active without causing strain.

KEEP MOVING, STAY HEALTHY

Whether it's a gentle walk or an action-packed adventure, keeping your dog active is one of the best ways to promote long-term health and happiness. Take advantage of the beautiful spring weather and make movement a regular part of your dog's routine—it's a win-win for both of you!

Have questions about your dog's fitness and exercise routine? Your veterinarian is always there to help create a plan that's right for your pup's individual needs 🐾

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.

Springtime Snacks Fresh & Fun Dog Treats For April



As the days grow warmer and flowers begin to bloom, it's the perfect time to celebrate spring with some fresh, homemade treats for your furry friend. These easy-to-make dog snacks use wholesome ingredients that will have tails wagging in excitement.

1. STRAWBERRY BANANA BITES

A fruity, vitamin-packed snack perfect for spring!

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 ripe banana, mashed
- 1/2 cup diced fresh strawberries
- 1/4 cup plain Greek yogurt (unsweetened, unflavored)
- 1 cup oat flour

DIRECTIONS:

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F (175°C).
2. In a bowl, combine the mashed banana, strawberries, and Greek yogurt.
3. Gradually mix in the oat flour until a dough forms.
4. Roll out the dough on a lightly floured surface and cut into small shapes.
5. Place on a parchment-lined baking sheet and bake for 15–20 minutes, until golden.
6. Allow to cool completely before serving.

Storage: Store in an airtight container in the fridge for up to a week.





2. COCONUT CARROT PUPCAKES

A dog-friendly cupcake bursting with natural sweetness and nutrients!

INGREDIENTS:

- 1/2 cup shredded carrots
- 1/4 cup unsweetened coconut flakes
- 1/4 cup unsweetened applesauce
- 1 egg
- 1 cup oat flour
- 1/2 tsp baking powder

DIRECTIONS:

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F (175°C) and line a mini-muffin tin with paper liners.
2. In a bowl, mix the shredded carrots, coconut flakes, applesauce, and egg.
3. Stir in the oat flour and baking powder until well combined.
4. Spoon the batter into mini-muffin cups, filling each about 3/4 full.
5. Bake for 15–18 minutes, until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean.
6. Let cool completely before serving.

Storage: Keep in the fridge for up to five days or freeze for later use.

3. FROZEN WATERMELON YOGURT CUBES

A hydrating, refreshing treat for warm spring days.

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 cup seedless watermelon, blended into a puree
- 1/2 cup plain Greek yogurt (unsweetened, unflavored)

DIRECTIONS:

1. In a bowl, mix the blended watermelon with Greek yogurt.
2. Pour the mixture into silicone molds or an ice cube tray.
3. Freeze for at least 4 hours or until solid.
4. Serve as a cool treat on warm days.

Storage: Keep in the freezer and serve as needed.

SPRINGTIME TIPS FOR DOG PARENTS

Seasonal Allergies Awareness: Springtime pollen can affect dogs just like humans! Watch for signs like excessive itching, sneezing, or watery eyes. If you notice these symptoms, talk to your vet about allergy-friendly solutions.

Avoid Toxic Spring Plants: Be mindful of seasonal plants that can be harmful to dogs, such as tulips, lilies, and daffodils. Keep your pup away from these flowers while out on walks or in the garden.

Fresh Spring Ingredients: Take advantage of the season by incorporating fresh, dog-safe fruits and veggies like carrots, blueberries, and cucumbers into your pup's diet.

Longer Walks & Outdoor Fun: With the weather improving, it's a great time to enjoy more outdoor activities with your dog. Just be sure to bring water and keep an eye on your pup's energy levels during longer walks. 🐾



The Ultimate Puppy Care Guide

ALEX AND SOPHIE'S JOURNEY TO A GOOD DOG

In the heart of the bustling town of Willow Creek, Alex and Sophie embarked on a new adventure with their golden retriever puppy, Charlie. After mastering potty training, they were determined to learn all aspects of puppy care. Their goal was ambitious: to create an "Ultimate Puppy Care Guide" based on their experiences, a handbook for future puppy owners filled with advice, tips, and the wisdom they gained along the way.

CHAPTER 1: NUTRITION AND FEEDING

Alex took the lead on nutrition, researching

the best puppy foods, portion sizes, and feeding schedules. They learned the importance of balanced diets and the role of nutrition in Charlie's growth and development. The siblings documented everything, from choosing the right food to understanding nutritional labels and adjusting portions as Charlie grew. Their guide emphasized the importance of fresh water and cautioned against foods dangerous to dogs, such as chocolate and grapes.

CHAPTER 2: EXERCISE AND PLAY

Sophie's passion for activity made her the perfect curator for the exercise chapter. She

“..The heart of puppy care was love, patience, and the willingness to learn and grow together.”

explored the benefits of regular walks, playtime, and mental stimulation for puppies. Together, they discovered how exercise prevented boredom and behavioral issues, reinforcing the bond between pet and owner. They included tips on finding the right balance of activity, introducing new games, and the importance of socialization with other dogs and people.

CHAPTER 3: HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Both Alex and Sophie knew that a healthy puppy was a happy puppy. They learned to monitor Charlie for signs of good health, from shiny coats to energy levels. Their guide detailed regular vet visits for vaccinations and checkups, the importance of flea and worm treatment, and how to handle minor injuries at home. They also emphasized the importance of dental care, including brushing Charlie's teeth and providing dental chews.

CHAPTER 4: TRAINING AND BEHAVIOR

Drawing from their potty training adventure, the siblings expanded their guide to include basic obedience training, such as *sit*, *stay*, *come*, and *heel*. They stressed the importance of consistency, patience, and positive reinforcement. The guide also tackled common behavioral challenges, offering solutions for chewing, barking, and digging. They included personal anecdotes of their challenges and triumphs, making the guide relatable and encouraging.

CHAPTER 5: GROOMING AND CARE

Grooming was an area where Alex and Sophie learned through trial and error. Their guide outlined the basics of coat care, bathing routines, nail trimming, and ear cleaning. They shared their experiences with different grooming tools and products, finding what worked best for Charlie's golden coat. The chapter conveyed grooming as not

just a necessity but a bonding experience, filled with laughter and playful splashes.

CHAPTER 6: CREATING A SAFE ENVIRONMENT

The safety chapter was born from a scare when Charlie chewed on a potentially dangerous household plant. They researched and removed hazardous items, securing cords and small objects Charlie might swallow. Their guide provided a checklist for puppy proofing a home, emphasizing the importance of creating a safe, welcoming space for a new puppy.

CHAPTER 7: LOVE AND COMPANIONSHIP

The final chapter was a collaborative effort, a reflection on the emotional journey of raising a puppy. Alex and Sophie wrote about the unconditional love, the challenges, and the pure joy of having Charlie in their lives. They reminded readers that while the guide provided practical advice, the heart of puppy care was love, patience, and the willingness to learn and grow together.

As Alex and Sophie compiled their “Ultimate Puppy Care Guide,” they realized it was more than just a manual; it was a diary of their journey with Charlie. It was a testament to their dedication, the challenges they overcame, and the unbreakable bond they formed. Their guide was not only a resource for new puppy owners but a story of love, learning, and the incredible journey of raising a puppy.

Through their adventures with Charlie, Alex and Sophie discovered that caring for a puppy was a journey filled with learning, laughter, and love. They hoped their guide would inspire and support others on this rewarding journey, sharing the message that with the right care, every puppy could grow into a happy, healthy, and loving companion. 🐾

MY DOG IS MY
CO-PILOT

Resolutions



Even with the best intentions, New Year's resolutions do not always produce positive results. This year, I crafted what I felt was a very attainable list of resolutions. You know, ones you may actually stick to beyond January 7th. I mean I really tried to keep the list short and well-thought-through. I didn't just want resolutions; I wanted to create new habits.

Winnie Lew, of course, was the subject of several of them. I often come in from work too tired to really interact much with Winnie Lew, except for a nice long walk. I realized that she deserved better than that and more of my attention. So I decided that after our afternoon walk, I would dedicate 15 minutes to nothing but playing with Winnie Lew. While I know she enjoys her days figuring out how to catch serial killers with the *Criminal Minds* cast, or figuring out how to make a gourmet meal using only quail eggs, mustard greens, and spicy gummy peppers while watching *Chopped*, she needed true playtime.

Now I won't say she is overweight (we'll get to that resolution in a minute), no body shaming here, but she did need to up her physical activity. Fifteen minutes of tossed toys or chasing each other through the house has been good for both of us. There is nothing like a barrage of chew toys being squeaked and then tossed repetitively. Pure joy for her. The light blue holiday Yeti is looking pretty grimy . . . Winnie Lew prefers to think of it as well-loved. My fingers are crossed that remains in one piece. It is her favorite and was bought on a whim at Walmart before Christmas and unfortunately cannot be replaced if it goes over the dog toy rainbow bridge. The hedgehogs—there are three that live in a fuzzy burrow—are the next favorite and have had to be replaced. Once the squeaker is dead in a toy, Winnie Lew has no use for it. This first resolution has

been a successful one for both of us. Our playtime gives her a workout but also me some valuable one-on-one time with Winnie Lew.

This brings us to our second resolution. Winnie Lew is not fond of this one. At one of her vet visits last year, it was pointed out that she had put on two pounds. Now that may not sound like much, but on a smallish dog, it can add some unneeded and unwanted wear and tear on the canine joints. She was not told she needed to lose weight, but no female likes for anyone to point out her weight gain. I explained to Winnie Lew that I can only use the line, "She not fat, she just fluffy," so many times. But in her defense, she doesn't feed herself. She actually doesn't eat that much dog food, but it doesn't take much to turn 'enough' into 'too much.' So I have cut back on her kibble and tried to not overload her on treats.

WL is less than thrilled about the second part of that. The girl likes her treats, and she likes variety in them. Different treats for different times of day. She gets a certain one when I leave for work, a different one when I leave after lunch, and some afternoons, she gets a special treat—a kabob. She won't touch a healthy treat—"Please, Winnie Lew . . . it's blueberries and pumpkin [then I take a fake bite] . . . I promise you will like it." I've tried them all, but she is a woman set in her ways. Not too long ago, she had to go to the vet for a nail trim and I asked them to weigh her. Miracle of miracles, she had lost a pound and a half. Another successful New Year's resolution.

Which brings me to our final resolution. Seemingly the easiest of them all. I resolved to brush Winnie Lew at least every other day. This doesn't sound like a big deal, but it is. Winnie Lew can shed with the best of them. It can feel like living in a fur tornado. I have more money invested in dog hair removal implements than in my retirement fund. When black is the

“About a month into the resolution, I looked at my freshly brushed furry companion and realized that something wasn’t right.”

primary color that you wear, you need to make sure that it is not black with a covering of tan fur. When crafting my resolutions, brushing and “fur-minating” Winnie Lew every other day seemed like a win-win. So I began with gusto on January 1st, and it really seemed to be working. I noticed less dog hair on me and on my furniture. And Winnie Lew seems to like being brushed, so again, this felt like a win-win.

About a month into the resolution, I looked at my freshly brushed furry companion and realized that something wasn’t right. Her usual plume of a tail looked oddly stringy. It was clearly much thinner. And it just didn’t look right. She looked like I did in that family photo when my mom was trying to even my bangs out. They eventually were even, but let’s just say they were really short and just didn’t look right. When I looked at Winnie Lew, she seemed to be sporting kind of a pitiful mullet. Business in the front and party in the back—except it was a really sad party. I panicked thinking she had some horrible illness that was making her lose her tail. So I did what any self-respecting self-diagnoser would do. I turned to Google.

I discovered that while brushing your dog is a good habit, brushing a floofy tail is not a good

thing. Why, you wonder? Because brushing hair on that kind of tail can cause the hair to fall out. Mystery solved. If I feel the need to groom Winnie Lew’s tail, it seems I should only be using a wide-tooth comb. I have decided to be safe. I will not even comb my furry child’s tail. I don’t care if it looks like a mad hot mess. Her fuzzy backside will continue to be brushed but the tail will be left alone. A month has passed since I ceased brushing Winnie Lew’s tail. Maybe it is just wishful thinking, but I think I see a little growth at the base of the tail. Fortunately, she is blissfully unaware of her lack of tail floof. But clearly, this last resolution was a big, fat failure. Lesson learned.

Next year, when I feel the need to make resolutions, Winnie Lew’s tail will not be a part of them. And fortunately for my co-pilot (unlike with me and the bangs), there is no photographic evidence of her less-than-full tail that can come back to haunt her. I will just have to live with being two for three on successful resolutions. And like the song says, “two out of three ain’t bad.” 🐾



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.



Puppy Potty Training Unleashed

The Ultimate Guide To Dry Carpets & Happy Tails

Bringing a new puppy into your home is like welcoming a tiny, furry bundle of joy that immediately becomes the center of your universe. But with great cuteness comes great responsibility, especially when it comes to potty training. Ah, potty training—arguably the most memorable (and sometimes comically challenging) phase of puppy parenthood. I’ve been there, standing in the living room at 2 a.m., bleary-eyed and pajama-clad, cheering on my little furball as if they’re about to win an Olympic gold medal for simply doing their business outside. So, let’s dive into the whimsical world of potty training your puppy, where patience is a virtue and success is measured in dry carpets and happy tail wags.

The Ultimate Puppy Potty Training Guide To Dry Carpets & Happy Tails

1. EMBRACE THE SCHEDULE

Like a cute, fluffy dictator, your puppy thrives on routine. Set a strict schedule for feeding, potty breaks, playtime, and naps. Remember, what goes in on a schedule comes out on a schedule—hopefully, outside.

2. CHOOSE THE POTTY SPOT WISELY

Select a designated potty area outside like you’re choosing a spot for a moon landing. This spot will become your puppy’s go-to bathroom, so choose wisely and stick to it.

3. SING PRAISES FOR POTTY SUCCESS

When your puppy does their business in the right spot, throw a mini-party. Treats, praises, and the kind of excitement you'd reserve for winning a small lottery should follow. Positive reinforcement is key.

4. CRATE TRAINING IS YOUR FRIEND

A cozy crate is like a personal bedroom for your puppy. It taps into their natural instinct not to soil their sleeping area, making it a powerful potty training ally.

5. ACCIDENTS HAPPEN: KEEP CALM AND CLEAN UP

When accidents happen (and they will), clean up without drama. Use an enzymatic cleaner to remove odors that might lure them back to the crime scene.

6. SUPERVISION IS KEY

Keep an eagle eye on your furry friend. Look for signs they need to go—sniffing, circling, or the classic squat. Then, swiftly escort them to their potty spot.

7. POTTY BREAKS: THE MORE, THE MERRIER

Especially during their first months, puppies have tiny bladders. Frequent trips outside aren't just recommended; they're non-negotiable.

8. DITCH THE DISTRACTIONS

During potty breaks, keep playtime and exploration off the agenda until after they've done their business. Focus is the name of the game.

9. NIGHTTIME STRATEGIES

Limit water intake before bed and make sure to take them out for one last potty break. And yes, be prepared for some midnight outings.

10. LEAVE NO PUPPY BEHIND

If you're going out, consider a puppy pen with a designated potty area inside. Freedom is great, but not at the expense of your carpet.

Best Tips For Potty Training Your Pup

11. CONSISTENCY IS YOUR CO-PILOT

Stick to your routines and signals. Changing the game plan only confuses your pup. Consistency leads to mastery.

12. PATIENCE, PATIENCE, AND MORE PATIENCE

Remember, Rome wasn't built in a day, and your puppy won't be potty trained in one either. Celebrate the small victories, learn from the mishaps, and keep a sense of humor. After all, these are the days you'll look back on and laugh.

13. EARLY BIRD GETS THE WORM

Wake up a bit earlier than usual to give your puppy an immediate chance to relieve themselves outside. Think of it as your new, furry alarm clock that doesn't have a snooze button.

14. THE POWER OF CUE WORDS

Teach your puppy a cue word or phrase like "Go potty!" Use it consistently and soon they'll associate the words with the action, making your life a tad easier and much cleaner.

15. WATER INTAKE MONITORING

Keep an eye on how much water your fluffy companion drinks. Scheduled drinking times can help predict when they'll need to go out. It's like being a hydration detective.

16. REWARD VARIABLY

Mix up the treats and praise to keep your puppy guessing and engaged. Sometimes a treat, sometimes a toy, sometimes an overly enthusiastic hug. Variety is the spice of life, after all.

17. USE A LEASH, EVEN IN THE YARD

Keeping your puppy on a leash during potty breaks can help reinforce that it's business time, not playtime. Plus, it gives you control to gently guide them to success.

18. BE A ZEN MASTER

Stay calm and patient, even when accidents happen. Your puppy can sense your frustration, and trust me, they want to please you. Take a deep breath and remember it's all part of the process.

19. SOCIAL POTTY BREAKS

If possible, let your puppy see other dogs going potty outside. Dogs are social learners, and "If they can do it, so can I" works wonders here.

20. LIMIT SPACE GRADUALLY

Start with a smaller area for your puppy to roam and gradually increase it as they become more reliable. It's like leveling up in a game, with fewer accidents as the prize.

21. PAPER TRAINING AS A PLAN B

If you're in an apartment or can't always take them outside, paper training in a specific area can be a temporary solution. Just remember, it's a stepping stone, not the destination.

22. CELEBRATE THE MILESTONES

Keep a log or celebrate milestones in your puppy's potty training journey. First week accident-free? That's a paw-ty! Recognizing

progress, no matter how small, keeps you both motivated.

In the end, potty training your puppy is a journey filled with laughter, a few mishaps, and plenty of memorable moments. It's about much more than just avoiding accidents; it's an opportunity to strengthen the bond with your furry companion through patience, understanding, and consistency.

So, as you navigate this path, remember to celebrate every small victory and learn from each mistake. With time, patience, and a sprinkle of love, you'll look back on this period not just as a challenge you overcame but as a special chapter in the story of your life together with your puppy. Here's to the journey of potty training—may it be as rewarding as it is entertaining! 🐾



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!

Say TREATS!



**Hey Paw-
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