

# Darling Dog

For Dog Lovers, By Dog Lovers

JULY 2025

DOG IS MY CO-PILOT

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### LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

## Dear *Darling* Dog Friends,

In last month's letter, I made you a promise: *Darling Dog* would continue to grow, evolve, and bring you even more of the dog-loving content you enjoy. This month, I'm excited to share that some big changes are officially underway, and we can't wait for you to see what's coming.

First up: our entire website is getting a makeover. We're building a new digital home that will be easier to navigate, filled with richer content, and designed with you and your pups in mind. Soon, you'll be able to browse your favorite stories, access back issues more easily, submit your dog's tale, and listen to audio versions of featured articles. It's all part of our effort to make the *Darling Dog* experience more seamless, engaging, and fun.

While the website transformation is still in progress, we're working hard behind the scenes to get every detail just right. We'll unveil the new look very soon and promise to keep you updated along the way.

And the changes don't stop there. This issue brings fresh content we're especially proud of, from heartwarming stories to helpful training tips. Our reader-submitted photo gallery is growing, too, and we've got some surprises on the horizon we think you'll love.

Everything we're doing, from the digital upgrades to the editorial additions, is about honoring our commitment to you: to make *Darling Dog* better with each passing month. Your encouragement, feedback, and enthusiasm keep us going. Thank you for being part of this journey with us.

We're just getting started. So, stay tuned, keep sending those incredible photos and stories, and know that your *Darling Dog* family is working to build something even more special for you and your pups. 🐾

**Beau Boyd, Editor, [DarlingDog.com](http://DarlingDog.com)**



# Fireworks & Fur Babies



## Keeping Your Dog Safe This Summer

**S**ummer brings festive holidays, backyard gatherings, and fireworks lighting up the sky—but what’s a blast for us can be terrifying and dangerous for our dogs. In this month’s column, we’ll tackle how to manage noise anxiety, keep your pup safe during celebrations, and make July a little less scary for sensitive dogs.

### 1. UNDERSTANDING NOISE ANXIETY

Dogs have incredible hearing, which means loud sounds like fireworks can feel overwhelming. Signs of noise anxiety include trembling, hiding, whining, drooling, panting, pacing, or even destructive behavior. It’s important not to scold a frightened dog. Instead, focus on comfort and prevention.

### 2. CREATE A CALM ZONE

Designate a quiet, secure space in your home where your dog can retreat during fireworks. Close the windows, draw the blinds, and play calming music or white noise. Some dogs feel safer in a covered crate or familiar bed. Adding a piece of your clothing can provide added comfort through your scent.

### 3. TRY CALMING AIDS

There are many tools to help soothe anxious dogs:

- Compression wraps or anxiety vests
- Pheromone diffusers (like Adaptil)
- Calming chews or supplements with L-theanine or melatonin
- Prescription medications for severe cases (consult your vet well in advance of holiday events)

### 4. KEEP THEM INDOORS AND SECURE

More dogs go missing on the 4th of July than any other day of the year. Make sure your dog is indoors during fireworks, and double-check that doors, windows, and fences are secure. Microchip information should be up to date, and ID tags should be worn at all times.

### 5. PARTY PRECAUTIONS

If you’re hosting a BBQ or party, keep food and drinks well out of paw’s reach. Alcohol, chocolate, skewers, and greasy leftovers can all be hazardous. Make sure guests know not to feed your pup table scraps—and watch out for open doors when people are coming and going.

#### 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.

## DOGTER’S CORNER

## Summer Smart:

### Boom-Proofing Your Dog’s Holiday: Vet Tips For A Peaceful 4th of July

- **Walk Early:** Get in a long walk or play session before sunset to burn off energy and help your dog relax later.
- **Avoid Firework Exposure:** Even if your dog seems okay with fireworks, don’t push it. Exposure can build fear over time.
- **Update Microchips:** Make sure microchips and ID tags reflect your current contact info—just in case your dog bolts.
- **Stay Home If Possible:** If your dog has high anxiety, staying home to comfort them during fireworks is the best choice.

**Final Woof:** Fireworks and summer festivities can be stressful for our four-legged friends, but with a little prep, we can help them feel safe and secure. If you’re not sure what will work best for your pup, talk to your vet. We’re here to help you enjoy the holiday with peace of mind.

Stay safe and have a paw-some July. 🐾





# What's In A Name?

Why We Name Our Dogs The Way We Do  
& What Happens When We Never Stop  
Naming Them The Same Thing

**E**very year, the Social Security Administration releases its much-anticipated list of the top 1,000 baby names in the United States—a tradition that offers a snapshot of our culture and who we're honoring, watching, or rewatching on Netflix. But this list got us thinking: What about dogs? Our loyal, loving, tail-wagging companions. Don't they deserve a little name-nerding, too?

As it turns out, they're already getting it.

## THE HUMANIZATION OF DOG NAMES

Once upon a time, dogs were named Spot, Fido, and maybe Lucky. Today? They're Bella, Oliver, and Lily—names that wouldn't be out of place on a preschool attendance sheet. This shift reflects how we see our dogs not as pets but as full-fledged family members. If you're naming a new puppy, you're probably putting as much thought into it as you would naming a baby.

And yes, the data backs that up. Many of the most popular dog names overlap with the Social Security baby name list. Luna, Max, Milo, and Ava? They're just as likely to be chewing on squeaky toys as they are crayons.

## ONE NAME TO RULE THEM ALL: THE TALE OF CHARLIE X3

Still, for some dog lovers, picking a name is easy—because it's the same name they've always used.

A reader told us about her former neighbor who had a deep love for dogs—and an unshakable attachment to the name Charlie. Every time a Charlie passed, the next dog inherited the same name. Charlie 1, Charlie 2, Charlie 3.

Why? For some, it's tradition. For others, it's comfort. For many, it's a heartfelt way of continuing a legacy—keeping a name alive in honor of the dog that once wore it best.





There's something sweet and enduring about that. A name, in this case, isn't just a label. It's a memory, a tribute, a thread that binds a life full of love to the next chapter.

### THE DARLING DOG TAKEAWAY

Whether your dog's name is a pop-culture reference (Grogu), a flavor favorite (Cinnamon), or part of a family tradition (Charlie), it's special because it's shared between you and the one who wags when they hear it.

So, what's in a name?  
Quite possibly, everything.



## Top Dog Names



### By Breed Or Personality

**For Fluffy White Dogs (Bichon, Maltese, Samoyed):** Snowball, Marshmallow, Cloud, Luna, Casper

**For Big, Gentle Dogs (Labs, Goldens, Bernese):** Bear, Moose, Daisy, Maggie, Max

**For Small, Sassy Dogs (Chihuahuas, Pomeranians, Yorkies):** Pixie, Diva, Coco, Peanut, Nacho

**For Working Breeds (Border Collies, Shepherds):** Ranger, Scout, Diesel, Blaze, Juno

**For Goofballs (no matter the breed):** Waffles, Pickle, Banjo, Zoomer, Noodle

**Classic Names That Never Go Out Of Style:** Buddy, Charlie, Bella, Rocky, Sadie

### CALLING ALL DOG READERS!

What's your dog's name—and what's the story behind it?

We'd love to hear from you! Whether it's funny, meaningful, quirky, or a cherished tradition (Charlie 1, Charlie 2, . . .), send us your dog's name and the tale behind it. You might be featured in an upcoming issue of *Darling Dog*!

Email us at [darlingdog2023@gmail.com](mailto:darlingdog2023@gmail.com) or tag us on Instagram [@darlingdogmag](https://www.instagram.com/darlingdogmag) with [#DogNameTales](https://www.instagram.com/explore/tags/dogname Tales). 🐾

# Bitch, Please:

## *The Life Of Mae,* A Boykin From Mobile

### Installment VIII




**T**hat I am a singular creature should go without saying at this juncture, canine-loving reader. The Lord God Almighty broke a mold when he created moi. To say the least of the best, I am memorable. From the first sight of my cocked head, with my animated yellow eyes, I make a lasting impression. In appearance alone, I am cause for pause. You are dealing with one good-looking bitch. My fabulous sable-like coat and graceful poses cause me out in a crowd. Action, too, is on my side in terms of making my presence felt. Be my mood either

judgy from a distance or batshit crazy and in your face, this one-and-only type of pooch is unforgettable. Captivating aspects of appearance and behavior are just part of my appeal. I am always sporting some accessory or another. This lady works them, too. From my signature orange collar to full-blown costume, I own my looks.

As the character Clairee Belcher from *Steel Magnolias* wisely said, "It is our ability to accessorize that separates us from animals." This bitch might act like a wild beast, but I am no mere animal. I like accoutrements. It is a good thing I like to be adorned, for my human thinks it a riot to have me don garments of





# **This bitch might act like a wild beast, but I am no mere animal.**

all sorts. Just so long as the given wardrobe item does not mess with my ears, I am down for the sartorial challenge. Never have once been fashion roadkill. No fails here.

My go-to is my orange collar. I love it. All ladies have their armor. You know, those signature pieces worn every day and known-for among family and friends. Like a family ring, a special necklace, or a striking cuff, every lady has them. We are talking about those pieces that are so familiar to loved ones that they go noticed and unnoticed at the same time. For people not familiar with these beloved items, they are among the first things that they notice about

you. My signature piece is my orange collar. I have had my orange collar for six-and-a-half years. Lots of dogs have these hunting collars. This dog does not hunt. I still rock my collar though. I feel naked without it. When human removes my collar, I look up at him and nose my ever-present attribute as if I am not whole without it. Not just anyone can wear orange. This bitch does, and well. The hue complements my luscious chocolate coat very well.

My groomer knows my love of fashion. She always places a jaunty scarf about my neck during my spa days. A dog scarves or simply a piece of fabric, I sashay in my scarfs as if they were Hermès. Bitch drops it like it is hot in any accessory, especially a scarf. My canine ascots are also a source of entertainment for my human. The fatso appreciates the variety within the presiding and always present reality of me, his mascot. Admiration is one thing. It can lead to bother. When sitting in his lab or minding my own business, the dude often rearranges my scarves. He does it for his own amusement. It is as if he knows that his styling ticks me off. No sooner than I break free and attempt to reinstate my desired effect does he consciously tamper with my artfulness. I glare at that cretin. The manservant is not Dior. This Chanel requires neither assistance nor puts up with no harassment!

My spare's best friend knits me scarves and sweaters. I have a wonderful purple-and-white scarf that she made me. Beautifully made and hued, this special piece is used for special occasions. During this past winter, which was a bitch in another meaning of the word, my human was tempted to wear it! This bitch does not share wardrobe items. For the most part, the locales I call home or frequent are warmer ones. Mobile can be downright tropical. Knitwear is thus seasonal wear. Sometimes, I carry around my knitted scarf for security, attention, and pure admiration on my part alone.

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Wardrobe items in singular only go so far. They are only a part of my fashion game. I love a costume. It is like Halloween year-round for this household mascot. I represent. Just so long as the ensemble does not mess with my ears, I am good with most anything. Sometimes my human decides to break this rule. He should know better. The gift shop associated with the museum where he is a curator is the source of most of these unwanted adornments of the headgear variety. I wear a figurative crown; there is no need for anything else. Still, the human is always putting someone on my head. He should have known all too well there is a price to pay for messing with me. Revenge is served warm, lukewarm, and cold. Costumes sans parts that engage my ears are welcomed.

One of my favorite costumes was my bat dog costume. It had a cap and vest. I ate the cap. Yep, I shredded that thing to pieces. The vest was great. Not just anyone can pull off a vest. As I am



a chesty lass, I can don a vest. My full-figured body build really showed off the bat emblem of the bat dog costume. Charging down a street, with the human being drug along behind me, or running around a pasture up the country, I was easy to spot in my bat dog costume.

I have a bat costume as well. Of vest-like construction, it has wings. Are you aerodynamic? Sometimes I appear to be. I feel as if I am when I wear my bat costume. When I work up my pace, I cause the wings to flutter. Walking down the street is my favorite activity in which to wear my bat wigs.

Superheroes and bats are not the only creatures that have wings. You know that a Boykin can have them. What about other creatures? Why, yes, wings are not just for angels, even fallen ones. I once had a flying monkey costume. It was glorious. My human is afraid of monkeys. Watching the original *Planet of the Apes* as a





young child and then visiting a zoo not too long after led to a phobia of monkeys for my human. The tubby one loves the *Wizard of Oz* all the same. Margaret Hamilton, the great actress who portrayed the Wicked Witch of the West in the original film version of the book, is hard to beat. The Cowardly Lion is my human's favorite character. The munchkins are just freaks. I would chase them around and bark at them if they existed and I encountered them in person. I digress though . . . back to flying monkey costume. It was not a case of love at first sight. As with all wardrobe items, I know that something is going down when my human approaches me with one. The flying monkey ensemble was no exception. I immediately spied the headpiece. The human was given a glare. I even curled my lips in disgust. First, I refused to engage, but I could not help myself. Dogs sniff everything, you know. Taking advantage of this instinct, the human immediately secured the flying monkey fez on my head. Do I neither look nor walk like an Egyptian? Indian food is great. There, fashion has its place as well. A sari is something I can wear. No to a fez. My human knows the no-headaddress-period rule. I still disobeyed it. I had to take matters into my own paws. Dude was pawed in the privates. He dropped to the ground, and I rid myself of the headgear. As he had already saddled me into the monkey vest, I then trotted off with flair while he cried out profanities in pain. The vest with wings was fun. Still recognizable to a passerby, I used the costume to garner attention. It had the desired result. Attention results in praise and maybe treats. I employed the flying monkey costume with those aims in mind. One day, I doo-ed in my monkey costume. You might recall from previous installments that I enjoy rolling in all types of excrement. My thorough and theatrical engagement with a fresh dropping of some identified pile of sh\*\* made my human gag and toss out my monkey wing vest and wings.

The passion for fashion is universal. I have one beef with it. Why is the art of dress demeaned by the word catwalk?

## This bitch takes offense. I can strut better than any feline, and a fair number of women.

What I wear, I own, and not the other way around, you hear. Again, I am unforgettable. My signature orange collar, innumerable scarves, and fun costumes only heighten and vary my badass self! 🐾



### 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!

DOG IS MY  
**CO-PILOT**

# *The* **Morning** *Walk*



**“Even on the  
most well-  
worn paths,  
magic can  
appear if you  
open your  
eyes to it.”**



I am a creature of habit, and because of that, my creature, Winnie Lew, is also a creature of habit. My mornings usually feature the same routine. After rising, I make my bed and begin my morning workout. I conclude my workout with a brisk one-mile walk. I am fortunate to live in a wonderful little cottage on the grounds of a much larger estate. A walk down the drive and back is about a third of a mile, so three laps and I have finished my workout. Almost. It is then that I take Winnie Lew, who has patiently waited for me on the screened-in porch, for her morning constitutional and lap. Of the many words that might describe my morning walks with Winnie Lew, invigorating is not one of them. It takes roughly the same amount of time to do one lap with her as it does for me to get three in. Why? you are wondering. It seems that every night, the odor fairies leave delectable smells for Winnie Lew to discover each morning.

She approaches each scent with the dedication of a sommelier evaluating a vintage wine. Her nose twitches, her head tilts at precise angles, and she inhales with the kind of focus I reserve for sermon writing. A particularly fascinating aroma near the magnolia might hold her attention for a full three minutes while I stand there, leash in hand, swatting away the pterodactyl-like gnats that insist on trying to make me their breakfast.

Today's expedition began no differently. Winnie Lew emerged from our cottage with her usual enthusiasm, tail wagging and walking with a purpose. We made it approximately twenty feet before the first olfactory discovery brought our procession to a complete halt. A patch of gravel had apparently been blessed by the scent gods overnight. It looked no different to me than it did the evening before, but clearly, I was mistaken. We finally moved on, Winnie Lew cautiously sniffing ahead and leaving her mark for others to enjoy.



I sometimes wonder what she's thinking during these investigative pauses. Is she reading a newspaper of pheromones, catching up on the neighborhood gossip? "Ah yes, I see the Labradoodle from across the street has been eating chicken again," or perhaps, "My goodness, that bulldog must have had quite the adventure last night."

We rounded the curve in the driveway where an old oak stands sentinel. This is typically a hot spot in Winnie Lew's aromatic tour, and today proved no exception. She circled the base three times, nose twitching with scientific precision, before deciding this particular spot required not just investigation but contribution. After her deposit was carefully placed, she performed her ritualistic backward dance, her paws kicking up bits of grass and soil in what I can only assume is the canine equivalent of flushing. I piously picked up her offering. Winnie Lew decided to munch on some grass while I was completing my duty. That is another part of her ritual. It's almost as if she feels she needs a salad prior to her kibble that comes after the walk. As I looked up, I noticed something standing very still on the edge of the woods eyeing us. It looked like another dog, but I couldn't quite be sure. The creature finally made a slight

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movement, and I realized that it wasn't a dog at all. It was a fox. In my five years of living here, I've seen deer, rabbits, and raccoons, even the occasional possum—but never a fox.

It was stunning. A vibrant russet coat that seemed to glow, its white-tipped tail held perfectly horizontal, and those eyes—intelligent, calculating, and fixed directly on us. Winnie Lew, still munching contentedly on her breakfast greens, remained blissfully unaware of our observer. I dared not move, afraid to break this rare moment of wild communion. The fox tilted its head slightly, in a gesture so reminiscent of Winnie Lew's scent-evaluation pose that I nearly laughed aloud.

"Winnie Lew," I whispered, not wanting to startle either animal. She glanced up at me mid-chew, bits of grass dangling from her mouth like a poorly maintained mustache. The fox hadn't moved. We were engaged in some sort of silent standoff, this wild creature and I, while my domesticated companion remained more interested in her impromptu salad than the remarkable wildlife encounter happening mere yards away.

Then Winnie Lew finished her grass, looked up, and froze. Her entire body went rigid, one paw still raised mid-step, as if someone had pressed a pause button on her very existence. The transformation was instantaneous and complete—my leisurely, scent-obsessed companion had suddenly remembered she was, at her core, still a predator. Her ears perked forward, her fur fluffed up, and a low, almost inaudible whine escaped her throat. The fox, for its part, seemed equally transfixed. Neither animal moved. Of course, this would be the morning that I didn't bring my phone along for this National Geographic-worthy photo. I found myself holding my breath, acutely aware that I was witnessing something primal, something that predated fancy pink leashes, kibble, and morning constitutionals.





Then Winnie Lew did something I'd never seen her do before. She lowered herself into what could only be described as downward dog—front legs extended, rear end up in the air, tail wagging uncertainly. It was the universal canine invitation to play, though I suspected she wasn't entirely sure what she was inviting. The fox's response was immediate and unexpected. Instead of bolting into the safety of the woods, it took three deliberate steps forward, paused, then sat down and regarded Winnie Lew with what I could only interpret as amused curiosity.

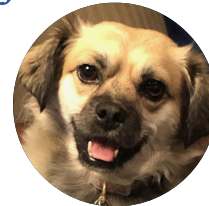
Winnie Lew, encouraged by this apparent acceptance of her social overture, seemed very pleased with herself and this chance encounter. She took a tentative step forward, and all I could think was this was not my idea of a morning puppy play date. I didn't realize that we were being watched. I heard a rustle in one of the trees behind me, and out shot MB, the wild man kitten from next door. Clearly, MB thought there was a party that he hadn't been invited to. The fox, not looking for a feline friend, gave us a nod and darted back in the woods. "Really, MB?" I said to the fluffy black cat who had materialized from thin air like some sort of feline ninja. "You couldn't have waited five more minutes?" MB responded by flopping dramatically onto his side in the middle of the driveway, as if the effort of ruining our fox encounter had completely exhausted him. Winnie Lew stepped over him with the dignity of a queen forced to navigate around peasant



children, but I caught her glancing back toward the woods one more time, hope flickering in her brown eyes.

"Well, that was anticlimactic," I muttered to my sulking dog.

I couldn't help but wonder if the fox would return tomorrow, if we'd stumbled upon what might become a new morning ritual. How fitting that Winnie Lew, my methodical creature of habit, would be the one to remind me that routines don't preclude surprises. That even on the most well-worn paths, magic can appear if you open your eyes to it. 🐾



## 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.



# Charlie's Confidence Quest:

## *A Social Adventure With Alex & Sophie*



Alex wasn't sure Charlie was ready for a bustling park full of energetic pups, but he figured they'd never know unless they tried. And besides, they had treats, tennis balls, and the world's fluffiest cheerleader—Charlie would be just fine.

### THE ARRIVAL

The family arrived at the Willow Creek Bark & Bound Dog Park just after 10 a.m. It was a beautiful, fenced-in space with rolling grassy hills, shaded benches, and a separate area for small or shy dogs. There were already a few dogs romping around—some chasing each other, others trotting alongside their humans.

Charlie stepped out of the car cautiously, tail wagging but low. His ears perked forward as he took in the sights and sounds.

"He's curious," Sophie whispered, handing Alex a bag of treats. "That's a great start."

They led Charlie into the shy dog zone, giving him time to adjust. He sniffed the grass, then the bushes, then Sophie's shoes—just to be safe.

"Look!" Alex pointed. "Here comes a new friend."

A calm black lab named Daisy ambled over, her tail wagging gently. Charlie froze for a moment, then stepped forward slowly, giving Daisy a cautious sniff. Their tails gave a few polite wags, and before long, the two were walking side-by-side like old pals.

"Progress!" Sophie grinned, tossing Charlie a treat. "Nice work, buddy."

It was a crisp Saturday morning in Willow Creek, and the sun streamed through the windows as Alex poured cereal into a bowl and Sophie slipped into her sneakers.

"Mom said the new dog park is finally open!" Sophie announced, bouncing into the kitchen with excitement. "And she thought it would be a great place to take Charlie—to help with his social skills."

Alex glanced over at their golden retriever, who was curled up under the kitchen table like a cinnamon roll, snoozing without a care in the world.

"Charlie? Social skills?" Alex raised an eyebrow. "He hides behind me every time a skateboard goes by."

Sophie grinned. "That's exactly why we're going. We learned all about dog socialization in that article last night, remember? New people, new dogs, new smells—it's all good for him."

## TRYING NEW THINGS

After some successful sniff-and-greet sessions, they decided to explore the rest of the park. They passed a row of agility equipment—a mini tunnel, a low jump, and a few balance beams.

“No way he’ll go in that tunnel,” Alex said, watching Charlie stare at it suspiciously.

But Sophie knelt beside it and tossed a treat just inside the entrance. “Let’s build confidence, remember? One paw at a time.”

Charlie crept forward. First one paw. Then the second. He stretched his nose toward the treat . . . and snatched it, scooting backward immediately.

“Victory snack!” Alex cheered, tossing him another treat for bravery.

After a few tries, Charlie was trotting through the tunnel like a pro, tail wagging proudly.

## A WOBBLY MOMENT

Things were going great until a nearby skateboarder zipped past the park’s fence. The sudden sound made Charlie jump back, his tail tucked low.

“He’s scared,” Sophie said softly, watching him lower his body and lick his lips.

“Let’s give him a minute,” Alex suggested, crouching down with a calm voice. “It’s okay, buddy. Nothing’s chasing you.”

They moved to a quiet corner of the park and just sat with him, offering gentle pets and soft encouragement. After a few minutes, Charlie’s tail started to lift, and his eyes scanned the park again—not in fear, but curiosity.

“See?” Sophie smiled. “He just needed a break. This is part of socializing too—learning what he’s okay with and taking it slow.”

## ENDING ON A HIGH PAW

Before they left, Charlie met two more friendly dogs, played fetch with a new toy, and even approached a group of kids for a pat on the head (and a stolen cracker).

“Today was a big win,” Alex said, buckling Charlie into the backseat.

“Totally,” Sophie agreed. “He was nervous, but he tried. And that’s what matters.”

Charlie sighed happily, tongue lolling out as he nestled into his seat for the ride home—tired, content, and just a little braver than he’d been that morning.

## LATER THAT NIGHT . . .

Back at home, the family cozied up on the couch, Charlie snoozing among them. Sophie gently scratched behind his ears.

“You know,” their mom said, smiling at the sleepy pup, “it’s amazing what a few new experiences can do.”

Alex nodded. “Yeah. He might not be the most outgoing dog at the park, but he’s learning. And we’re learning with him.”

And with that, the lights dimmed, the room grew quiet, and Charlie snored softly—dreaming, perhaps, of tunnels, tennis balls, and the next adventure that waited just around the corner. 🐾



# Socializing Your Dog:

## *How To Build Confidence With New Experiences*

**L**et's be real; some dogs strut into the world like social butterflies, ready to sniff every bush, bark at every squirrel, and befriend every dog they meet. Others? Well, they're more like awkward freshmen on the first day of school, unsure of what to do with themselves and sticking close to your leg like it's home base.

But no matter where your pup falls on the social spectrum, socializing your dog is one of the most important things you can do for their confidence, happiness, and overall well-being. The good news? It's never too early, or too late, to start.

So grab your leash, a handful of treats, and your most encouraging "You got this, buddy!" voice. We're diving into the wonderfully sniff-filled world of dog socialization tips that'll help your pup feel confident in every new situation they face.

### 1. START SMALL AND GO SLOW

Socializing your dog doesn't mean throwing them into the middle of a crowded dog park

and yelling, "Make friends!" In fact, that's kind of like forcing a shy kid to give a speech at a birthday party—not helpful.

Start with quiet, controlled environments. Introduce your dog to one new person, dog, or place at a time. Let them take the lead (literally and emotionally). The goal is to make each new experience positive, not overwhelming.

**Pro tip:** Short and sweet is the name of the game. Five minutes of a good experience is way better than 30 minutes of sensory overload.

### 2. EXPOSE THEM TO DIFFERENT PEOPLE

Dogs don't automatically know that tall people in hats or kids with sticky fingers are safe. Help your dog learn by gently introducing them to people of all shapes, sizes, ages, and voices. That includes:

- People with sunglasses
- Kids on bikes
- Joggers
- People in wheelchairs or using walkers
- Your uncle who smells like beef jerky

Each person is a new opportunity for learning. Just remember to let your dog approach them when they're ready—no forced cuddles allowed.

### 3. MEET OTHER DOGS (BUT CHOOSE WISELY)

Not every dog is a good match for yours, and that's okay! Just like us, dogs have personalities and preferences.

Start with one calm, friendly dog at a time in a neutral space. Let them sniff, observe, and interact on their own terms. Keep leashes loose and tension low. If both dogs are vibing, let them have a little playtime. If one looks overwhelmed, it's totally fine to take a break.



Doggy daycare and puppy classes can also be great—but make sure they're run by professionals who understand dog body language and group dynamics.

#### 4. PRACTICE IN DIFFERENT ENVIRONMENTS

Your dog's confidence builds when they experience new environments without stress. Think: elevators, car rides, busy sidewalks, coffee shops with outdoor seating, hardware stores (yep, many are dog-friendly!).

Introduce these places gradually, and always bring high-value treats and a calm voice. Even just sitting on a bench together and people-watching can be a great training opportunity.

Bonus points if you make it a game: How many new smells can your dog investigate without losing their cool?

#### 5. REWARD BRAVE BEHAVIOR

Anytime your dog does something confident—like walking calmly past another dog, sniffing a new person, or sitting quietly while a skateboard rolls by—celebrate it like they just won Best in Show.

That might mean a treat, a happy “Yes!”, or a belly rub if that's their jam. Reinforcing the good stuff helps build trust and encourages them to explore even more.

#### 6. WATCH FOR STRESS SIGNALS

Your dog will tell you if something is too much—they just use body language instead of words. Look for signs like:

- Tucked tail
- Lip licking
- Yawning
- Avoiding eye contact

- Raised hackles
- Panting when they haven't exercised

If you see any of these, give your dog space and reassurance. Take a step back and try again later or in a quieter setting.

Remember, confidence is built, not forced.

#### 7. KEEP IT CONSISTENT

Socializing isn't a one-and-done task. It's more like brushing your teeth—you've got to keep at it. Incorporate new experiences into your regular routine. Even just walking a different route or saying hi to a friendly neighbor can help keep your dog's social skills sharp.

And hey, it keeps things interesting for you, too.

#### 8. DON'T FORGET TO HAVE FUN!

Socialization should be a positive adventure, not a chore. Your dog feeds off your energy—if you're relaxed and excited, they're more likely to be, too.

So laugh at the silly moments, cheer them on when they're brave, and don't be afraid to hit the pause button if something's too much. You and your dog are a team, and every experience is a building block in your relationship.

Whether your dog is a confident explorer or a cautious observer, socialization is the secret sauce that helps them grow into a well-adjusted companion. By taking things slow, reinforcing bravery, and tuning into their body language, you're giving your pup the tools they need to navigate the world with wagging tails and open hearts.

**So here's to new friends, new smells, and new adventures—your dog's next confidence boost is just around the corner. 🐾**

# Patriotic Pup Treats:

## July Delights For Your Dog



**J**uly is the heart of summer—and your dog deserves to celebrate too! Whether you're hosting a backyard BBQ, heading to the lake, or just soaking up some sun, these easy-to-make, dog-safe treats will keep tails wagging. We've also included practical tips to help your pup stay safe and happy all month long.

### 1. WATERMELON & YOGURT STARS

Cool, hydrating, and perfect for the Fourth of July!

#### INGREDIENTS:

- 1 cup seedless watermelon, pureed
- 1/2 cup plain Greek yogurt (unsweetened)

#### DIRECTIONS:

1. Blend the watermelon until smooth.
2. In a bowl, mix the puree with the yogurt.
3. Pour into silicone molds (stars are perfect for the holiday!)
4. Freeze for at least 4 hours until solid.

**Storage:** Keep in the freezer. Serve on hot afternoons or after playtime.

## 2. TURKEY & CRANBERRY MINI-BURGERS

A savory, protein-packed treat with a hint of holiday flair.

### INGREDIENTS:

- 1/2 lb lean ground turkey
- 1/4 cup finely chopped cranberries (fresh, or unsweetened dried)
- 1 egg
- 1/4 cup oat flour

### DIRECTIONS:

1. Preheat oven to 350°F (175°C).
2. In a bowl, combine turkey, cranberries, egg, and flour. Mix thoroughly.
3. Form into small, bite-sized patties.
4. Place on a lined baking sheet and bake for 20–25 minutes, flipping halfway through.
5. Let cool before serving.

**Storage:** Refrigerate in an airtight container for up to 5 days or freeze for later.

## 3. BLUEBERRY & BANANA FROZEN BITES

A fruity, antioxidant-rich treat for warm-weather snacking.

### INGREDIENTS:

- 1 banana, mashed
- 1/2 cup fresh blueberries
- 1/2 cup plain Greek yogurt

### DIRECTIONS:

1. Mix mashed banana, blueberries, and yogurt in a bowl.
2. Spoon into ice cube trays or silicone molds.
3. Freeze for several hours or until solid.
4. Pop out and serve as needed.

**Storage:** Store in the freezer in a sealed container.



## July Tips For Dog Parents

### 1. FIREWORKS SAFETY

Fourth of July fireworks can be frightening for dogs. Create a calm, quiet space indoors. Consider a calming vest or consult your vet about safe anxiety-relief options.

### 2. BBQ AWARENESS

Keep pups away from the grill! Common BBQ foods like onions, corn cobs, bones, and greasy meats can be dangerous to dogs.

### 3. WATCH THE TEMPS

hot for your pup. Stick to morning or evening walks.

### 4. SUN & SHADE

Make sure your dog has access to shade and plenty of fresh water if spending time outside. Short-snouted breeds (like Bulldogs and Pugs) are especially prone to overheating.

### 5. TRAVEL PREP

Planning a summer trip? Bring your dog's essentials: food, treats, ID tags, leash, water, and a favorite toy. If traveling by car, ensure proper restraint or crate space. 🐾



# Say TREATS!



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