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VA Dog Care Course

Lesson 1. Dog Care Basics: Feeding, Exercise, and Basic Healthcare

You have been asked to take this course to help you get ready for a dog to be assigned to you for the research study you will be taking part in. The information in this course is likely to be useful as you and your dog get to know each other, so you will get a printed copy of everything to take home with you. Put it somewhere handy so you can look in it whenever you have questions about doing things with your dog. Feel free to share it with other people in your household and anyone else who may do things regularly with you and your dog.

This lesson goes over the basics of caring for a dog. You will find out about dog nutrition and feeding, how to make sure your dog gets the exercise he or she needs, and what else you need to do to keep your dog healthy. These are basic to building a successful partnership with your dog, and this lesson is to help you understand what to do.

Throughout this course, “your dog” may be referred to as either “he” or “she”. This does not mean that the parts that talk about “him” only apply to male dogs and the parts that talk about “her” only apply to female dogs. It’s just simpler than saying “he or she” each time, and is always intended to apply to your dog, regardless of whether you are assigned a male dog or a female dog.

Remember that you are responsible for your dog’s care, but his VA trainer, his veterinarian, and the entire study team are dedicated to helping you learn what you need to do. If you have any questions, be sure to ask them for advice!

During the study, almost all of the expenses of taking care of your dog will be covered for you. But after your part of the study is finished, the dog will become yours if you want to keep him, and at that point, you will become responsible for all of the costs, so this lesson also includes information about what it costs to care for a dog properly.

As a final step before receiving a dog in the study, you will be tested on the information in all four lessons in this course. A VA dog trainer will go over the exam with you and explain any information that is not clear to you then.

Learning Objectives for Lesson 1

This lesson will help you to learn:

- What foods are healthy to **feed to your dog**, and what is not healthy for her to eat;
- How to make sure your dog is getting the right amount of **exercise**;

- What else you should do to **keep your dog healthy**:
 - Grooming and bathing
 - Mouth care
 - Nail care
 - Keeping ears healthy
 - How much it costs to take proper care of a dog.

1.1 Diet, Feeding, and Nutrition ¹⁻⁷

A good diet is important for keeping your dog healthy and happy. It provides the right proportions of the nutrients that your dog needs. She will be used to a good quality kibble (dry food) when you get her. It will be best for her to keep on getting the same kind of food, so you will get a coupon for a free bag of it each month during the study. Give your dog one dish for food and a separate one for water. Clean the bowls each day, and make sure that there is always cool, fresh water in the water bowl.

How often should I feed my dog?

Find out from your dog's vendor or the VA trainer when you receive the dog how many meals a day he's used to eating, and how much he gets each time, so you can start from there. The important thing is to watch your dog and adjust the amount of food you give him, so that he maintains a good weight and stays healthy. The dogs in this study will be fairly large (more than 40 lb.) healthy young adults, so most likely, 1 or 2 meals a day will be about right. You may need to figure on giving your dog as much as a few cups of kibble each day (give half the amount at each meal, if you feed 2 meals per day!). The nutrition label on the food can also help you figure out a reasonable amount of food for your dog's weight and activity level. If you have any questions about this, check with your dog's veterinarian.

What about other kinds of food?

While you and your dog are participating in the study, we recommend that you use the food that you get with the coupon, but you can feed other good-quality diets as well.

Different kinds of dog food are designed for different stages of a dog's life, from puppyhood to senior years, so you may want to change the food as your dog gets older.

Look on the package of any food you consider feeding your dog, to see that it meets the standards of the Association of American Feed Control Officials ² (you might see this written as "AAFCO") There are different categories of standards that the food can meet, which can be confusing, so it may be helpful to ask your dog's veterinarian for suggestions.

In general, kibble (dry food) is better for dogs than soft dog food is, for several reasons. Crunching the hard kibbles keeps your dog's teeth clean and exercises his jaw muscles. It also keeps his stools compact and firm, which makes them easier to clean up. If your dog needs soft food some reason, you can mix some in with the kibble (try three-quarters dry kibble with one-quarter canned moist food).

Whatever food you choose, the most important thing is always for you to watch your dog's behavior and appearance carefully, because they will tell you whether the food is right for her. If your dog's energy level is right for her breed and age, if her skin and coat are healthy, if her stools are firm and brown, and if she seems to be in overall good health, then the food is doing its job.

What about treats?

Dogs enjoy occasional treats, just like humans do. Just remember to choose nutritious treats, and include them when you figure out how much food you are feeding your dog! Just like humans, dogs can become obese if they get too many extra snacks or treats, so limit the number of treats you feed your dog. Also, remember that dogs enjoy a very small piece of a treat as much as they do a large treat with more calories, so when you give treats, use small treats with fewer calories.

Besides nutritious treats that are sold especially for dogs, dogs enjoy vegetables like broccoli, carrots, zucchini, cauliflower, peas, and beans, and fruits like bananas (peeled), apples, and melon (peeled) ¹. Small amounts of these can be great low-calorie treats. Other foods that are good for humans can actually be harmful for dogs. The next part of this lesson will tell about some of those. The bottom line is that dogs have different nutritional needs than humans do, so it will be best for your dog if you only give him food meant for dogs (no matter how hard he begs for whatever you are eating!).

Keeping food and treats safe and healthy ³

Just as it's important to handle and store food for humans carefully, to make sure it's wholesome and tasty when it's served, the food and treats that you give your dog also need to be handled and stored carefully. Make sure when you buy food for your dog, that you choose a package that is clean and sealed, and then store the food the way the package recommends. It's best to keep kibble in a cool, dry place. Leave it in the bag it came in, and put the opened bag inside of a large plastic container with a cover.

An extra problem to watch out for when you have a dog, is that some germs (like Salmonella) may or may not make your dog sick, but your dog can still pass them on to you (or other people) and make the people sick, even when your dog is fine. When people get infected with Salmonella, they generally get diarrhea and stomach cramps, which can be severe enough to send them to the hospital. Salmonella can be present in raw meat ⁴, bones, and eggs, as well as in the stools of infected animals. If you handle any contaminated foods or wastes, and then handle your dog or his food, you can pass the germs to your dog. Your dog can also get the germs by contact with stools from infected animals. He can then spread them in his stools. The best way to stop the spread is for you to always wash your hands well with soap and water ⁵ before and after you handle your dog or your dog's food, water, or waste.

Dangerous for Dogs!

Many things that you may have around your house can make your dog sick or even die. Some are foods that are perfectly okay for humans to eat (chocolate, avocados, onions, grapes, and spinach), and others are things you would never think of eating, but your

dog could get into (bleach, deodorants, deodorizers, detergents, matches, and nail polish). The table ⁶ on the next page was put together by the American Kennel Club (www.akc.org), and is a handy list of things to watch out for. There's an extra copy of it on the following page, so you can put one on your refrigerator door if you like.

Certain foods and household products can be dangerous to dogs!	
<p>It's only natural for dogs to be curious. But, their curiosity can get them into trouble when they get into areas where you store household items such as medicine and detergents. Many common household items that you use every day can be harmful, and sometimes even lethal, to your dog.</p>	
<p>Foods that are harmful to your dog:</p> <p><u>May cause vomiting, abdominal pain and/or diarrhea:</u> Wild cherry Almond Apricot Balsam Pear Japanese Plum</p> <p><u>May cause varied reactions:</u> Yeast dough Coffee grounds Macadamia nuts Tomato and potato leaves and stems Avocados Onions and onion powder Grapes Raisins Chocolate Pear and peach kernels Mushrooms (if also toxic to humans) Rhubarb Spinach Alcohol</p>	<p>Common household items that are harmful to your dog:</p> <p>Acetaminophen (Tylenol®) Antifreeze and other car fluids Bleach and cleaning fluids Boric acid Deodorants Deodorizers Detergents De-icing salts Disinfectants Drain cleaners Furniture polish Gasoline Hair colorings Weed killers Insecticides Kerosene Matches Mothballs Nail polish and remover Paint Prescription and non-prescription medicine Rat poison Rubbing alcohol Shoe polish Sleeping pills Snail or slug bait Turpentine Windshield-wiper fluid</p>
<p>Symptoms of possible poisoning are: vomiting, diarrhea, difficult breathing, abnormal urine (color, aroma or odor, frequency, etc.), salivation, weakness. If your dog shows any of these symptoms, or you suspect that she has swallowed harmful chemicals, contact a veterinarian or poison control center immediately.</p>	

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Foods that are harmful to your dog:

May cause vomiting, abdominal pain and/or diarrhea:

Wild cherry
Almond
Apricot
Balsam Pear
Japanese Plum

May cause varied reactions:

Yeast dough
Coffee grounds
Macadamia nuts
Tomato and potato leaves and stems
Avocados
Onions and onion powder
Grapes
Raisins
Chocolate
Pear and peach kernels
Mushrooms (if also toxic to humans)
Rhubarb
Spinach
Alcohol

Common household items that are harmful to your dog:

Acetaminophen (Tylenol®)
Antifreeze and other car fluids
Bleach and cleaning fluids
Boric acid
Deodorants
Deodorizers
Detergents
De-icing salts
Disinfectants
Drain cleaners
Furniture polish
Gasoline
Hair colorings
Weed killers
Insecticides
Kerosene
Matches
Mothballs
Nail polish and remover
Paint
Prescription and non-prescription medicine
Rat poison
Rubbing alcohol
Shoe polish
Sleeping pills
Snail or slug bait
Turpentine
Windshield-wiper fluid

Symptoms of possible poisoning are: vomiting, diarrhea, difficult breathing, abnormal urine (color, aroma or odor, frequency, etc.), salivation, weakness. If your dog shows any of these symptoms, or you suspect that she has swallowed harmful chemicals, contact a veterinarian or poison control center immediately.

Are Bones OK?

It's tricky to select and prepare bones that are safe for your dog. The wrong kind of bones can make your dog sick, or injure the stomach or gut with splinters or sharp edges, so it is easiest if you just don't give him any bones. Fortunately, there are plenty of other options that your dog can enjoy just as much. You may want to discuss with his veterinarian which specific chew toys are best for him.

1.2 Exercise ^{7, 15}***Why is exercise important?*** ⁸

Dogs need exercise to stay healthy and happy. They enjoy being mentally and physically active, and they are social animals. This means that when your dog gets to do things with you for exercise, it's a WIN-WIN-WIN situation! It can be a lot of fun for both of you, it's great for your dog's health, and it makes it less likely that she will misbehave.

Just like for humans, the health benefits of exercise include helping to:

- keep your dog agile and limber
- keep his digestive system working well (preventing constipation and other problems)
- make her feel sleepy rather than restless, when it's time to be quiet
- maintain healthy weight

Exercise also encourages good behavior. Dogs who are bored or who don't get to use up enough of their energy exercising are more likely to misbehave and do things like:

- Destroy property by chewing, digging or scratching
- Be hyperactive and excitable, and have a hard time settling down at night
- Knock over furniture
- Jump up on people
- Play too roughly
- Bark and whine for attention

How much exercise does my dog need?

The dogs in this study will all be healthy young adults of generally active breeds, so you should figure on giving your dog at least 30 minutes of vigorous exercise daily, or an hour or two of ordinary everyday activities.⁹ Your dog's vendor or VA trainer will tell you when you get your dog what routine he's used to.

There are lots of things you can do to make sure your dog gets the exercise she needs. You can choose activities for you and your dog to exercise together, but there are also ways to exercise your dog when your dog needs more exercise than you are up for. The most important thing is to choose activities that you and your dog both enjoy.

1.2.1. If Your Dog Needs More Exercise Than You Want ⁸⁻¹⁰

Some activities keep your dog busy even if you don't want to exercise with him.

Give your dog interesting things to pay attention to. Food puzzle toys can be a great way to keep him active. Just make sure to count the food he gets from the toy as part of the food he gets for the day! Obedience training and teaching your dog to do tricks can also be fun for both of you, and will give your dog both a brain workout and some physical activity. Playing with a chew toy is another kind of healthy physical activity that your dog will probably find interesting.

Besides activities like these, which can satisfy your dog's need for mental activity, she will also still need *some* additional physical activity. You can help her get it with games that give her reasons to run around while you mostly stand or sit still. These include "fetch" with a ball or Frisbee, Hide-and-Seek, catching bubbles, and chase (a toy on a rope).

Even though many dogs seem to like to play with sticks, this is really quite dangerous, so don't let your dog do it. Dogs often get badly injured when they run too eagerly into the end of a stick they are chasing. (The stick can puncture a dog's eye, mouth, chest, abdomen, and even skull!). Even chewing on sticks is dangerous because splinters get caught in the tongue or gums. Splinters also irritate or injure the gut if they get swallowed, and can cause infection or make it hard for your dog to breathe if they get inhaled ¹⁰.

1.2.2. Exercise for You and Your Dog Together ^{8 - 11}

On-leash walking and jogging

Going for a walk can be good exercise for both of you, and also gives your dog more territory to sniff and explore. Use a leash that is about 6-8 feet long, so that he stays close to you, and take different routes every now and then, for variety.

A brisk 30 minute walk with your dog will give you each a healthy dose of exercise, but if either of you is out of shape, start with less and work your way up. Your dog's vendor or VA trainer can tell you when you receive her, what she is used to. If you like to jog, and you want your dog to jog along with you on a leash, just make sure you pay attention to how she responds, so you don't make her overdo. If she behaves like you feel when you've done too much, it was probably too much for her, so try a little less (slower or shorter, or both) next time. Check her paws for blisters afterward, rinse off any salt (if there was salt sprinkled on your route to melt ice) and dry off any water, snow, or ice.

Exercise on a leash may be all that some smaller, older, or unathletic dogs need, but the dogs in this study will be healthy young adults, about two years old, so be sure to give your dog chances to exercise without a leash as well.

Off-leash exercise

Being off the leash lets your dog do what he feels like, when he feels like it – run like the wind, stop to sniff something interesting, go off in a different direction on a whim. To keep your dog safe, make sure you let him do this only when he's in a fenced-in yard, or in your home.

1.2.3. Dogs, Play, and Public Health ^{5, 12, 13}

Dog parks can be great places for your dog to get off-leash exercise, and there's the added bonus of other dogs to play with as well. Your dog can also make friends with other dogs if you take training classes or just get together informally with other people with dogs. Just like when groups of people get together though, like in schools, at work, and at parties, there are more chances of getting sick when dogs get together. Diseases spread more easily among dogs than among humans because dogs tend to have more direct physical contact with each other, they share bowls, toys, and equipment, and they are more likely to get exposed to insects, and contaminated water and stools. There also diseases that people can catch from dogs. And of course, there's an increased risk of dog bites when people and dogs get together. This doesn't mean you should avoid getting together with other people and their dogs, but it is worthwhile to know what to watch out for and how to reduce your risks.

Common symptoms in dogs that are sick include:

- Fever
- Respiratory symptoms like a snotty nose, or more than occasional sneezing or coughing
- Stomach upset, including vomiting or diarrhea
- Looking malnourished
- Noticeable external parasites, like ticks or fleas
- Patchy fur, fur loss in a single area, or crusty skin sores

If your dog has any of these symptoms, keep him away from other dogs, and take him to his veterinarian right away, so that he can be treated to get well again, if needed. Also, let the study team know promptly if your dog is sick. The cost of your dog's visits to the veterinarian will be covered by insurance while you are participating in the study, so you won't need to worry about the veterinarian's fees. Watch out for these symptoms in other dogs too, so that you can avoid letting your dog catch anything from them.

Common symptoms of diseases that humans can catch from dogs include:

- Fever
- Respiratory symptoms, like runny nose, or lots of sneezing or coughing,
- Stomach upset, including vomiting, or diarrhea
- External parasites, such as ticks
- Skin sores

Avoid letting your dog have contact with stool from other dogs, and be careful to

collect your dog's stools promptly and dispose of them properly ¹³. Always wash your hands as soon as you can after you do so. Also wash your hands frequently when you take your dog to any gathering where you interact with other dogs. This can reduce the chances of spreading or catching anything from the other dogs ⁵. If you do get sick yourself or think you have been exposed to a sick dog, see your own doctor right away. Let your doctor know if your dog is being treated for anything, and be sure to tell your doctor that you have a dog. Also let the study team know promptly if you (or anyone else in your household) catch something from your dog.

1.4 Dog Hygiene

1.4.1 Grooming and bathing ^{7, 14 - 21}

Just like humans, dogs need their hair (or fur!) brushed and they need to be bathed.

Brushing helps to remove dirt, debris, loose hairs and tangles. It also distributes natural skin oils along the hairs for a healthy coat, and it gives you a chance to check for ticks and fleas. Be gentle and make sure that it's a pleasant experience for your dog, so you can do it easily.

How often your dog needs to be brushed depends on what kind of coat she has, and what she has gotten into lately. Your dog's vendor or VA trainer can tell you when you get your dog, what brushing routine she is used to, but the bottom line is always to brush often enough to keep her coat clean and looking healthy. Many dogs love getting brushed, so you can do it much more than the minimum, but here's a rough idea of what you can expect. There are three breeds of dogs that will be involved in this study, Labrador Retrievers (Labs), German Shepherds (GSDs), and Golden Retrievers (Goldens).

- If your dog is a Lab, he has a "low-maintenance waterproof coat" ¹⁵, which means that brushing once or twice a week will probably be enough. ^{16,17}
- If your dog is a German Shepherd, she has a "dense, medium-long coat" that tends to shed a lot ¹⁸, especially in the spring and fall, so you'll need to brush her often. When she's shedding, brush often enough to keep the loose hair under control. The rest of the year, once a week will probably do the job. ¹⁹
- If your dog is a Golden, he has longer hair, which will need brushing about twice a week ²⁰ or even daily ²¹.

Dogs don't need baths as often as humans do, and getting a bath too often can even dry out the skin and coat. As a rule of thumb, figure on giving your dog a bath only when he is dirty or smells bad, which can be as little as once every 2-3 months ¹⁴. Check with your dog's vendor or VA trainer when you get your dog, to find out what he is used to.

You can find detailed instructions about brushing and bathing a dog at <http://www.aspca.org/pet-care/dog-care/groom-your-dog> .

1.4.2 Mouth Care ^{7, 22 - 24}

Chewing on kibble, dog biscuits, and chew toys helps to keep your dog's teeth clean, but may not be enough to keep plaque and tartar from building up. The accumulation of plaque and tartar can lead to problems with your dog's gums and other tissues in her mouth and jaw. Pay attention to your dog's mouth, and check with your veterinarian if you notice any of the following:

- Gums that are red, swollen, or bleeding
- Teeth that are brownish
- Really disgusting breath (not just ordinary "dog breath")
- Your dog keeps pawing at or rubbing his face or mouth
- Your dog tries to avoid hard foods

Your veterinarian can tell you what kind of dental routine she needs, and how to perform it. Your veterinarian will also advise you if your dog needs anything more.

1.4.3. Nail Care ^{14, 25 - 27}

Just like your own nails, if your dog's nails get too long, they can break, which can be painful and get infected. They can also push her toes into unnatural positions, which will make it harder for her to walk or run. This is not a problem for most dogs, because the nails tend to wear down naturally as they run around. Keep an eye on your dog's nails, and ask your dog's VA trainer or veterinarian for advice if they look like they are catching on things, or pushing her toes to the side. If your dog needs her nails clipped, you can ask the veterinarian to do it, or you can learn to do it yourself, with special clippers made just for dogs.

1.4.4. Keeping Your Dog's Ears Healthy ^{28 - 30}

The twists and turns inside of a dog's ears can be a great place for dirt or wax to collect and for germs to grow, so check on your dog's ears regularly (every couple of weeks). The insides should look clean and pink, so check with your veterinarian if you notice any of the following:

- Discharge (might look like coffee grounds)
- Bad smells,
- Redness, swelling, ears feel unusually hot, or seem to hurt when you touch them
- Crusty skin
- Your dog is tilting or shaking his head, pawing at his ears, or circling to one side

You can clean your dog's ears (just the parts that you can see easily) by wiping them with a cotton ball or a soft cloth wrapped around your finger. Dampen the cotton or cloth with some canine ear cleaning solution that you can get at a pet store. Don't push anything into the ear canal.

1.5 The Costs of Taking Care of a Dog ³¹

While you are enrolled in the study, you will get a monthly coupon for food, and a monthly allowance to cover other costs of taking care of your dog. VA has purchased health insurance for your dog's health care costs, so you also won't have any out-of-pocket expenses for her veterinary care either, while you and she are participating in this study. After you and your dog finish your part in the study, you will become responsible for all of the future costs of taking care of your dog if you choose to keep her, so it's very important for you to budget for them. Although there are VA benefits that can cover some of the expenses for Service Dogs that help Veterans with hearing, visual, or mobility impairments, Service Dogs and Emotional Support Dogs for Veterans with PTSD are not covered right now. This is because it is not known yet whether Service Dogs or Emotional Support Dogs actually help people with PTSD to manage the effects of the PTSD ³², and that's exactly why VA is doing this study.

Below is a list of costs that you should be prepared to pay when you are no longer participating in the study. The amounts are based on an informal survey conducted by the American Kennel Club in 2004. They collected responses from about 1000 dog owners. The numbers here have been adjusted for inflation to 2014 dollars.

ANNUAL EXPENSES	AVERAGE REPORTED
Food (about 1 bag of dog food per month) – the average shown is for ordinary food. Premium food can cost as much as 50% more	\$562
Routine veterinary care, including check-ups, shots, etc.	\$533
Toys and treats	\$273
Grooming	\$239
Travel	\$352
Total per year	\$1959

Sometimes a dog will need emergency veterinary care or surgery, and you'll want to be prepared to pay for it if your dog does need it. How much it will cost of course depends on exactly what is needed, but the owners surveyed reported spending an average of \$795 each time it was needed.

This is the end of Lesson 1. Now take the quiz questions after the Reference pages below and check your knowledge.

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Lesson 1. Dog Care Basics: Feeding, Exercise, and Basic Healthcare – Practice Quiz Questions

Question 1: Which of the following should you NEVER feed your dog? (Choose the one best answer.)

- A:** Chocolate
- B:** Peeled bananas
- C:** Kibble
- D:** Broccoli
- E:** Soft dog food

Question 2: Most adult dogs only need to eat once or twice a day. (True or false?)

Question 3: Which of the following is a sign that your dog is probably is getting a good amount of exercise? (Choose the one best answer.)

- A:** Often wants to play rough, and likes to play bite
- B:** Being “hyper”, and unwilling to settle down at night
- C:** Barks and whines frequently for no apparent reason
- D:** Being active and alert during the day and becoming contentedly sleepy as bedtime approaches
- E:** Often destroys things by chewing, digging, or scratching

Question 4: Leashed walks alone probably won't provide enough exercise for the dog you are assigned for this study. (True or False?)

Question 5: How often should you brush your dog? (Choose the one best answer.)

- A:** There is no need for you to brush your dog; dogs take care of their own grooming in the wild.
- B:** Only if she is very dirty or smells bad
- C:** No more than once a month
- D:** Only in the summer to check for ticks and fleas
- E:** At least often enough to keep her coat looking nice.

Question 6: Bathing too often can make a dog's coat and skin too dry. (True or False?)

Question 7: Which of the following is true about keeping your dog's mouth healthy? (Choose the one best answer.)

- A:** There is no need for you to pay special attention to your dog's mouth, as long as she gets an annual check-up by a veterinarian.
- B:** Chewing on dog biscuits, kibble, and chew toys helps to keep your dog's teeth clean, but may not be enough to prevent tartar and plaque from building up.
- C:** The build-up of plaque and tartar on the teeth is a problem for humans, but not for dogs.
- D:** Your own dentist is the best expert to ask if you have concerns about your dog's teeth.
- E:** If your dog starts pawing at her face, it means that she is not getting enough hard foods to eat.

Question 8: Why should you put so much effort into taking care of your dog? (Choose the one best answer.)

- A:** Your dog depends on you – your role in your partnership is to take care of him.
- B:** You can be asked to stop participating in the study, and will have to give up the dog, if you don't take good care of him.
- C:** Your dog and you will have a stronger relationship with each other if you take good care of him.
- D:** Your dog will be healthier and happier if you take good care of him
- E:** All of the above

Question 9: There are lots of sources of information on taking care of dogs. Which source should you rely on the most, if they disagree? (Choose the one best answer.)

- A:** What you know from when you had a dog as a kid.
- B:** The internet.
- C:** Your buddies who have dogs themselves.
- D:** Your dog's veterinarian.
- E:** Other participants in the study.

Question 10: Long nails on a dog look funny, but are natural and don't need any special attention. (True or False?)

Question 11: To take good care of your dog's ears, you should ... (Choose the one best answer.)

- A:** Avoid touching your dog's ears as long as your veterinarian has checked them as part of your dog's annual checkup.
- B:** Rely on your dog to keep his ears clean himself.
- C:** Once every couple of weeks, gently pull your dog's ears open so you can see how they look inside
- D:** Clean as deep into the ear canal as you can reach with a Q-tip.

Question 12: What kind of behavior suggests that your dog might have an ear infection? (Choose the one best answer.)

- A:** Bounding out as far as her leash will let her go, and playing repeatedly when you are trying to settle down for a quiet evening
- B:** Tilting or shaking her head, circling to one side, or pawing at her ears, for no apparent reason
- C:** Chewing your good shoes to bits
- D:** Limping
- E:** Turning down the kibble she always eats, even though she seems hungry

Question 13: Which of the following is TRUE about your costs of taking care of the dog during and after the study? (Choose the one best answer.)

- A:** All costs will be covered by the VA, for the life of your dog.
- B:** When the dog is given to me, I must be prepared to pay for all of his care, beginning when we are matched.
- C:** All costs will be covered by the study as long as my dog and I are participating in the study. After our participation ends, I will be responsible for all of my dog's expenses.
- D:** Routine veterinary care, not counting emergencies, typically costs \$5000 - \$6000 each year.
- E:** It takes patience and lots of time to take good care of a dog, but it doesn't cost very many dollars, so it probably won't mess up anyone's budget.

Question 14: A reasonable estimate of the cost of owning a dog is about \$167/month. (True or False?)

Question 15: Feeding my dog properly should not cost more than \$100 a year. (True or False?)

VA Dog Care Course

Lesson 2. Dog Health and Safety

This lesson goes over healthcare and safety for your dog. It covers how to tell whether your dog's weight is healthy, what routine veterinary care to plan on for your dog (like routine check-ups and shots), and how to recognize problems that you should take your dog to a veterinarian for. It also brings up some special safety issues to pay attention to, for your dog at home, on the road, and when the weather is hot or cold.

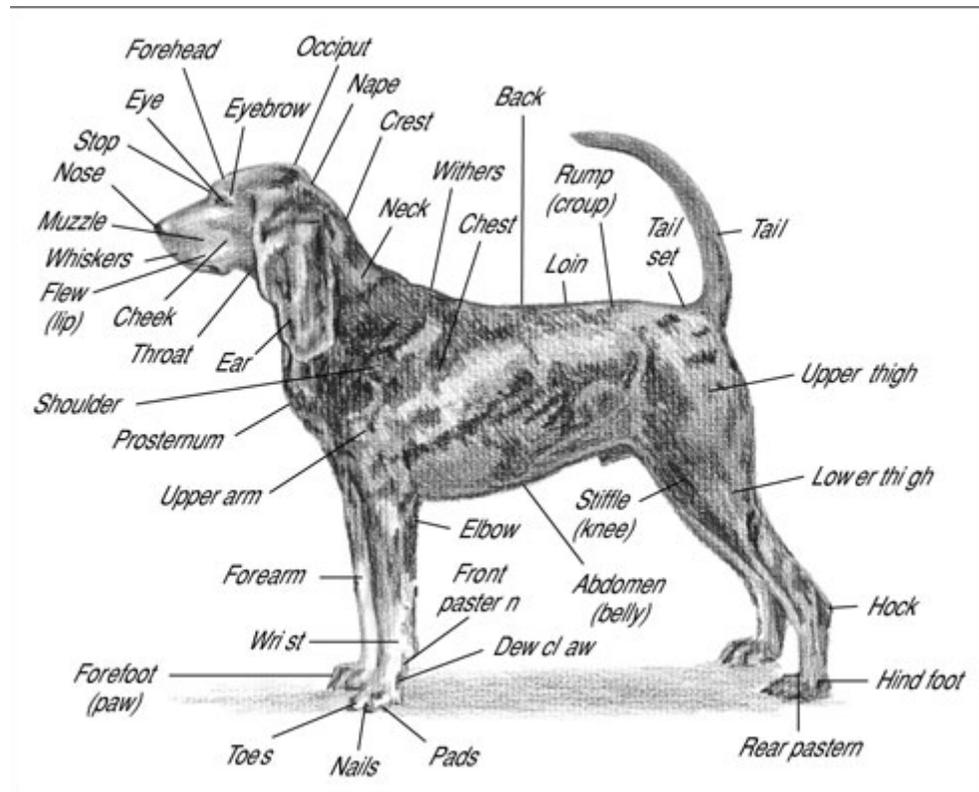
Learning Objectives

This lesson is to help you to become familiar with:

- The names of the basic **parts of a dog's body**
- What a dog at a **healthy body weight** looks like, compared to a dog that is too fat or too thin
- Signs that a dog should be taken to a **veterinarian**
- The protective **medications and vaccines** that dogs need, to stay healthy (e.g. heart worm medicine, parasite check, flea medicine, rabies vaccine)
- Potential safety hazards for dogs at home
- Safe ways of **traveling** with a dog
- The hazards to dogs, when the **weather is hot or cold**

2.1 Parts of Your Dog's Body

It's useful to know the names for the different parts of your dog's body, because that makes it easier for you to tell your dog's veterinarian and VA trainer about your dog, and to understand what they tell you. Most of the names are the same as for human beings, but a few are different. You may want to keep a picture like this one ² handy for when you talk with your dog's veterinarian or VA dog trainer.



Here are descriptions for some of the names that may be less familiar:

Stop – between the eyes, about where the forehead begins

Occiput – the very top of the head

Flews – lips

Nape – where the head attaches to the neck

Withers – the very top of the shoulders

Crest – between the nape and the withers

Stifle -- knee

Hock – the first joint on each leg, coming up from the paw

Dew claw – the little dangly toe a little above the paw

Pads – on the sole of each paw

Tail set – where the tail attaches to the dog

2.2 Obesity in Dogs ^{3, 4}

Did you know that more than half of all pet dogs in the United States are overweight or obese? This is a problem for dogs, just as it is for humans, because the excess pounds add stress to a dog's bones, joints, and internal organs, and they can shorten a dog's life. The risk that your dog will gain too much weight to be healthy increases when he:

- has too much fat in his diet
- eats too much
- eats table scraps instead of kibble
- doesn't get enough exercise
- has health problems such as a slow thyroid genetics

2.1 How to "Score" Your Dog's Body ³

The chart at the top of the next page ³ shows the score to assign to your dog body condition, based on what she looks like, from the side and looking down at her back from above. If your dog scores 1, 2, or 3 (too thin) or 6, 7, 8, or 9 (too heavy), you should adjust her diet and/or the amount of exercise that she's getting (review Lesson 1, "Dog Care Basics", for general recommendations about food and exercise). Generally, your dog's weight is probably about right for her (score of 4 or 5) if:

- You can feel her backbone and ribs without pressing, but they are not sticking out.
- She has a waist that you can see from the side and from above

Talk with your dog's veterinarian if you have questions about your dog's body condition and what to do about it.

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BODY CONDITION SYSTEM

TOO THIN	1	Ribs, lumbar vertebrae, pelvic bones and all bony prominences evident from a distance. No discernible body fat. Obvious loss of muscle mass.	
	2	Ribs, lumbar vertebrae and pelvic bones easily visible. No palpable fat. Some evidence of other bony prominence. Minimal loss of muscle mass.	
	3	Ribs easily palpated and may be visible with no palpable fat. Tops of lumbar vertebrae visible. Pelvic bones becoming prominent. Obvious waist and abdominal tuck.	
IDEAL	4	Ribs easily palpable, with minimal fat covering. Waist easily noted, viewed from above. Abdominal tuck evident.	
	5	Ribs palpable without excess fat covering. Waist observed behind ribs when viewed from above. Abdomen tucked up when viewed from side.	
TOO HEAVY	6	Ribs palpable with slight excess fat covering. Waist is discernible viewed from above but is not prominent. Abdominal tuck apparent.	
	7	Ribs palpable with difficulty; heavy fat cover. Noticeable fat deposits over lumbar area and base of tail. Waist absent or barely visible. Abdominal tuck may be present.	
	8	Ribs not palpable under very heavy fat cover, or palpable only with significant pressure. Heavy fat deposits over lumbar area and base of tail. Waist absent. No abdominal tuck. Obvious abdominal distention may be present.	
	9	Massive fat deposits over thorax, spine and base of tail. Waist and abdominal tuck absent. Fat deposits on neck and limbs. Obvious abdominal distention.	

The BODY CONDITION SYSTEM was developed at the Nestlé Purina Pet Care Center and has been validated as documented in the following publications:

Mowbray D, Borjesson MJ, Moyers T, et al. Comparison of body fat estimates by dual-energy x-ray absorptiometry and distention scale dilation in client owned dogs. *Compendium* 2007; 29 (19A): 70

Laflamme DR. Development and Validation of a Body Condition Score System for Dogs. *Canine Practice* July/August 1997; 22(1): 0-15

Kady, et al. Effects of Diet Restriction on Life Span and Age-Related Change in Dogs. *JAVMA* 2002; 222: 1315-1320

Call 1-800-222-VETS (8387), weekdays, 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. CT

Nestlé PURINA

2.2 How to Know When It's Time to Call the Veterinarian ⁵

Your dog depends on you to notice and figure out when he should be seen by his veterinarian. He can't tell you in words how he feels when he doesn't feel good, and he doesn't know what the veterinarian can help him with. That means it's up to you to pay attention to what his behavior and appearance tell you about his health, and use your best judgment to decide when it time to call the veterinarian. Make sure that you also pay attention when friends or family members mention noticing anything – you are with your dog all the time, so it may be hard for you to

see some of the more gradual changes that jump out at people who only see your dog every now and then.

What are some signs that your dog needs to see a veterinarian right away? If you observe any of the following, don't delay – call your veterinarian, or take your dog to an emergency veterinary clinic IMMEDIATELY!

- His gums are very pale, white, or bluish, instead of a normal healthy pink
- He looks like he's having a hard time breathing
- He collapses or is unconscious
- He staggers around, acts dizzy, or circles for no apparent reason
- He has trouble walking
- His belly is very bloated, like there's an inflated beach ball inside
- He's having seizures, which look like he's thrashing around and jerking, without meaning to
- Anything that makes you think he's feeling severe pain (for example, if he keeps crying out loudly, or if he "guards" some part of his body and won't let anyone touch it)
- He feels unusually hot or cold to you (Normal temperature for a dog is 100.5-102.5 °F, which is a little warmer than you are normally. Something is likely to be seriously wrong, if his temperature is over 104°F or below 99°F.)

With other signs, you can wait a little, but if you notice any of the following, pay extra attention and call her veterinarian if they continue for more than a day or two:

- She seems to have lost her usual appetite
- She seems unusually droopy or weak
- She is vomiting
- She is having diarrhea
- She is limping
- She is drooling more than usual
- She seems unusually thirsty and is drinking more than usual
- She's urinating more often than usual, or doesn't manage to wait until she goes outside
- Her urine is dark, cloudy or otherwise looks different than usual
- She is constipated
- She is scratching a lot, her coat looks dull, her skin seems dry, or you see dandruff
- She's wheezing or panting for no obvious reason
- She has a runny nose or seems congested
- She acts like something hurts (maybe crying when you touch a specific area or when she moves something a certain way)

These aren't complete lists, but should give you an idea of what to pay attention to. If you're not sure whether your dog needs to see his veterinarian, go ahead and call – the veterinarian is the best one to advise you about it. You can learn a lot from your dog's veterinarian, so make sure that you get comfortable about

asking questions and learning from the answers. If the veterinarian tells you to take your dog to a veterinary emergency clinic right away, you will learn one more example of what needs immediate attention. If the veterinarian recommends waiting a day or two, make sure you ask what to watch for in the meantime, so you can learn what kinds of changes are important.

Remember that all of the costs of veterinary care will be covered by insurance while you and your dog are participating in the VA study. You will not have any out-of-pocket expenses for veterinary services, so do not hesitate if you think your dog needs to be seen by the veterinarian. If you contact your dog's veterinarian because you think your dog may be sick or injured, please let your dog's VA trainer or some other member of the study team know right away as well.

2.3 Routine Veterinary Care ⁶⁻¹⁰

Keeping your dog healthy involves more than just taking her to a veterinarian when something is wrong. Every dog should get a complete veterinary check-up at least once each year. She will have had this just before you get her. While you are participating in the study, you will be required to take her to her veterinarian at least every six months.

You should take her to a veterinarian for a parasite check right after you get her, then 6, 12, and 17 months later. At 12 months, your dog should have a full physical examination and blood work. Insurance will pay for all of these visits and any medications you may need.

It's important that you choose a veterinarian before your dog needs one, so you will have to tell the study team the name of the veterinarian and the emergency veterinary clinic you've chosen before you get your dog. The veterinary insurance provided by the VA will pay for care by any state licensed local veterinarian you like, so make sure you choose one you are comfortable with. It is important that you can work well together with the veterinarian to keep your dog healthy. It's also important that you know which emergency veterinary clinic to take your dog to in case of an emergency- make sure you know where it is, before you need to go there.

2.3.1 Vaccinations (“shots”)

All dogs need to be vaccinated so that they are protected from diseases that they can easily catch from other dogs (these include rabies, distemper, parvovirus, and canine adenovirus-2). Your dog will have had the shots he needed to get as a puppy, so you will only have to make sure he gets his annual booster shots. He also has to get a rabies shot, usually every year, as required by law.

2.3.2 Parasites ⁸⁻¹⁰

Parasites are organisms that live in or on other animals and are often big enough to see. Some, like fleas and ticks, live on the outside of their hosts. Others, like heartworms or various gut worms, live inside. Both kinds cause health problems for their hosts, either because of what they do themselves, or because they carry germs that cause other diseases. Many can infect humans, especially children, as well as dogs.

Heartworms are a common problem for dogs. Their eggs are spread when mosquitoes bite an infected dog and then another dog. Adult heartworms make their way into the bloodstream of the host where they can actually clog up the heart and eventually kill the dog. Dogs should be on routine monthly heartworm medication that prevents adult heartworms from forming. Some of these monthly medications also prevent ticks and fleas. Check with your veterinarian for the best product for your dog, and keep the dog on the medication year round.

Hookworms, roundworms, and tapeworms live in the intestinal tract, and are spread when an animal touches or swallows the stool of infected animals, or anything contaminated with the stool. These parasites steal nutrients from their hosts by taking them out of the food the host has eaten before the host gets a chance. Some of them also damage the tissue that makes up the intestinal tract.

Fleas and ticks are a problem for both you and your dog, both because their bites are unpleasant and because they spread dangerous diseases.

To keep your dog, you, and all the other members of your household safe, you are required to take your dog to the veterinarian immediately after you receive your dog, then about every 6 months during your participation in the study, so that she can get the medicines she needs to prevent parasite infestations, so that she can be checked for any parasites that she might get anyway, and so that she can get treated to get rid of any that are detected.

2.3.3 Staying Healthy Around Other Dogs ⁷

As discussed in the first lesson on Dog Care Basics, it's important to be aware that your dog can catch diseases from other dogs, and to recognize signs that a dog might be sick. That way, you can avoid exposing your dog to sick dogs, and you can get your dog treated promptly if she does get sick. There are other things you can do to reduce the chances that she gets sick.

First, make sure that your dog has her routine check-ups with her veterinarian and gets all her booster vaccinations and parasite prevention medications, as discussed earlier in this lesson.

Second, check your dog for ticks as soon as you can after she has been outside. The longer a tick is attached, the more time there is for germs to get passed from the tick to your dog. If you find a tick, don't try to kill it with alcohol or petroleum jelly or by touching it with a hot match – the germs can still get into your dog, even

if the tick is dead. Instead, use a pair of tweezers to gently pull the tick off without breaking or crushing it. Avoid skin contact with the tick yourself as well, so you don't get infected either! If you have any questions about ticks, call your dog's veterinarian.

Third, make sure you always collect your dog's stools right away after he relieves himself, and dispose of them properly, so others won't be exposed to them. Also pay attention to avoid letting your dog sniff or eat stools left by other dogs.

Fourth, watch out for any wild animals in the area, especially if their behavior seems "odd" in any way. Bats, skunks, raccoons, foxes, rabbits, and squirrels, as well as wild dogs and cats, can all carry rabies, parasites, and other diseases. Keep your dog away from them.

Fifth, remember that you are responsible for making sure that your dog behaves appropriately. Your dog has been well socialized and trained, but may still become frightened or confused in unfamiliar surroundings. If her behavior becomes aggressive, or suggests that she is anxious, fearful, or not feeling well, take her to a place where she is more comfortable. Get in touch with the study team right away if her behavior seems out of line.

2.4 Staying Healthy at Home ¹¹

Remember from the Dog Care Basics lesson that there are many things around the house that are dangerous for your dog to eat. Some are foods that humans eat routinely, but can make dogs sick. Others are things that adult humans would never dream of putting into their mouths, but dogs (and small children!) may find their smells or appearance interesting to try. The list below was put together by the American Kennel Club, and alerts you to things that you should be extra careful about keeping out of your dog's reach. This is the same list that appeared in the Dog Care Basics lesson, where there is an extra copy that you can take out and post on your refrigerator door, if you like.

Certain foods and household products can be dangerous to dogs!

It's only natural for dogs to be curious. But their curiosity can get them into trouble when they get into areas where you store household items such as medicine and detergents. Many common household items that you use everyday can be harmful, and sometimes even lethal, to your dog.

Foods that are harmful to your dog:

May cause vomiting, abdominal pain and/or diarrhea:

Wild cherry
Almond
Apricot
Balsam Pear
Japanese Plum

May cause varied reactions:

Yeast dough
Coffee grounds
Macadamia nuts
Tomato and potato leaves and stems
Avocados
Onions and onion powder
Grapes
Raisins
Chocolate
Pear and peach kernels
Mushrooms (if also toxic to humans)
Rhubarb
Spinach
Alcohol



Common household items that are harmful to your dog:

Acetaminophen
Antifreeze and other car fluids
Bleach and cleaning fluids
Boric acid
Deodorants
Deodorizers
Detergents
De-icing salts
Disinfectants
Drain cleaners
Furniture polish
Gasoline
Hair colorings
Weed killers
Insecticides
Kerosene
Matches
Mothballs
Nail polish and remover
Paint
Prescription and non-prescription medicine
Rat poison
Rubbing alcohol
Shoe polish
Sleeping pills
Snail or slug bait
Turpentine
Windshield-wiper fluid



Symptoms of possible poisoning are: vomiting, diarrhea, difficult breathing, abnormal urine (color, aroma or odor, frequency, etc.), salivation, weakness. If your dog should ingest harmful chemicals, contact a veterinarian or poison control center immediately.



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If you suspect that your dog has eaten or drunk something dangerous, contact a veterinarian or poison control center immediately. Take the container along with you, if you think you know what he has gotten into. Then notify your dog's VA trainer or another member of the study team as soon as your dog is getting the care he needs.

2.5 Staying Safe on the Road ¹²⁻²¹

Is it okay for my dog to hang his head out the window of the car when we are driving? ¹²⁻¹⁵

Although your dog, like many others, may enjoy riding with his head hanging out of a window of your car, don't let him do it! Cars have "wind shields" to protect the occupants from the wind and everything it can carry. This is not just for comfort – bits of debris (gravel, sand, etc.) can hit the windshield and scratch or crack it. If your dog's head is outside of the car, the debris can hit him as well, and injure him. Even just the wind and dust can be enough to cause dehydration, make him prone to ear infections, and trigger long-lasting eye problems. It's fine to open the car windows some for fresh air; just don't open them far enough for your dog to get his head out.

What about riding in the back of my pickup? ¹²⁻¹⁶

Not a good idea! Although it used to be common for people to drive their dogs around in the back of a pickup, we now know that this is actually very dangerous. A majority of states have laws restricting when children may ride in the back of a pickup ¹⁵, because of how easy it is for them to get thrown around, or out, if the driver has to stop or swerve suddenly, even at low speeds. A dog in the back is just as vulnerable as a child is, and can be badly injured if she hits the side of the truck bed or anything else that's in the back with her. It's even worse if she jumps or gets thrown out – she can wind up with scrapes and bruises, broken bones, and even injuries to her head and internal organs, from hitting the ground or something else, and especially if she then gets hit by another car!

How can I keep my dog safe and comfortable when we are driving? ¹²⁻¹⁵

There are many ways to restrain a dog safely for riding in a car or truck. You will receive a seat belt harness, which attaches to the seat belts in the vehicle, and keeps your dog from flying if you have to stop or swerve suddenly, but still allows him to see out the windows. Make sure you use it, to keep everyone safe. Riding in a crate is another way to help your dog to be safe. If you have the crate in the back of a truck, make sure that it's secured to something. In some vehicles, you can install a gate or screen to keep your dog from bouncing around all over the car. There are many models and designs of each of these on the market, and lots of information about which features are effective. The most important thing to keep in mind is that it's dangerous for both you and your dog (and any other passengers) if your dog rides completely free and loose in the vehicle. Without some kind of restraint, he can get hurt if he gets thrown against something, and he can become a lethal projectile if he gets thrown against someone else in the

vehicle. He can even wind up making you more likely to be in an accident if he tries to climb into your lap, gets under your feet, or otherwise distracts you!

Beware of how hot it can get in a parked car, and how quickly it can get that hot, even if it's not all that hot outside! ^{13 - 15, 17 - 20}

Many people have heard of the dangers of leaving children and pets in locked cars in the summer. But if it's a comfortable temperature outside, and you leave the windows open a little, there won't be a problem, right? WRONG! It turns out that the temperature in a closed car can climb over 100°F in less than 20 minutes, even if the temperature outside is in the low 70s. If it's in the low 80s outside, the temperature inside a closed car can go over 109°F in 15 minutes. And it really doesn't matter much whether or not the windows are "cracked"! Because it's so easy for dogs to get overheated, which can make them sick or even die (see the section below on Staying Safe in the Summer), it's best not to take your dog anywhere with you in the car unless you know you will be able to take him with you when you get out of the car at your destination.

How about going on a summer road trip? ¹⁹

Sure, if you take a few precautions to keep your dog safe. If she rides in a crate in the car, make sure it's a well-ventilated crate, so that the temperature inside the crate doesn't get a lot hotter than in the rest of the car. You can put icepacks inside the crate too, to help keep it cool. (Freeze clean water inside of plastic water bottles, so you don't have to worry if your dog chews the container open and the contents leak!) Bring fresh water with you, and a bowl, to be sure that you can give your dog can have a drink when you stop for a break along the way. Look for a shady area when you get out of the car – remember that your dog has a fur coat on, so if it's hot outside for you, it's even hotter for her!

What about driving when it's cold out?

Your dog's fur coat will help keep him warm when it's cold outside, but you still have to pay attention to not letting him get too cold (see the section below on Staying Safe in the Winter). When you're in the car together, the temperature will probably be okay for your dog if it's okay for you. If you leave your dog alone in the car, you'll have to think about how the temperature inside the car will change while you are away, just as you do when it's warm outside. It can get dangerously cold very quickly in an unheated car. On the other hand, there's a danger of carbon monoxide poisoning if you let the engine run while you are away and the ventilation is not quite enough or the exhaust pipe is blocked. High levels of carbon dioxide inside a car can kill in minutes! ²². Your best move generally will be, just like in warm weather, not to leave your dog alone in the car.

2.6 Staying Safe in the Summer ^{19–21,23}

Summer brings warmer weather, more bugs, and activities that you and your dog may not do at other times of the year. To keep your dog healthy and safe, pay attention to what these aspects of summer mean for him.

2.6.1 In General

Being outdoors more means he may pick up more dirt, grass, leaves, and other debris in his coat, so he'll need to be groomed more often. Watch for fleas and ticks while you are brushing him, as there are more of them around in the summer too!

Be especially careful about keeping your dog up-to-date on all his vaccinations in the summer, because he's more likely to encounter other animals, and whatever they may be carrying, when he's outside more.

You may be surprised about how many of the plants that people commonly have in our homes or yards are poisonous to dogs. You can find very long lists of them, and the symptoms they produce, on the internet, but it's probably easiest just to avoid letting your dog chew on any plant unless you know for sure that it's safe. Keep in mind that some plants that are not themselves poisonous to dogs may have been treated with substances that are not safe for your dog to eat – for example, if you see a sign posted in someone's yard saying that the lawn has just been treated (herbicides, fungicides, fertilizer, etc.), don't let your dog on that lawn for at least 24 hours, and follow whatever other instructions are provided on the sign about keeping out of the treated area.

2.6.2 Heat ^{19, 20}

In general, when you and your dog are together, you can use your own comfort level as a guide to what your dog needs, in terms of cooling off. Keep in mind though that she has on a fur coat that she can't take off – if you are just comfortable in shorts and a T-shirt, your dog may need some help to stay cool! Here are some things you can do:

- Make sure she always has plenty of fresh cool water available to drink.
- Exercise her early in the morning, or in the evening, when it's cooler, and avoid having her exercise hard when it's really hot. Remember that she is barefooted, so her paws can actually get burned if she spends too much time on hot asphalt or sand.
- She might enjoy sitting or lying in a child's wading pool that you've put some fresh water in. Just make sure you put it in a nice shady spot!

2.6.2.1 Overheating^{19 - 21}

Dogs can't sweat through the skin all over their bodies like humans do. Instead, they get rid of excess heat mainly by panting, with just a little by sweating just through the skin of their noses and their paw pads. If the environment is too hot, or your dog is producing too much heat by exercising harder than is good for him, these mechanisms may not be enough. His temperature will start to rise, and you'll see symptoms like these, as he keeps trying to get rid of the extra heat:

- Panting hard
- Breathing hard
- Drooling
- Spreading his feet apart as though he's feeling unsteady

Eventually (and this can happen in minutes), if his temperature gets too high, his body will stop functioning the way it's supposed to, and you'll see more dramatic symptoms like these:

- Gums turn pale, gray, or blue
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Confusion
- Breathing becomes labored, slow, or stops
- Looking like he can't manage to move to a cooler spot, or he doesn't care enough to bother
- Seizures

This is heat shock, which can permanently harm or kill your dog very quickly, so don't wait for it to develop before you step in to help your dog cool down! Here are some things that you can do right away when you start to see any of the symptoms above:

- Get him to slow down and move him to a cooler location – off of asphalt and onto grass, into the shade, into an air conditioned room
- Call his local veterinarian for advice
- Hose him down with cool water, or put him in a wading pool or bathtub with cool water (make sure that his nose and mouth are out of the water, so he can breathe!)
- Wipe his paw pads, groin area, and armpits with rubbing alcohol, which cools as it evaporates
- Offer him ice cubes to lick
- Take his temperature every so often so that you will know when his temperature is back under control (when it comes down to 103 °F) and you can stop trying to cool him further

If your dog seems to continue getting worse, **take him to his veterinarian or a veterinary emergency room immediately.** In any case, notify his VA trainer or another member of the study team about what has happened, as soon as

possible.

2.6.3 The Beach ^{19, 23}

Before you go to your favorite beach, check whether dogs are allowed there, keeping in mind that the rules may be different for Service Dogs than for other dogs (pets and Emotional Support Dogs) – we'll talk more about this in the lesson on "Dogs in this Research Study".

Just like you should do for yourself, bring plenty of fresh water (and a bowl) for your dog (drinking seawater is not good for either of you!), and make sure there's some shade somewhere to rest in.

Remember that hot sand can burn your dog's paws, as well as contribute to overheating (see section on Overheating, above), and keep an eye out for broken glass or sharp shells.

Beware of stuff in the water. Check with a lifeguard to find out whether there are any cautions about sea lice or jellyfish, or riptides, for the day. Don't let your dog go into the water if it looks too rough. Then, when he comes out, make sure you give him a good rinse with fresh water, to get rid of the salt in his fur and on his skin.

2.6.4 Swimming ^{19, 20}

Many dogs love the water and are enthusiastic swimmers, but be sensitive to how your dog responds. As with everything else, individual dogs have their own preferences!

If your dog does want to swim, it's your responsibility to make sure she stays safe. Keep an eye on her, and use your judgment to get her out of the water if she seems to be tiring, or if conditions start to look unsafe. Remember too that it is possible for a dog to overheat while swimming, if the water is much warmer than 75°F, because swimming is such hard work that the dog produces a lot of heat while swimming, and that heat tends to stay in the dog because fur is such a good insulator.

2.7 Staying Safe in the Winter ²⁴⁻²⁶

Winter brings colder temperatures, dryer air, the possibility of ice and snow outdoors, and holiday foods and decorations indoors. To keep your dog healthy and safe, pay attention to what these aspects of winter mean for her.

2.7.1 In General

When you take your dog outside in the winter, be extra careful around any ice. She

might not realize how slippery it is and could get hurt if she loses her footing. If the ice is covering a body of water, like a pond, it can be tricky to tell whether the ice is thick enough to be safe to walk on. It can be very dangerous if you or your dog break through the ice and wind up in the water.

While you're outside with your dog in the winter, his fur coat is a great asset, so take good care of it! Besides the usual grooming that you do, make sure that when you bring him inside after a walk, you rinse off his feet, legs, and belly right away to get rid of any salt, antifreeze, or other chemicals that he might have picked up outside. The salt can irritate his skin, and antifreeze is poisonous if he licks at it. Then dry him off with a towel or blow-dryer, making sure to remove any ice or snow that is stuck to his fur or the hair between his toes. Wet fur does not work well at all for keeping him warm and can even make him colder (think what it's like to be out in the cold in wet clothes!). If you put a sweater on your dog when you take him out, remember that it will be just like wet fur, if it gets wet. Make sure to take any wet sweater or vest off of him right away and dry him off when you come inside. If your dog has long hair around his feet, you may want to trim it carefully, so less ice gets trapped there.

Ice can be sharp and skin can crack when it's cold out, so check for cuts or cracks in the pads of your dog's paws after she's been outside. If you see bleeding or cuts, check with your dog's local VA trainer or veterinarian how best to treat them. Try putting a thin layer of petroleum jelly (Vaseline) on her pads before she goes outside – it works as a barrier against water and salt, and can help to prevent problems in the first place.

Just like humans, dogs tend to get sick more easily when it's cold out. As discussed in the lesson on Dog Care Basics, your dog depends on you to recognize when he has symptoms that mean he should get looked by his veterinarian. If she looks like she's caught a cold, don't try to treat her with medicines you take yourself when you have a cold – many things that are safe for humans are dangerous for dogs, and may not work anyway. If you're not sure what to do, call her veterinarian and ask for advice.

Dogs burn more calories in order to stay warm when they are exposed to a cold environment. That means your dog may need more food than usual if she's out in the cold a lot. On the other hand, there's no need for her to put on any extra weight, which can be unhealthy. Only adjust the amount of food you give her if you need to, so that she maintains a healthy weight. If you have questions about how much food to give her, check with her veterinarian.

2.7.2. Cold

Just like when it's hot out, you can generally use your own comfort level as a guide to what your dog needs, to stay warm enough in cold weather, when you and he are together. If it's too cold for you in your winter coat, he probably won't be comfortable either. Here are some things you can do to help keep him comfortable.

First, make sure he always has plenty of fresh, unfrozen water to drink. Having the heat on in your house can make the air dry, so it's easy for him to get dehydrated. Eating ice or snow and melting it into water takes a lot of energy and can make it harder for your dog to stay warm.

Second, give your dog some options for places to sleep that are dry and free of drafts, and watch to make sure she finds a spot she's comfortable in. Keep in mind that uncarpeted flooring, especially tile, can be quite cold, so it's important to provide some kind of blanket or pad that she can lie on.

Space heaters and fireplaces can be cozy and pleasant, but your dog may not realize how easy it is to get burned by them. To keep him and your household safe, make sure that he can't get at a space heater and touch the hot coils or knock it down. And when you have a fire going in a fireplace, keep an eye on your dog and make sure there's a screen securely in place in front of the fireplace.

2.7.2.1 Hypothermia (Getting Dangerously Cold)

In spite of her fur coat, if it's cold enough, your dog can still get dangerously cold. Don't make her stay in a cold environment any longer than you are comfortable staying yourself, and watch for signs like the following that tell you that she is getting too cold, even if you are still comfortable:

- Shivering
- Whining or looking unhappy or anxious
- Looking like it's hard for her to move or she doesn't care to move
- Becoming weak or droopy

Remember that a normal body temperature for a dog is a little warmer than for a human, so if she feels to you like she is the same temperature as you are, her body temperature is already low enough that she needs you to do something about it. If her body temperature drops far enough, she can lose consciousness and die. Don't wait for that to happen before you step in to help her warm up. Here are some things that you can do right away when you start to see any of the symptoms above:

- Move her into a warmer spot – out of the wind, into the sun, into a warm room
- Call her local VA trainer or veterinarian for advice
- Wrap her in a warm blanket or coat
- Fill water bottles with warm water, wrap them with towels, and put them next to her belly or armpits, inside of the blanket
- Take her temperature every so often so that you will know when her temperature is back under control (when it's back up above 100°F)

If your dog seems to continue getting worse, **take her to her veterinarian or a veterinary emergency room immediately**. In any case, notify your local VA trainer or another member of the study team about what has happened, as soon

as possible.

2.7.2.2. Frostbite

Frostbite is when some tissue actually freezes. This can happen even if your dog's core body temperature is still okay, because the blood flow to some areas can be reduced to conserve heat. Areas that are at the greatest risk of frostbite are areas that are the furthest away from his core or the least protected with fur. On a dog, these include the ears, tail, paw pads, and scrotum. It might not be obvious right away, but if your dog does get frostbite, you will see things like the following in the frostbitten areas within a day or two:

- Skin that is pale, gray, or blue to start with, and stays cold
- The skin may shrivel or turn red and puffy later on
- He may behave as though it hurts when you touch the areas

Frostbite damages the tissue like a burn can, so call your dog's veterinarian right away if you suspect he's gotten frostbite. If you notice it while the tissue is still actually frozen (not just very cold, but feels hard like ice, or "crunchy"), use warm water to gently warm the area back up and prevent more tissue from freezing, but don't rub or massage the area. Follow the veterinarian's instructions, and notify your dog's local VA trainer or another member of the study team about what has happened, as soon as possible.

2.7.3. Holiday Hazards

The holidays are a big part of winter for many people, but the foods, decorations, excitement, and commotion that come with them require you to pay special attention, to make sure that your dog stays safe. Plan ahead a bit and organize to keep him away from the things that are dangerous to him, so that you can both enjoy the special time of year.

Plants like holly, mistletoe, and poinsettias are toxic to dogs, and the needles from a Christmas tree (regardless of whether it is a real or artificial one) are sharp and dangerous for your dog to swallow. Make sure that you keep an eye on her and don't let her eat any of them, and that they are not where she can nibble on them when you're not looking.

Many kinds of food for humans, and especially chocolate and alcohol, are always dangerous for your dog, but tend to be much more available during the holidays. Take extra care not to let your dog get into them! Even foods that are safe for him may become dangerous if they are hung on the tree and he knocks the tree over trying to get to them.

There tend to be lots of other things around the house at holiday times too, that are dangerous for your dog to play with or chew on. Here are some examples:

- Glass ornaments (broken ones are sharp and can cut her if she tries

to eat them or walk on them)

- Other ornaments that may be coated with toxic paints or preservatives,
- Tinsel is not digestible and can get stuck in her gut.
- Lights can be hot, or give her a shock.
- Power cords can give her a nasty shock if she chews on them.
- Lit candles can start a fire if they get knocked over.
- Toys and treats for your dog from friends who do not realize that they are not suitable.

You might find it best to have an area of the house where your dog does not go without you, and where you can have all of these things without worrying.

This is the end of Lesson 2. Now take the practice quiz after the Reference pages below and check your knowledge.

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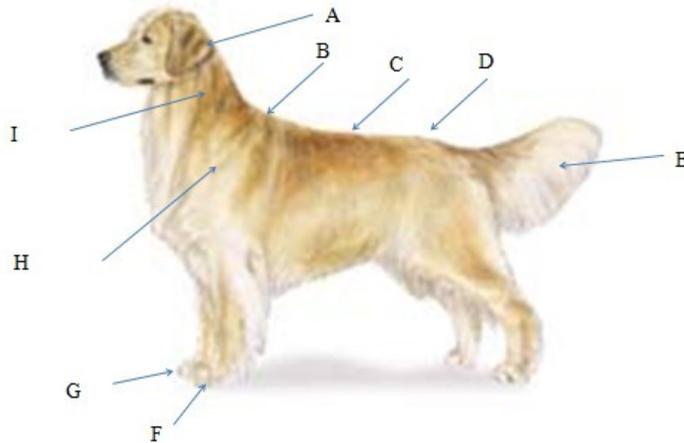
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Lesson 2. Dog Health and Safety – Practice Quiz Questions

Question 1: Look at the picture below and choose the letter that goes with the one arrow that points to the dog's "withers".



Question 2: Look at the picture for Question 1, above, and choose the letter that goes with the one arrow that points to the dog's "pad".

Question 3: Which of the following characteristics is typical of any dog that is a healthy weight and condition?

- A: He weighs less than 30 lb.
- B: You can easily see his waist, but not his ribs.
- C: You don't feel any bones when you pet him
- D: It's easy to see his backbone.
- E: She always has enough food to have some leftovers in her bowl.

Question 4: Choose the one statement below that is TRUE about obesity in dogs.

- A: Very few of the dogs you are likely to see in the U.S. are overweight or obese.
- B: If you eat a healthy diet, sharing it with your dog will keep him from becoming overweight.
- C: Being overweight can make your dog more likely to get sick and to die younger.
- D: It's important for your dog to put on a good bit of extra weight to keep warm when the weather is cold.

Question 5: Which of the following is something that you should definitely call your

dog's veterinarian about immediately, or take your dog to an emergency clinic for, right away? (More than one of these may need immediate attention. Make sure to choose all of the ones that do.)

- A:** Her gums are normally pink, but have turned pale, white, or even bluish.
- B:** She has diarrhea
- C:** She starts limping
- D:** She doesn't seem as excited about going for a walk as usual
- E:** She urinates in the house

Question 6: What should you do so that you can tell when your dog needs to be seen by his veterinarian? (Choose the one best answer.)

- A:** Pay attention to how he looks and behaves, and to what your friends and family members notice
- B:** Take him to see the veterinarian routinely once a month
- C:** Nothing, dogs can take care of themselves when they don't feel good.
- D:** Rely on your friends and family to alert you; you will be too close to your dog to be able to see any important changes
- E:** Respect your dog's judgment and don't intrude unless he collapses

Question 7: How often should you plan to take your dog to her veterinarian during the study? (Choose the one best answer.)

- A:** Regularly, once a month
- B:** At least once every 6 months, plus any time she is sick or injured.
- C:** No more than once a year, as that's all the insurance will pay for
- D:** Only when she gets sick
- E:** Only when you can't stand the fleas any more

Question 8: What do you need to do to keep your dog from picking up diseases or parasites from other animals he meets? (Choose the one best answer.)

- A:** Make sure all of his vaccinations and parasite treatments are always up-to-date.
- B:** Promptly crush any ticks you find on him, without trying to pull them off.
- C:** Don't allow your dog to interact with any other dogs.
- D:** Keep your dog away from areas like dog parks, where other dogs may have deposited their stools.
- E:** If your dog seems fearful when he meets other dogs, make him stay until he becomes confident enough to chase them away.

Question 9: Choose all of the items in the list below that you should keep your dog from eating, because they can be unhealthy for dogs, even in small amounts. (There may be more than one in the list, so make sure you choose all of the unhealthy items.)

- A:** Kibble
- B:** Chocolate
- C:** The grass in your neighbor's yard, right after the lawn service treats it
- D:** Broccoli
- E:** Poinsettias

Question 10: Dogs know better than to eat things that don't taste good, so I only have to worry about tasty things like rat poison or slug bait. (True or False?)

Question 11: Which of the following is the most dangerous way for your dog to ride when you are driving somewhere with her? (Choose the one best answer.)

- A:** Sitting in the backseat with a seatbelt harness on.
- B:** Inside of a crate bolted to the bed of your pick-up
- C:** Inside of a screened-in area in the cargo area of your van.
- D:** On the floor inside the cab of your truck, with her head on your knee
- E:** Inside of a crate in the passenger area of your car.

Question 12: My dog loves to hang his head out of the window when I'm driving, and it helps to keep him cool in hot weather, so this is a good way for him to ride in the car when we need to go somewhere. (True or False?)

Question 13: Choose each of the following that is a potential hazard to your dog that you should watch out for on a hot sunny day. (There may be more than one hazard listed, so make sure you choose all of the hazards.)

- A:** Having too much cool, fresh water available to drink
- B:** Exposure to so much sun that she could get overheated
- C:** A short "haircut" that reduces the chances of overheating
- D:** Hot sand or asphalt that can burn her pads
- E:** Building up so much heat inside that her body temperature rises to a dangerous level.

Question 14: How can I make sure that my dog will be safe if I can't take him with me when I arrive where I'm going, and I have to leave the car for a half hour?

- A:** Leave him at home.
- B:** Make sure the temperature outside is less than 80°F.
- C:** Leave the engine running and the heat on, if the temperature outside is less than 40°F.
- D:** If it's summer, make sure that the windows are all cracked open an inch or two
- E:** It won't be a problem if the weather is comfortable for me when I get out of the car.

Question 15: When the weather turns cold, which of the following is important to remember, to keep your dog healthy and safe? (Choose the one best answer.)

- A:** Don't tempt him with extra water, if there is plenty of fresh, clean snow for him to eat.
- B:** Dogs can't get frostbite because they have fur.
- C:** He should get enough food to increase his body weight by at least 20% to stay warm when the weather is cold.
- D:** His fur will help to keep him warm, but it is still possible for the cold to cause problems for him.
- E:** His temperature is fine if he feels about the same temperature as you are.

Question 16: If your dog is behaving not quite as usual, and you're not sure whether it's anything important, what is the first thing you should do ?

- A:** Nothing. Don't bother anyone if there isn't an obvious problem.
- B:** Call your dog's local VA trainer or veterinarian for guidance.
- C:** Look on the internet for anything that might explain what's going on.
- D:** Take his temperature.
- E:** Give him some of the medicine that you take to help you sleep.

VA Dog Care Course

Lesson 3. Dog Behavior and Training

This lesson goes over understanding your dog's body language, using that understanding to prevent bites, and working with your dog to maintain and build on his training.

Learning Objectives

This lesson will help you to:

- Interpret your dog's body language to know what she may be feeling so that you can respond appropriately. Some of the things that her behavior is likely to tell you at one time or another are:
 - "Let's play!"
 - "I'm feeling confident" or "I'm being submissive"
 - "I'm on the alert!"
 - "I'm scared"
 - "I'm getting to the end of my rope and may be about to do something about it that you won't like"
- Recognize situations where your dog may bite, and know what to do about it.
- Maintain and build on the skills your dog has been trained for, which will help you to develop a strong relationship with him.
- React appropriately if your dog is not behaving the way he should.

3.1. Body Language ^{1, 2}

Like humans, dogs express a variety of emotions through their behavior and body language. Unlike humans, dogs cannot express their feelings in human words. In order for you to understand your dog and build a relationship with her then, it's important for you to learn her language. This section will go over some of the most common clues that your dog is feeling playful, confident or submissive, alert, fearful, or aggressive.

3.1.1. “Let’s play!”

Dogs generally enjoy playing with other dogs or with humans, and play is a great way for your dog to get the exercise he needs. But, like with humans, that doesn’t mean you should assume that all your dog ever wants to do is play. So how can you tell when your dog is in the mood to play, or when he’s actually playing with another dog and not fighting? Again, like for humans, it’s generally a good sign if he’s responding enthusiastically, and not showing any of the warning signs of growing aggressiveness (see section 3.1.5, below), when you play with him. A special dog indicator is the “play bow”, which the dogs in the picture below are doing:



Fig 3.1.1.a. Two dogs play bowing to each other.³

Dogs play bow when they start to play, as an invitation to play and to make it clear that they mean to play. They also play bow sometimes in the middle of playing, as if to reassure their companion that they are still playing.

3.1.2. Confidence and Submission



Just like for a human, standing tall and looking calmly and directly at others suggests that a dog is feeling confident. Holding his tail high or wagging it slowly also go along with feeling safe and sure of himself. Confidence is not necessarily the same as dominance, which has to do with having power over someone else, while confidence has more to do with lack of fear. The dog to the left is showing confidence (lack of fear) with the upright tail.

Figure 3.1.2.a. A confident puppy. ¹

Now look at the dogs in the pictures on the next page. The standing dog is expressing confidence. The dog that is lying on her back (in Fig. 3.1.2a) is expressing submission. Just as humans tend to duck our heads to acknowledge that someone else is higher ranking, a dog will lower her head and body, or let the other dog literally “stand over” her, and will avoid looking him straight in the eye. A

submissive dog will also lower her tail, or tuck it between her legs, and may lick at the higher ranking dog's lips. Sometimes a dog will do this to reassure others that she has friendly intentions.



Figure 3.1.2.b. A confident dog standing, and a submissive dog lying on her back ⁴.

3.1.3. Alertness

If a dog looks like her full attention is focused on something, and her body seems stiff and still, something has probably got her on the alert. She may or may not be afraid or angry, but she definitely wants to be ready to react quickly to whatever comes next. You should be cautious about approaching her, as she might be getting ready to snap or bite, and she might snap or bite by mistake if she doesn't notice you coming.

3.1.4. Fear



Figure 3.1.4.a The dog in these pictures is afraid. ²

Like a person, a dog that makes quick, nervous movements, and tries to look small

and move away is probably afraid. In a dog, looking small includes crouching down and tucking his tail in tightly, which tends to make his back hunch (3.1.4.a, picture on left). Dogs will also lick their lips (3.1.4.a. center picture) and give a huge yawn (3.1.4.a. right picture) when they are nervous or afraid. It's important to recognize when a dog is feeling fearful, because a fearful dog may feel that he has no choice but to become aggressive if the thing he is afraid of does not go away. Dogs that bite because they are fearful are often called "fear biters."

3.1.5. Warning Signs of Building Aggressiveness

A dog may resort to aggression for any number of reasons, but there are often warning signs that can help you to defuse the situation. Some of the warning signs are subtle, so you will have to pay attention to notice them, but it's worth the effort! A few of the most common warning signs include:

- Turning away or getting up and moving away – just like a person who is getting annoyed might do
- Turning her eyes so that a crescent or half-moon of the whites show
- Staring hard into the eyes of the person or animal who is bothering her
- Her whole body becoming very stiff and still

If you see your dog do any of these things, try to identify what is bothering her and figure out how to calm down the situation. For example, if she looks like she feels threatened by someone, try to get that person to back off, and move quietly farther away. If she might just be getting tired of being petted a certain way, give her a break.

A good rule of thumb is "If the dog is all soft and wiggly, then he is not likely to bite. If a dog is stiff like a statue then he is dangerous." ⁵ Teach any children in your household that if your dog (or any other dog) gets too excited around them, the best thing for them to do is "to stand still, like a tree. Trees are boring and the dog will eventually go away" ⁶. The easy to remember steps are:

- (1) Stop – don't run
- (2) Fold in your branches – put your arms down quietly
- (3) Watch your roots grow and count in your head – look down until the dog gets bored and leaves. ⁶

3.2. Bite Prevention ^{7 - 10}

Humans and dogs have a long history of living and working together, and many people have very close and treasured relationships with their dogs. That's why it's so surprising that dog bites are actually a very real problem. It's been estimated that, with over 50 million dogs living with humans in the United States, something like 4.5 million people get bitten by dogs each year. For about 1 out of every 5 of those people, the injuries are serious enough for them to wind up going to get medical treatment. ⁷ That's a lot of people getting hurt by dogs. On the other hand, that also means that there are a lot of dogs that do not bite anyone. The CDC

considers injuries due to dog bites to be a “largely preventable” problem.⁸ The key is for you to be aware that, pushed hard enough, just about any dog will bite, so you have to do what you can to make sure that your dog (and any other dog you interact with) never gets pushed to that point.⁹ The Doggone Safe website (www.doggonesafe.com) is an excellent source of more information on how to do that.

You are responsible for your dog’s behavior, which includes how he interacts with other people and other dogs. To keep his behavior safe for everyone, you have to:

- (1) understand what he “says”
- (2) communicate with him in ways that he understands
- (3) help your dog to stay out of or get out of situations that are likely to lead to biting.

3.2.1. Understanding what your dog “says”

Understanding what your dog “says” involves paying attention to each situation and how your dog responds to it. The section above (3.1), on body language is a good starting point for this. As you observe and get to know your dog, and see how she behaves in different situations, you will also get to know what kinds of situations are comfortable for her and which ones are less so.

3.2.2. Communicating in ways your dog understands¹⁰

This includes how you communicate with your dog yourself, and also what you ask others to do when they interact with your dog. The goal is for everyone to behave in ways that will make it easy for your dog to enjoy their company and respond in ways that the people enjoy as well. In general, dogs, like humans, respond better when they are treated with some respect, so let that guide your actions, and encourage others to do the same. For a dog, like for a human, showing respect includes things like:

- Don’t pull or poke body parts (hair, ears, tail, or legs)
- Don’t hug tightly – like some humans, many dogs don’t like hugs
- Don’t get “in his face”
- Don’t yell
- Pay attention to how he responds to how you treat him, and stop doing things that he doesn’t seem to like
- Let him move away if he wants a break from your company
- Let him eat, drink, and sleep in peace, without bothering him

Other things are more specific to dogs. Because it’s harder to explain to your dog if he misunderstands something, it’s worth it to try not to do things that he’s likely to misunderstand. This means:

- Try not to startle him by making sudden large movements, or by touching him when he doesn’t see you coming.

- Don't stare straight into his eyes – dogs do this as a warning when they are getting angry, so they are likely to assume you mean the same thing
- Introduce yourself by letting the dog sniff the back of your hand – smells are more important to dogs than they are to humans

3.2.3. Helping to avoid risky situations

If you see your dog becoming uncomfortable about a situation, help her to get out of it. If she's uncomfortable about another dog, alert the other dog's owner and work together to separate the dogs. If she's uncomfortable about a person, use your judgment to decide whether to just alert the person, to suggest or teach a better approach, or to move your dog away from the person.

If you have children in your household, or meet other children who want to interact with your dog, keep in mind that about half of all the people in the US who get bitten by dogs each year are children, and the children who are bitten tend to have more serious injuries than the adults who are bitten do ⁸. They may not be as aware as you are of what might put them at risk of getting bitten, and they are easier targets. Your dog will be new to your household, so the children and your dog will not know each other as they would if your dog had come as a puppy. Make sure that you supervise carefully and have control of your dog when he interacts with the children, so that you can intervene if necessary to prevent bites. Teach the children in your household how to interact in ways that are enjoyable for your dog as well as for them. Help to keep other children safe by paying careful attention to how your dog is behaving and do not let them pet or play with him without your permission. Only give permission if he seems okay about it, and (if you are assigned a Service Dog) he is not working.

If, in spite of your best efforts, your dog bites someone while you are enrolled in the study, make sure that you get medical attention for the person who was bitten, and then notify a member of the study team immediately.

3.3. Maintaining training ¹¹

The dog that you receive from the VA will already be trained, but just as you have to keep on training if you want to stay in shape physically, your dog will need to keep on training for her behavior to stay "in shape". Regardless of whether you have a Service Dog or an Emotional Support Dog, she will be obedience trained. That training is crucial for making sure not only that she stays safe, but also that she interacts well with the other dogs and people in your life. Training can be fun for both you and your dog, and working on it together will help to build your relationship with each other, as well as customize her training especially for working with you. For the training to be effective, you should plan to work on it a little every day.

There are many different approaches and methods and theories about training dogs, and the amount of advice about training that you can get, online, in books, and in videos, and from people who say they know, can be overwhelming. Your best bet

will be to learn from your dog's vendor and VA trainer what your dog is used to, and start from there. Here are some basic principles that most trainers agree on:

Reward your dog when he does what you want him to do, and don't reward him when he doesn't. This may seem obvious, but it can also take some effort on your part to figure out what your dog considers a reward, and to manage it according to his behavior. Besides food treats and praise, getting your attention or getting you to do something he wants can also be rewards, even if you don't think of them as rewards. Do NOT hit, beat, or kick your dog as punishment for bad behavior – this is likely to damage your relationship with your dog and get in the way of his being able to support you as either an Emotional Support Dog or a Service Dog. It can also result in other behavior problems, and puts your dog at risk of injury, so it is not acceptable for participants in the study.

Be consistent, and reward good behavior immediately. This may also seem obvious, but again it may require some effort on your part to notice the good behavior consistently and respond immediately. If your dog has done several different things, some good and some bad, before you reward her, she will assume that the reward is for the last thing she did. There's no easy way for you to explain to her that you actually mean something else. But she will learn quickly if something she does gets a reward right away, every time!

Keep actual training sessions short, no more than about 15 minutes long. Although you will be paying attention to your dog's behavior, and rewarding good behavior, all the time, don't let training sessions that are focused on learning a new skill or practicing a specific familiar one, drag on. Long training sessions will just wear you both out, which is no fun, and teaches your dog that training is something to avoid!

Stop while you're ahead. When you have a training session, make sure that you end the session with something that your dog does well, so you can give him a reward as the last thing you do in the session. That rewards him both for doing what you asked him to do, and for working with you in the training session.

Be consistent about the commands that you use for specific behaviors. Find out from your dog's vendor or VA trainer what commands she knows, and continue to use those for the behaviors she has already been trained to do. When you start work on a new skill, choose sounds that are easy for you to remember and say clearly and consistently, in the same tone of voice. Your dog will learn the sounds, even though she may have no idea that other sounds might mean the same thing.

Remember that your dog decides what counts as a reward. What matters is that he gets something he wants when he does something you want. It doesn't matter what you think is a nice reward, if he's not interested!

3.4 What to do if your dog misbehaves

By the time you receive your dog, he or she will have spent many hours learning how to behave as a Service Dog or Emotional Support Dog. It will be up to you to

maintain that training. If you run into any problems with your dog's behavior, it can be stressful for you, and dangerous for you, your dog, and your household, so make sure you let someone on the study team know right away. That way, the trainer can help you work out how to correct the problem.

Here's a list of behaviors that you should be concerned about. If your dog does any of these, notify someone on the study team, and talk to your dog's VA trainer about it right away. They will help you figure out whether you have just observed an isolated incident that has a good explanation, or whether something needs to be done about it promptly. Don't wait until the behavior becomes a nasty habit!

- Growling at people or other dogs
- Excessive barking
- Mouthing, nipping, or biting, you or anyone else
- Pulling ahead on the leash while walking with you
- Jumping up on you or other people
- Lunging at people or other animals
- Destructive behavior – this includes things like chewing on furniture or shoes
- Defecating or urinating indoors
- Ignoring your commands
- Acting fearful

This is the end of Lesson 3. Now take the practice quiz after the Reference pages below and check your knowledge.

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Lesson 3. Dog Behavior and Training – Practice Quiz Questions

Question 1: You should be especially cautious when you approach a dog that is doing which of the following? (Choose the one best answer.)

- A: Lying on his back and showing his belly
- B: Standing tall and looking around
- C: Rolling in the grass, all soft and wiggly
- D: Standing very stiff and still, entirely focused on something
- E: Play bowing

Question 2: Each of the options below describes a way your dog might behave. Choose all of the ones that you should definitely talk with her VA trainer about, if you have trouble getting her to change the behavior yourself. More than one of the options may be behavior that you should talk with the trainer about, so make sure you choose all of the ones that raise concerns.

- A: Does not respond reliably and appropriately to your commands
- B: Play bows repeatedly when you are playing “fetch” with him
- C: Snaps at someone who tackles him while he is asleep.
- D: Consistently shows a crescent of the whites of his eyes when he sees other dogs
- E: Sniffs other people and does not look them in the eye when meeting them for the first time

Question 3: What is the **very first** thing you should do if your dog pulls her tail way down between her legs and up against her belly? (Choose the one best answer.)

- A: Look around to see whether she has a good reason to feel fearful.
- B: Try to pull her tail back out.
- C: Ignore this behavior -- it doesn't mean anything special.
- D: Call you dog's VA trainer immediately
- E: Scold her and spank her rump so she knows that such behavior is not acceptable.

Question 4: What is the best way to approach a dog that is dozing (sleeping)? (Choose the one best answer.)

- A: Enter the room very quietly and stroke his back to let him know you're there
- B: Make sure he sees you before you touch him
- C: Yell “Wake up, sleepyhead!” and wrestle him awake
- D: Poke him with your toe and then jump back, so you are out of reach when he wakes up.
- E: Tiptoe up to him and tickle his belly until he wakes up.

Question 5: Which of the follow behaviors may mean different things in different situations? Make sure to choose all of the behaviors with more than one interpretation – there may be more than one.

- A:** Play bowing
- B:** Standing stiff and still
- C:** Yawning
- D:** Sniffing the ground
- E:** Lying on her back and exposing her belly

Question 6: The best way to greet a dog who doesn't know you is...

- A:** Let her sniff the back of your hand
- B:** Bring your face close to hers and look straight into her eyes
- C:** Stand still and ignore her
- D:** Roll her onto her back to establish your dominance
- E:** Don't approach until she play bows.

Question 7: If another dog growls at you as you and your dog approach, what should you do?

- A:** Ignore the growling dog and continue with what you were doing.
- B:** Stare the growling dog in the eye until he backs off.
- C:** Stand your ground, wave your arms, and yell to intimidate the growling dog
- D:** Back away calmly without staring into the growling dog's eyes
- E:** Turn and run away as quickly as possible

Question 8: Dogs can be rough when they are playing, so it can be hard tell whether they are really playing or fighting. If a dog does one of the following behaviors, which one indicates most clearly that he is playing?

- A:** His barking is high-pitched
- B:** He play bows
- C:** He's growling
- D:** He's standing still and stiff
- E:** He tucks his tail up tightly against his belly

Question 9: Dogs play with people, but not with other dogs, so you should always intervene if your dog looks like she's fighting with another dog. (True or False?)

Question 10: What does it mean to treat your dog with respect? (Choose the one best answer.)

A: Never use commands of just one word – always put your commands into complete sentences.

B: Don't poke her or pull on her tail.

C: Pull her back to show you like her, if she moves away from you while you are watching TV.

D: Get down on all fours and bring your face close to hers so she can see you clearly when you are talking to her.

E: Reward her regularly, no matter what she does.

Question 11: The key to managing interactions between your dog and any children she might encounter is to remember that ... (Choose the one best answer.)

A: Dogs are exceptionally tolerant of children, so there is rarely cause for concern when a child interacts with a dog.

B: Children know instinctively how to communicate with dogs, so there is no need to teach children how to behave around dogs.

C: Dogs are more likely to become aggressive without warning, and tend to become harder to control, when approached by children than when interacting with adults.

D: Children are especially vulnerable to being bitten by a dog, and tend to be injured more seriously when they are bitten.

Question 12: If my dog bites someone, I should call 911 and contact the study team. (True or False?)

Question 13: Training is something best left to professionals. If your dog is properly trained before you get her (and you can assume that she will be), there is no point in trying to do any further training yourself, unless you have taken formal courses in dog training. (True or False?)

Question 14: What is the most important thing to keep in mind about training your dog? (Choose the one best answer.)

- A:** Consistently reward behaviors you like and make sure that the behaviors you don't like are not rewarded.
- B:** Consistently use the same reward whenever you train your dog.
- C:** Training sessions must be long enough, at least half an hour each.
- D:** Only behavior during formal training sessions should be rewarded
- E:** If your dog has trouble doing what you command him to do, stop the training session right away without giving him any further commands.

Question 15: What is the best strategy for choosing the commands you will use? (Choose the one best answer.)

- A:** Think up new words for the commands that your dog already knows, so that she learns to behave you and not her previous trainer.
- B:** Use different tones of voice at different times, so that your dog will learn to focus on the words and not get distracted by your tone.
- C:** Use the commands that your dog's vendor or VA trainer tells you for the behaviors she already knows, and choose short clear commands for any new behaviors you want to teach her.
- D:** Use only words that your dog has already learned, and just use them in different combinations you want to teach your dog new commands and new behaviors.

Question 16: If your dog leaves your house without your knowledge, and bites someone before you find him, who is considered mainly responsible? (Choose the one best answer.)

- A:** Your dog
- B:** You
- C:** The VA
- D:** Your dog's VA trainer
- E:** The person who was bitten

VA Dog Care Course

Lesson 4. Dogs in this Research Study

This lesson goes over how dogs are involved in this research study. It describes Service Dogs and Emotional Support Dogs, and some of the main features of what to expect with each.

Learning Objectives

This lesson is designed to let you know what to expect, depending on whether you are assigned a Service Dog or an Emotional Support Dog. Specifically, it covers:

- What your dog's role will be
- What your legal rights will be
- What your legal obligations will be

4.1. The Role of the Dogs in this Study

Humans and dogs have a long history of living and working closely together, and dogs help humans in many ways. The help that a dog provides to a human partner is very closely tied to the relationship that the dog and the human build together. The dog learns to do things for the human because she wants to please the human. And she wants to please the human because the human takes care of her. This study is designed to find out whether partnering with a dog can help a Veteran who has Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) to overcome its effects. In particular, PTSD can cause Veterans to limit their activities, and this reduces their quality of life. This research is to study whether working with a Service Dog or an Emotional Support Dog can help you to break through those limitations so that your quality of life improves. Many people have suggested that working with a Service Dog may be very effective, so this study is designed to test objectively whether this is true. This study is also designed to find out whether working with an Emotional Support Dog is equally effective, as a dog can be trained more quickly to serve as an Emotional Support Dog, so more Veterans might be helped more quickly if this is true.

4.2. Types of Dogs in This Study

Each of the dogs in this study will be trained before being paired with an individual Veteran. All of the dogs will come with basic obedience training, and training in appropriate behavior in public, with other people, and with other dogs. What else your dog will be trained to do will depend on whether you are assigned a Service Dog or an Emotional Support Dog. Both of these two categories refer to dogs that provide some kind of benefit to a person with a disability, where the benefit is specifically related to the disability^{1,2}. Service Dogs are individually trained to perform specific tasks that can help with the disability², while Emotional Support

Dogs can provide love and companionship without being trained to perform specific tasks ². The differences between these two categories of dogs will be described in more detail below. The dogs will be assigned randomly (like by flipping a coin) so that half of the Veterans participating in the study will be assigned Service Dogs, and half will be assigned Emotional Support Dogs. In either case, the research is to see whether the things that your dog does will make it possible for you to do things that PTSD otherwise gets in the way of you doing. It will be up to you to build a partnership with your dog that encourages him to do what he can to help you. This will involve taking care of him, keeping him safe and healthy, learning to communicate with him, and keeping up his training. These have been covered in previous lessons of this course.

4.2.1. If You are Assigned an Emotional Support Dog

If you are assigned an Emotional Support Dog, your dog's role will be to provide affection and companionship that supports you as you work to overcome the effects of PTSD on your activities. An Emotional Support Dog is not trained to perform any specific tasks for you ^{1,2}, but provides emotional support because of its own nature as a dog. The Emotional Support Dogs obtained by VA for the study will be well behaved, trained dogs that come trained in obedience commands. They will also be screened to make sure they do well around people and other dogs. The research is to study whether that emotional support helps you to do things that the PTSD would keep you from doing otherwise. This is different from what a pet does, even though a pet might be wonderful to have around, and can generally make life nicer for many people.

Although an Emotional Support Dog is not trained to do specific tasks that give it full public access rights to places like grocery stores and movie theatres, the emotional bond between you and a well-trained, healthy dog could provide a number of benefits to you.

4.2.2. If You are Assigned a Service Dog

If you are assigned a Service Dog, your dog's role will be to perform specific tasks for you that are directly related to your PTSD ³. The research is to study whether having a dog that performs these tasks helps you to manage the effects of the PTSD. The Service Dogs in this study will be trained to do the set of basic tasks described below.

- Trained to go and get something that you point to and then bring it back to you. The Service Dog may be trained to know the names of some items, so that you could tell her to go get the "phone" or the "keys", even if those items are in another room, where you can't point to them.
- Trained to maintain some physical space in front of you, so that other people don't come too close.

- Trained to maintain some physical space behind you, so that you don't get surprised by someone coming up too close behind you.
- Trained to enter your home, or a room in it, ahead of you and look for anyone who might be inside. The dogs are trained to do this as a game—they get a reward when they find someone. They will not be trained to be aggressive upon finding someone in the home.
- Trained to turn on the lights in a room before you enter it.

For some of the tasks, you will have to refine the training to make it specific for you. For example, you will have to train your Service Dog to recognize your phone or your keys specifically, and where they usually are. She will also have to learn the layout of your home and where the light switches are.

A Service Dog is expected to focus his attention completely on you and what you need him to do, while he is on duty. Just as humans can't stay on duty all of the time, it is important for a Service Dog to have off-duty time as well, when he can just relax and be a dog. That means that you will need a way to let him know when he is off-duty and can relax or play. You and the dog will develop ways to do this as you get to know each other. It may be that you will only expect him to work when he is wearing a Service Dog vest. Or the vendor may have trained your dog with a specific command to let him know that he's off duty. If you receive a Service Dog, the vendor will explain all of this to you.

4.3. Your Legal Rights

The law recognizes that Service Dogs and Emotional Support Dogs are different from simple pets that people choose to keep. The key is that they do more than just make life nicer for the people they live with. Their role is to help people with established disabilities, to do specific activities of normal life that their disabilities would otherwise interfere with. Because of this, there are laws that make allowances for you to take your Service Dog or Emotional Support Dog with you into places where pets are not allowed.

The law also treats Service Dogs differently from Emotional Support Dogs, so you have to be clear about which kind of dog you are assigned. In general, a Service Dog is allowed almost anywhere you are allowed to go, in order to provide the help you might need when you are in those places. An Emotional Support Dog is not generally allowed in places where pets are not allowed, except that they are allowed to live in housing and ride in the cabin of a passenger airline, even if pets are not allowed.

4.3.1. Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)^{5, 6}

The ADA is one of several laws that were written to prevent discrimination against people because of their disabilities. The ADA specifically focuses on access to public places (this includes all sorts of places like restaurants, grocery stores, other businesses, doctor's offices, etc.). It says that if a person with a disability needs to

be accompanied by a Service Dog to be able to use a public or commercial space, the Service Dog has to be allowed to go there. In practical terms, this means that if you are assigned a Service Dog, the Service Dog is allowed to go pretty much anywhere you are allowed to go, even into places where pets and other animals are otherwise not allowed. It also means that a Service Dog is expected to be on duty when it goes to such places, so you cannot leave the Service Dog alone, or allow it to play or otherwise disregard your needs, while it is in such places.

The ADA treats Emotional Support Dogs as a separate category from Service Dogs, because Emotional Support Dogs are not trained to perform specific tasks. This means that the ADA does not require Emotional Support Dogs to be allowed to go into places like restaurants, grocery stores, other businesses, doctor's offices, etc., unless these places allow other people to bring their pets in as well.

The rules for access to VA Medical Centers are under development but are expected go along with the ADA ⁷. This means that when you come to the VA for your clinic visits (at 3 months, 9 months, and 18 months after you get your dog) you will be able to bring your dog with you if you have a Service Dog, but you will not be able to bring your dog into the hospital with you if you have an Emotional Support Dog ⁸.

4.3.2. The Fair Housing Act (FHA) ⁹⁻¹¹

The FHA is another one of the laws that was written to prevent discrimination against people because of their disabilities. The FHA specifically focuses on the availability of housing, and applies to both Service Dogs and Emotional Support Dogs (but not to pets). It says that if a person has a disability and will not be able to live in a place because of the disability unless the person's Service Dog or Emotional Support Dog lives there as well, the animal has to be allowed to live there, even if pet dogs are not allowed ^{1, 2, 10}. If there is a fee for having a pet dog live there, the fee has to be waived for a Service Dog or Emotional Support Dog ^{1, 2, 10, 11}. The FHA does not say anything about taking your dog to visit someone who lives in housing where no pets are allowed – that is covered by the ADA.

The FHA applies to most of the different kinds of housing that you might want to buy or rent, including apartments, condominiums, and single family houses. If you live in a place that has rules against dogs, you may have to provide documentation that your dog is a Service Dog or Emotional Support Dog ^{1, 2, 11}. The study team will work with you to help you get the documentation that you need.

4.3.3. The Air Carrier Access Act (ACAA) ¹²⁻¹⁴

The ACAA is another law that was written to prevent discrimination against people because of their disabilities. The ACAA specifically focuses on air travel. It says that if a person has a Service Dog or Emotional Support Dog, the air carrier generally has to allow the dog to accompany the person in the cabin of the aircraft, even if the dog would not be allowed in the cabin if it were a pet. The air carrier is allowed to require that you provide a letter from a mental health professional,

making it clear that your dog qualifies under the ACAA. The air carrier is also allowed to require that you provide the letter at least 48 hours ahead of time^{13, 14}. If you need to travel by air, the study team will work with you to help you get the documentation that you need.

4.3.4. Summary of Legal Rights

This table summarizes the protections that are provided in Federal law for the dogs in this study. The information in the table is intentionally simplified to make it easier to see how the different roles are treated differently in the law. For more details, see the sections above, or the references for this lesson. The last column shows how pets are different from both Service Dogs and Emotional Support Dogs.

	Service Dog	Emotional Support Dog	Pet
Person must have a disability	Yes	Yes	No
Dog must help the person manage with the disability	Yes	Yes	No
Dog must be trained to perform tasks	Yes	No	No
Must be accommodated in public buildings and businesses (ADA)	Yes	No	No
Must be accommodated in housing (FHA)	Yes	Yes	No
Must be accommodated for airline travel (ACAA)	Yes	Yes	No

4.4. Your Legal Obligations

Under the law, you have two basic obligations to meet, so that the law can work fairly:

- (1) You are responsible for making sure that your dog behaves appropriately
- (2) You are responsible for providing the information that is needed so that others can make the appropriate accommodations

To be fair to everyone, the law grants special allowances for Service Dogs and Emotional Support Dogs, but also requires you to manage your dog so that other people will be safe and free to use the public spaces, housing, and aircraft cabins where you go with your dog. It is expected that your dog will behave himself, and you are responsible for making sure that he does.

The ADA says that you have to be in control of your Service Dog. If the dog is out of control, or you can't get her under control, you can be required to remove her from the premises. This includes if your dog urinates or defecates in a store or other

public building. If that happens, you lose the right to keep her with you there^{2, 15}. If any of these things happen, be sure to get in touch with your dog's VA trainer for help in correcting this behavior.

Although the FHA says that your Service Dog or Emotional Support Dog has to be allowed to live with you, you are responsible for taking proper care of the dwelling and for making sure that your dog behaves himself^{10, 11}. The other people who live nearby have the right for their health and safety not to be endangered by your dog. That means, for example, that a person with a Service Dog or Emotional Support Dog is responsible for making sure that the dog does not run around biting the neighbors! Likewise, you are responsible for making sure that your dog is up-to-date on all his vaccinations, and is treated promptly if he catches anything. You are also responsible for paying reasonable charges for any damage that he does^{1, 2, 11}. And, of course, you are also responsible for taking care of your dog. If you neglect his care, your participation in the study may be terminated, and your dog reassigned. If the health of your dog is endangered, animal neglect laws apply just like for any other dog.

The ACAA requires air carriers to let your Service Dog or Emotional Support Dog fly with you, but they are also allowed to assume that your dog is not a real Service Dog or Emotional Support Dog if she misbehaves or is disruptive¹⁴. "Disruptive" behavior includes doing things like running around instead of resting quietly at your feet, barking or growling at other people for no good reason, jumping on or trying to bite people, and urinating or defecating in the airport or aircraft cabin. It's up to you to supervise your dog and make sure that she behaves as a proper Service Dog or Emotional Support Dog should.

Keep in mind that it can be hard for other people to tell that your dog is a Service Dog or Emotional Support Dog, and qualifies for the legal accommodations. The sad fact is that there are people who try to pretend that their pets are Service Dogs or Emotional Support Dogs so that they can take their pets where pets are not allowed. Try not to get upset or bothered if someone questions you about your dog before making accommodations. Don't take it as an attack on your right to have your dog with you -- remember that this helps to prevent abuse of the law by dishonest people, and gives you a chance to help people who mean well to understand what real Service Dogs and Emotional Support Dogs do. Take it as your responsibility to provide the information they need, so that they can recognize that your dog is a Service Dog or Emotional Support Dog and qualifies for the legal accommodations.

For your Service Dog to be allowed access under the ADA, you should be prepared to answer the following two questions²:

- (1) Do you need your dog with you because he helps you with a disability? (You do not have to explain what the disability is.)
- (2) What tasks is your dog trained to perform? (You do not have to have your dog demonstrate.)

For your Service Dog or Emotional Support Dog to live with you under the FHA, it's your responsibility to provide a note from your doctor certifying that:

(1) You have a disability, and

(2) You need your dog to be able to live in the housing with you, for you to be able to live there with your disability (you do not have to provide details about the disability) ¹¹

It can be hard for airline personnel to know that your dog qualifies to fly in the cabin with you under the ACAA. To make sure that your dog really qualifies and is accommodated as a Service Dog or Emotional Support Dog, be prepared to provide a letter from your mental health professional to the airline at least 2 days before your flight, certifying that:

(1) You have a mental-health related disability (you don't have to give any details about the disability or diagnosis), and

(2) You need your dog with you to help you manage the disability ¹⁴

If you have questions about the information you should provide, make sure you contact someone on the study team. They can help you to make sure your letters explain your situation clearly, without going into unnecessary detail.

4.5. Fake Service Dogs and Fake Emotional Support Dogs

Several recent trends in America might cause you problems with your Service Dog or Emotional Support Dog. There are an increasing number of people who want their pets to go everywhere with them, and they buy "Service Dog" vests on the internet and pretend that their pet is a well-trained Service Dog, or claim that their pet is an Emotional Support Dog so their pet can stay with them in housing that does not allow pets.

These imposters cause a number of problems:

- Because many fake Service Dogs are not well trained, business owners can end up having a negative view of Service Dogs because it is difficult sometimes for them to distinguish between real and fake Service Dogs. Many businesses don't know that the owner of a misbehaving dog should be asked to remove the animal. If you are assigned a Service Dog, realize that you might have to deal with some frustration on the part of business owners used to seeing some poorly trained fake Service Dogs. You may also begin to notice how many dogs have vests purchased from the internet that make them look like Service Dogs when their behavior shows that they are not.
- The same problem exists with people claiming that their pets are Emotional Support Dogs. If someone can convince their physician to write a letter documenting that they have a disability and establishing their need for an Emotional Support Dog, their poorly trained pet can be passed off as an Emotional Support Dog. By doing so, they can force an apartment or landlord to allow them to keep their dog despite rules against pets. However, attacks by these fake Emotional Support Dogs on other dogs in the community are

well documented, and such behavior can allow a landlord to require that dogs be removed from the property.

- Another problem comes up when a person with an Emotional Support Dog claims that it is a Service Dog, in order to take it along into a store or location of some other public accommodation where pets are not allowed. This causes confusion on the part of the business owner, who may then understandably be skeptical later when asked to accommodate a real Service Dog. Doing this if you are assigned an Emotional Support Dog for the VA study invalidates the data that can be collected from your participation, so you can be asked to leave the study. It is also illegal.

In short, fake Service Dogs and Emotional Support Dogs, including Emotional Support Dogs that are passed off as Service Dogs, confuse business owners, landlords, and the general public and make it more difficult for people who have well-trained and well-behaved Service Dogs and Emotional Support Dogs, and really depend on them. It is against the law to pass off a pet as a Service Dog or Emotional Support Dog, or to pass off an Emotional Support Dog as a Service Dog, and either of these can invalidate the VA study, which will further delay a decision by VA about whether to provide Service Dogs or Emotional Support Dogs to Veterans with PTSD.

Keep in mind that your work with your Service Dog or Emotional Support Dog is critical for the VA's efforts to provide effective care to Veterans with PTSD. You are also an ambassador for people who depend on dogs like these, so be patient with those who are not familiar with how they work: It is important to help them to understand how valuable a properly trained Service Dog or Emotional Support Dog is and how different it is from a fake one with poor training and poor manners.

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Lesson 4. Dogs in the Research Study – Practice Quiz Questions

Question 1: What will your role be, in your relationship with the dog that you are assigned for this study? (Choose the one best answer.)

A: Your role will be just to receive the help that your dog gives you; He will come to you fully trained, so you should not have to do any further training unless problems come up.

B: Your role will be to keep your dog in line; It will be important to keep the relationship “all business”, so your dog accepts it when you discipline him.

C: Your role will be to take care of your dog and build the best relationship you can; This is what will motivate him to do what he can to help you.

D: Your role will be to make sure that someone feeds your dog regularly and takes him to his veterinarian on schedule; As long as his needs are met, he will do for you what he knows he is supposed to do.

E: Your role will be to make sure your dog gets anything he wants, whenever he wants it; If you don't do this, he may refuse to do what he's supposed to do for you.

Question 2: The purpose of this research study is to see whether partnering with a Service Dog or Emotional Support Dog partner can help Veterans with PTSD overcome the limitations that the PTSD places on their daily lives. (True or False?)

Question 3: The ADA makes special allowances for Service Dogs. What does a dog have to do, for her to qualify for accommodations as a Service Dog under the ADA? (Choose the one best answer.)

A: She has to be trained to perform a task that helps you to overcome a disability.

B: She has to be so important to you that you are unhappy if you are separated.

C: She has to do a task that makes your life better.

D: She has to have a special certificate and vest.

E: She has to be on duty all the time.

Question 4: By law, where are Service Dogs generally allowed to go, where Emotional Support Dogs are generally not allowed? (Choose the one best answer.)

A: Into the cabin of a commercial airplane.

B: To live in an apartment where pets are not allowed.

C: Into any restaurant

D: Into a hospital operating room during surgery

Question 5: The FHA and the ACAA make special allowance for Emotional Support Dogs. What does a dog have to do, for him to qualify for accommodations as an Emotional Support Dog under these two laws? (Choose the one best answer.)

A: He has to be trained to perform a specific task that helps you to overcome a disability.

B: He has to make you feel better when he is around.

C: His affection and companionship have to make it possible for you to manage some activity of normal living that your disability otherwise gets in the way of.

D: He has to have a special certificate and vest.

E: He has to provide you with emotional support that you do not get from anyone else.

Question 6: The law requires that, when your Service Dog or Emotional Support Dog is allowed to accompany you, no restrictions can be placed on her behavior. (True or False?)

Question 7: Because many pets that are passed off as Service Dogs or Emotional Support Dogs are poorly trained and even aggressive to people and other dogs, you should be prepared to protect both yourself and your VA study dog by recognizing and avoiding dogs that are behaving inappropriately, even if they are wearing service dog vests. (True or False?)

Question 8: If you are assigned an Emotional Support Dog, and your relationship with your dog is so strong that you can't deal with the thought of not being able to take it with you into a grocery store, it's okay to say that he's a Service Dog, because of the enormous service that your dog does for you. (True or False?)

DOG^e Training Course Questions

Answer Key with Explanations

Dog Care Basics: Feeding, Exercise, and Basic Healthcare

Question 1: Which of the following should you NEVER feed your dog? (Choose the one best answer.)

- A: Chocolate
- B: Peeled bananas
- C: Kibble
- D: Broccoli
- E: Soft dog food

Correct Answer: A

Kibble (dry dog food) is nutritionally better than soft food and is highly recommended for feeding your dog, so you will get a coupon for kibble for each month in which you and your dog participate in the study. Letting him eat some soft dog food is also okay. Dogs DO like vegetables and fruits like broccoli and bananas (peeled), and small amounts of these are fine as low-calorie treats for dogs. Chocolate is poisonous to dogs – NEVER GIVE YOUR DOG CHOCOLATE.

Question 2: Most adult dogs only need to eat once or twice a day. (True or false?)

Correct Answer: True

Question 3: Which of the following is a sign that your dog is probably is getting a good amount of exercise? (Choose the one best answer.)

- A: Often wants to play rough, and likes to play bite
- B: Being “hyper”, and unwilling to settle down at night
- C: Barks and whines frequently for no apparent reason
- D: Being active and alert during the day and becoming contentedly sleepy as bedtime approaches
- E: Often destroys things by chewing, digging, or scratching

Correct Answer: D

If your dog is active and alert during the day and becomes contentedly sleepy as bedtime approaches, he is probably getting the right amount of exercise for him. All of the other behaviors suggest that your dog may need more exercise than he is getting.

Question 4: Leashed walks alone probably won't provide enough exercise for the dog you are assigned for this study. (True or False?)

Correct Answer: True. The dogs in this study are healthy young adults, and will need some off-leash exercise in addition to going on leashed walks.

Question 5: How often should you brush your dog? (Choose the one best answer.)

- A:** There is no need for you to brush your dog; dogs take care of their own grooming in the wild.
- B:** Only if she is very dirty or smells bad
- C:** No more than once a month
- D:** Only in the summer to check for ticks and fleas
- E:** At least often enough to keep her coat looking nice.

Correct Answer: E

You should brush your dog often enough to keep her coat free of dirt, debris, loose hair, and tangles, and so it looks healthy.

Question 6: Bathing too often can make a dog's coat and skin too dry. (True or False?)

Correct Answer: True. You only need to bathe your dog if he is dirty or smelly. Bathing too often removes his natural oils and makes his coat and skin dry.

Question 7: Which of the following is true about keeping your dog's mouth healthy? (Choose the one best answer.)

- A:** There is no need for you to pay special attention to your dog's mouth, as long as she gets an annual check-up by a veterinarian.
- B:** Chewing on dog biscuits, kibble, and chew toys helps to keep your dog's teeth clean, but may not be enough to prevent tartar and plaque from building up.
- C:** The build-up of plaque and tartar on the teeth is a problem for humans, but not for dogs.
- D:** Your own dentist is the best expert to ask if you have concerns about your dog's teeth.
- E:** If your dog starts pawing at her face, it means that she is not getting enough hard foods to eat.

Correct answer: B

Chewing on hard foods and chew toys helps to keep your dog's teeth clean, but plaque and tartar can still build up. These can cause problems for your dog, so it's important to pay attention to the condition of her mouth. If your dog's teeth or gums are bothering her, she might paw at her face. Check with your veterinarian if you see her doing that or if you notice any other problems.

Question 8: Why should you put so much effort into taking care of your dog?
(Choose the one best answer.)

- A:** Your dog depends on you – your role in your partnership is to take care of him.
- B:** You can be asked to stop participating in the study, and will have to give up the dog, if you don't take good care of him.
- C:** Your dog and you will have a stronger relationship with each other if you take good care of him.
- D:** Your dog will be healthier and happier if you take good care of him
- E:** All of the above

Correct Answer: E

Taking good care of your dog is good for your dog, good for your relationship with him, and good for your participation in the study, and it's the right thing to do.

Question 9: There are lots of sources of information on taking care of dogs. Which source should you rely on the most, if they disagree? (Choose the one best answer.)

- A:** What you know from when you had a dog as a kid.
- B:** The internet.
- C:** Your buddies who have dogs themselves.
- D:** Your dog's VA trainer and veterinarian.
- E:** Other participants in the study.

Correct Answer: D

It can be hard to know what to do when everyone tells you something different. Whenever you have questions about taking good care of your dog, your best bet will be to rely on what your dog's local VA trainer and veterinarian say, at least while you are participating in the research study.

Question 10: Long nails on a dog look funny, but are natural and don't need any special attention. (True or False?)

Correct Answer: False. If your dog's nails get too long, they will need to be clipped to keep them from breaking or getting in the way when she walks or runs.

Question 11: To take good care of your dog's ears, you should ... (Choose the one best answer.)

- A:** Avoid touching your dog's ears as long as your veterinarian has checked them as part of your dog's annual checkup.
- B:** Rely on your dog to keep his ears clean himself.
- C:** Once every couple of weeks, gently pull your dog's ears open so you can see how they look inside
- D:** Clean as deep into the ear canal as you can reach with a Q-tip.

Correct Answer: C

You should look at the insides of your dog's ears every couple of weeks or so, to check for any sign of problems. NEVER push anything into the ear canal.

Question 12: What kind of behavior suggests that your dog might have an ear infection? (Choose the one best answer.)

- A:** Bounding out as far as her leash will let her go, and play bowing repeatedly when you are trying to settle down for a quiet evening
- B:** Tilting or shaking her head, circling to one side, or pawing at her ears, for no apparent reason
- C:** Chewing your good shoes to bits
- D:** Limping
- E:** Turning down the kibble she always eats, even though she seems hungry

Correct Answer: B

Tilting or shaking her head, circling to one side, or pawing at her ears, all for no reason that you can see, all suggest that your dog might have an ear infection. Hyperactivity and destructive chewing suggest that she may not be getting enough exercise. Limping may be the result of overgrown nails, sore paws, or any number of other foot or leg injuries. Turning down hard foods that she usually likes suggests soreness in her mouth.

Question 13: Which of the following is TRUE about your costs of taking care of the dog you are matched with for this study? (Choose the one best answer.)

- A:** All costs will be covered by the study, for the life of your dog.
- B:** The dog will be given to me, but I must be prepared to pay for all of his care beginning when we are matched.
- C:** All costs will be covered by the study as long as my dog and I are participating in the study. After our participation ends, I will be responsible for ALL of my dog's expenses.
- D:** Routine veterinary care, not counting emergencies, typically costs \$5000 - \$6000 each year.
- E:** It takes patience and lots of time to take good care of a dog, but it doesn't cost very many dollars, so it probably won't mess up anyone's budget.

Correct Answer: C

While you and your dog are participating in the study, you will receive a monthly coupon for food, and an allowance to cover other expenses of taking care of him, and veterinary care will be covered by insurance. It is important to know though that once your participation in the study is over, it will become your responsibility to pay for all of the future expenses of taking care of him, which typically run at least \$2000 per year. It's important to consider this, when you are deciding whether you will be able keep the dog after the two of you finish your part of the research.

Question 14: A reasonable estimate of the cost of owning a dog is about \$167/month. (True or False?)

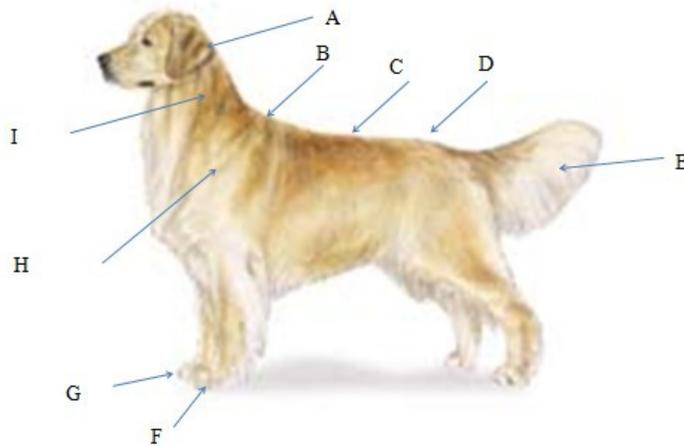
Correct Answer: True. An informal survey of dog owners showed that taking care of a dog costs, on average, around \$2000 / year for routine expenses. This comes out to about \$167/month. Veterinary emergencies or surgery average about \$800 each time, on top of the routine expenses.

Question 15: Feeding my dog properly should not cost more than \$100 a year. (True or False?)

Correct Answer: False. To keep your dog healthy, it's important to feed her a good quality kibble, which has the right balance of nutrients for a dog. The average dog like the ones in this research needs about one bag of kibble per month, will cost somewhere around \$562 per year, or a little under \$50/month.

Dog Health and Safety

Question 1: Look at the picture below and choose the letter that goes with the one arrow that points to the dog's "withers".



Correct Answer: B

- A points to the dog's ear
- B points to the dog's withers
- C points to the dog's back
- D points to the dog's rump
- E points to the dog's tail
- F points to the dog's pad
- G points to the dog's toes
- H points to the dog's shoulder
- I points to the dog's neck

Question 2:

Look at the picture for Questions 1 above and choose the letter that goes with the one arrow that points to the dog's "pad".

Correct Answer: F

Question 3: Which of the following characteristics is typical of any dog that is a healthy weight and condition?

- A: He weighs less than 30 lb.
- B: You can easily see his waist, but not his ribs.
- C: You don't feel any bones when you pet him
- D: It's easy to see his backbone.
- E: She always has enough food to have some leftovers in her bowl.

Correct Answer: B

When a dog has a healthy weight and is in good condition, you should be able to see

his abdominal tuck from the side and his waist from above, and you probably won't be able to see any bones sticking out, although you can feel his ribs when you pet him. The number of pounds he should weigh depends on what kind of dog he is. You should adjust the amount of food he gets to keep his body condition good; don't depend on him to stop eating himself and leave the rest in the bowl when he's had the right amount.

Question 4: Choose the one statement below that is TRUE about obesity in dogs.

- A:** Very few of the dogs you are likely to see in the U.S. are overweight or obese.
- B:** If you eat a healthy diet, sharing it with your dog will keep him from becoming overweight.
- C:** Being overweight can make your dog more likely to get sick and to die younger.
- D:** It's important for your dog to put on a good bit of extra weight to keep warm when the weather is cold.

Correct Answer: C

Something like half of the dogs in the U.S. are overweight or obese. Sharing the food of the humans they live with, instead of (or in addition to) eating kibble designed for dogs, is one factor that contributes to this. This puts them at risk for all sorts of physical problems, and for dying younger than they would if they were kept at a healthy weight. Some dogs may need extra food to maintain their weight when they use extra energy to stay warm in cold weather, but it doesn't do them any good to get so much extra food that they gain weight.

Question 5: Which of the following is something that you should definitely call your dog's VA trainer or veterinarian about immediately, or take your dog to an emergency clinic for, right away? (Immediate action may be needed for more than one of these. Make sure to choose all of the ones that do.)

- A:** Her gums are normally pink, but have turned pale, white, or even bluish.
- B:** She has diarrhea
- C:** She starts limping
- D:** She doesn't seem as excited about going for a walk as usual
- E:** She urinates in the house

Correct Answer: A

Get help right away if her gums go pale. Pay extra attention if she does any of the other things listed, but there's no need to do anything more if they clear up quickly on their own. If they get worse or continue for more than a day or two, or if more symptoms appear, get in touch with her VA trainer or veterinarian.

Question 6: What should you do so that you can tell when your dog needs to be seen by his veterinarian? (Choose the one best answer.)

- A:** Pay attention to how he looks and behaves, and to what your friends and family members notice
- B:** Take him to see the veterinarian routinely once a month
- C:** Nothing, dogs can take care of themselves when they don't feel good.
- D:** Rely on your friends and family to alert you; you will be too close to your dog to be able to see any important changes
- E:** Respect your dog's judgment and don't intrude unless he collapses

Correct Answer: A

Your dog depends on you to notice and evaluate the situation if his appearance or behavior seems "off" in any way, to you or other people close to you. He may not know when there's something going on that his veterinarian can do something about to make him feel better. It doesn't have to be so bad that he collapses, before you get the veterinarian involved. If you're not sure, call your dog's VA trainer or veterinarian and get some guidance over the phone.

Question 7: How often should you plan to take your dog to her veterinarian? (Choose the one best answer.)

- A:** Regularly, once a month
- B:** At least once every 6 months, plus any time she is sick or injured.
- C:** No more than once a year, as that's all the insurance will pay for
- D:** Only when she gets sick
- E:** Only when you can't stand the fleas any more

Correct answer: B

Besides taking your dog to the veterinarian if she is sick or injured, you are required to take your dog to her veterinarian at least once every 6 months while you are participating in the study. She will get a check-up once a year (which includes vaccinations and being checked for parasites), and an additional check for parasites at the visits between annual physicals. You should also check with her VA trainer or veterinarian any time she is sick or injured, or you aren't sure what to do. Do not be concerned about the costs of taking her to the veterinarian -- All veterinary care (for sick visits as well as for routine care) will be paid for by the veterinary insurance provided for your dog by the VA for as long as you are participating in the study.

Question 8: What do you need to do to keep your dog from picking up diseases or parasites from other animals he meets? (Choose the one best answer.)

- A:** Make sure all of his vaccinations and parasite treatments are always up-to-date.
- B:** Promptly crush any ticks you find on him, without trying to pull them off.
- C:** Don't allow your dog to interact with any other dogs.
- D:** Keep your dog away from areas like dog parks, where other dogs may have deposited their stools.
- E:** If your dog seems fearful when he meets other dogs, make him stay until he calms down.

Correct Answer: A

Above all, make sure all of his vaccinations and parasite treatments are always up-to-date. Encourage him to interact with other dogs, as long as they look healthy and friendly, but don't force him to stay in a situation where he is uncomfortable, as that increases the chances of bites and injuries. If you find a tick, remove it promptly with a pair of tweezers, taking care that you do not break it or crush it.

Question 9: Choose all of the items in the list below that you should keep your dog from eating, because they can be unhealthy for dogs, even in small amounts. (There may be more than one in the list, so make sure you choose all of the unhealthy items.)

- A:** Kibble
- B:** Chocolate
- C:** The grass in your neighbor's yard, right after the lawn service treats it
- D:** Broccoli
- E:** Poinsettias

Correct Answers: B, C, and E

Kibble is recommended for feeding dogs, and broccoli is fine in small amounts as a treat. Your dog may want to eat chocolate and poinsettia leaves, but these are both dangerous to dogs, so don't let him get any of them. Grass itself won't hurt your dog, but the chemicals sprayed onto it by the lawn service might, so it's best to wait at least a day after a treatment before you let your dog go on a treated lawn.

Question 10: Dogs know better than to eat things that don't taste good, so I only have to worry about things like rat poison or slug bait. (True or False?)

Correct Answer: False. Don't count on your dog being able to tell the difference between healthy foods and dangerous chemicals. Many dogs think that antifreeze smells and tastes good, even though it is poisonous. Pesticide baits are designed to make animals want to eat them. Laundry detergent pods can look like brightly colored chew toys. Dogs are also curious, and they often explore by tasting or mouthing the unfamiliar things they encounter. If you suspect your dog has eaten something unsafe, call your veterinarian or poison control right away.

Question 11: Which of the following is the most dangerous way for your dog to ride when you are driving somewhere with her? (Choose the one best answer.)

- A:** Sitting in the backseat with a seatbelt harness on.
- B:** Inside of a crate bolted to the bed of your pick-up
- C:** Inside of a screened-in area in the cargo area of your van.
- D:** On the floor inside the cab of your truck, with her head on your knee
- E:** Inside of a crate in the passenger area of your car.

Correct Answer: D

The most dangerous way for your dog to ride when you are driving somewhere with her is for her to ride loose and unrestrained. Just like for a person without a seatbelt, it puts her at risk of being thrown against something or someone, which can seriously injure or kill her, as well as whomever she hits.

Question 12: My dog loves to hang his head out of the window when I'm driving, and it helps to keep him cool in hot weather, so this is a good way for him to ride in the car when we need to go somewhere. (True or False?)

Correct Answer: False. The dangers of riding with his head out of the window far outweigh the benefits, so you should not let him do it. Besides all of the risks of being unrestrained in order to get to the window to stick his head out of it, the wind he gets exposed to can dehydrate him as well as bring dust and debris that can injure his eyes and make him prone to ear infections.

Question 13: Choose each of the following that is a potential hazard to your dog that you should watch out for on a hot sunny day. (There may be more than one hazard listed, so make sure you choose all of the hazards.)

- A:** Having too much cool, fresh water available to drink
- B:** Exposure to so much sun that she could get sunburned
- C:** A short "haircut" that reduces the chances of overheating
- D:** Hot sand or asphalt that can burn her pads
- E:** Building up so much heat inside that her body temperature rises to a dangerous level.

Correct Answers: B, D, E

Her pads can get burned if she stands on hot sand or asphalt for too long, so pay attention to how hot those surfaces are and limit the amount of time she spends on them when they are hot. Overheating is a very real danger and can become life-threatening, so keep an eye on your dog and get her out of the heat if she seems to be having a hard time with it. Getting a short summer "haircut" for your dog can also help to prevent overheating. Having plenty of cool, fresh water available is very important for getting rid of excess heat, so always make sure that she has more in her bowl than she wants to drink – she'll stop when she's had enough.

Question 14: How can I make sure that my dog will be safe if I can't take him with me when I arrive where I'm going, and I have to leave the car for a half hour?

A: Leave him at home.

B: Make sure the temperature outside is less than 80°F.

C: Leave the engine running and the heat on, if the temperature outside is less than 40°F.

D: If it's summer, make sure that the windows are all cracked open an inch or two

E: It won't be a problem if the weather is comfortable for me when I get out of the car.

Correct Answer: A

A dog can overheat and die in a matter of minutes in a closed-up vehicle in the summer, even if the temperature outside feels comfortable and the windows of the vehicle are cracked open. Carbon monoxide poisoning is a danger if you leave the engine running to keep your dog warm in the winter. Your best bet is to leave your dog safely at home any time you won't be able to take him with you when you leave the car at your destination.

Question 15: When the weather turns cold, which of the following is important to remember, to keep your dog healthy and safe? (Choose the one best answer.)

A: Don't tempt him with extra water, if there is plenty of fresh, clean snow for him to eat.

B: Dogs can't get frostbite because they have fur.

C: He should get enough food to increase his body weight by at least 20% to stay warm when the weather is cold.

D: His fur will help to keep him warm, but it is still possible for the cold to cause problems for him.

E: His temperature is fine if he feels about the same temperature as you are.

Correct Answer: D

Keep in mind that, although your dog's fur coat will help to keep him warm, it is still possible for him to get too cold to be healthy, or even to get frostbite. Eating snow to melt into water takes a huge amount of energy, and will make it much harder for him to stay warm, so do still provide liquid water for him even when it's snowy outside. He may need more food to maintain his weight in cold weather, but it doesn't do him any good to gain extra weight. If you find that he feels like he's about the same temperature as you are, he is losing more heat than he can generate, so get him into a warmer environment as soon as possible.

Question 16: If your dog is behaving not quite as usual, and you're not sure whether it's anything important, what is the first thing you should do ?

- A:** Nothing. Don't bother anyone if there's not something obvious.
- B:** Call your dog's local VA trainer or veterinarian for guidance.
- C:** Look on the internet for anything that might explain what's going on.
- D:** Take his temperature.
- E:** Give him some of the medicine that you take to help you sleep.

Correct Answer: B

Anytime you have a question about taking care of your dog, even if you're not sure whether it matters, do not hesitate to call your dog's VA trainer or veterinarian for advice. They can help you to learn what to look for, and how to evaluate what you observe, specifically for your dog. There is a lot of useful information available on the internet, but it can also sometimes be confusing – ask your dog's trainer or veterinarian too, if you have questions about anything you read. There may be times when it will be useful to take your dog's temperature, but let the trainer or veterinarian tell you when that's necessary. Don't ever give your dog any medicine other than what his veterinarian tells you to give him – medicines for humans can be dangerous for dogs, and may not work.

Dog Behavior and Training -- Questions

Question 1: You should be especially cautious when you approach a dog that is doing which of the following? (Choose the one best answer.)

- A:** Lying on his back and showing his belly
- B:** Standing tall and looking around
- C:** Rolling in the grass, all soft and wiggly
- D:** Standing very stiff and still, entirely focused on something
- E:** Play bowing

Correct Answer: D

Standing very stiff and still, and focused on something, suggests that the dog is on the alert about something, is prepared to snap or bite quickly, if necessary, and may be impatient with distractions. The other behaviors are of less concern: A dog may lie on his back and show his belly as a way to show submission, or to provide reassurance that he is not a threat. Rolling in the grass, all soft and wiggly, is characteristic of a dog that is relaxed and ready to interact. Play bowing is an invitation to play.

Question 2: Each of the options below describes a way your dog might behave. Choose all of the ones that you should definitely talk with her VA trainer about, if you have trouble getting her to change the behavior yourself. More than one of the options may be behavior that you should talk with the trainer about, so make sure you choose all of the ones that raise concerns.

- A:** Does not respond reliably and appropriately to your commands
- B:** Play bows repeatedly when you are playing “fetch” with him
- C:** Snaps at someone who tackles him while he is asleep.
- D:** Consistently shows a crescent of the whites of his eyes when he sees other dogs
- E:** Sniffs other people and does not look them in the eye when meeting them for the first time

Correct Answers: A and D

You should talk with your dog’s VA trainer right away if he does not respond reliably and appropriately to your commands. You should also consult the trainer if your dog shows a crescent of the whites of his eyes whenever he sees another dog -- this is a warning sign that he feels aggressive toward the other dogs, which should not happen with every dog he meets. The other behaviors described are normal: Dogs may play bow while playing, as well as before beginning, as a way of saying “let’s keep on playing!” If you tackle your dog while he is asleep, he may very naturally be startled awake and snap at whatever he thinks just attacked him. Dogs recognize people by smells and only look into someone’s eyes as a warning of being angry, so they typically sniff and do not look people in the eye when first meeting them.

Question 3: What is the **very first** thing you should do if your dog pulls her tail way down between her legs and up against her belly? (Choose the one best answer.)

- A:** Look around to see whether she has a good reason to feel fearful.
- B:** Try to pull her tail back out.
- C:** Ignore this behavior -- it doesn't mean anything special.
- D:** Call you dog's I VA trainer immediately
- E:** Scold her and spank her rump so she knows that such behavior is not acceptable.

Correct Answer: A

Pulling her tail way up against her belly suggests that she is fearful of something. You should look to see what might be causing her to feel that way. If she has a good reason to feel fearful, try to relieve her fear by, for example, moving away from a large threatening dog you see coming. If she does this a lot, for no apparent reason, it would be good to consult her local VA trainer. Trying to pull her tail back out won't help, and may even make things worse by making her feel mistreated. Scolding and physical punishment is never recommended, as it is likely to damage your relationship with your dog.

Question 4: What is the best way to approach a dog that is dozing? (Choose the one best answer.)

- A:** Enter the room very quietly and stroke his back to let him know you're there
- B:** Make sure he sees you before you touch him
- C:** Yell "Wake up, sleepyhead!" and wrestle him awake
- D:** Poke him with your toe and then jump back, so you are out of reach when he wakes up.
- E:** Tiptoe up to him and tickle his belly until he wakes up.

Correct Answer: B

You should always try to avoid startling your dog, so don't yell at him and wrestle him awake, or sneak up on him and poke him, tickle him, or touch him any other way when he doesn't realize you're there. If he's dozing, you should make some noise as you enter the room and make sure that he realizes you are there before you touch him.

Question 5: Which of the follow behaviors may mean different things in different situations? Make sure to choose all of the behaviors with more than one interpretation – there may be more than one.

- A:** Play bowing
- B:** Standing stiff and still
- C:** Yawning
- D:** Sniffing the ground
- E:** Lying on her back and exposing her belly

Correct Answers: B, C, D, E

Many behaviors have different interpretations, depending on the situation, so it's important to pay attention to what's going on around your dog, to be able to figure out what she's actually feeling. A dog may stand stiff and still if she is eagerly waiting for you to throw her ball, or if she is getting ready to attack an intruder. A dog may yawn if he is sleepy, or if he is fearful. A dog may sniff the ground just because he is in a new environment and curious to find out who else has been there, or she may do this if she senses something scary nearby. A dog may lie on her back and expose her belly to show submission, or just to provide assurance that she is not trying to dominate. Only the play bow is not likely to mean anything other than "let's play!"

Question 6: The best way to greet a dog who doesn't know you is...

- A:** Let her sniff the back of your hand
- B:** Bring your face close to hers and look straight into her eyes
- C:** Stand still and ignore her
- D:** Roll her onto her back to establish your dominance
- E:** Don't approach until she play bows.

Correct Answer: A

Dogs recognize people by smell, so letting her sniff the back of your hand is a good way to introduce yourself. Bringing your face close to hers and looking straight into her eyes is likely to seem threatening, and rolling her onto her back to establish your dominance actually is threatening. Standing still and ignoring the dog says that you don't want to interact, and waiting for a play bow doesn't let her know you want to interact.

Question 7: If another dog growls at you as you and your dog approach, what should you do?

- A:** Ignore the growling dog and continue with what you were doing.
- B:** Stare the growling dog in the eye until he backs off.
- C:** Stand your ground, wave your arms, and yell to intimidate the growling dog
- D:** Back away calmly without staring into the growling dog's eyes
- E:** Turn and run away as quickly as possible

Correct answer: D

If another dog growls at you as you and your dog approach, try to defuse the situation by backing away calmly. Trying to intimidate or stare down the growling dog, or even ignoring him, is likely to make him feel threatened and even more aggressive. Turning and running is likely to encourage him to chase you.

Question 8: Dogs can be rough when they are playing, so it can be hard tell whether they are really playing or fighting. If a dog does one of the following behaviors, which one indicates most clearly that he is playing?

- A:** His barking is high-pitched
- B:** He play bows
- C:** He's growling
- D:** He's standing still and stiff
- E:** He has his tail tucked tightly up against his belly

Correct answer: B

Almost all dogs play bow to start and continue playing, and play bowing almost never means anything else. Some dogs growl a certain way or use a high-pitched bark during play. Many bounce around or paw the air, but other dogs may mean something else when they do the same things. As you get to know your dog, you will learn to recognize the signs that your dog in particular is playing. Standing still and stiff most likely shows that he is on the alert about something, which may be waiting for you to throw his ball for "fetch", or may be because he's detected a threat in the environment. Tucking his tail up tight against his belly suggests fear – this is not common when a dog is playing.

Question 9: Dogs play with people, but not with other dogs, so you should always intervene if your dog looks like she's fighting with another dog. (True or False?)

Correct Answer: False. Dogs play both with people and with other dogs. You may have to look carefully to see whether your dog is playing or fighting for real. As you get to know your dog, it will become easier for you to tell when she is playing.

Question 10: What does it mean to treat your dog with respect? (Choose the one best answer.)

- A:** Never use commands of just one word – always put your commands into complete sentences.
- B:** Don't poke her or pull on her tail.
- C:** Pull her back to show you like her, if she moves away from you while you are watching TV.
- D:** Get down on all fours and bring your face close to hers so she can see you clearly when you are talking to her.
- E:** Reward her regularly, no matter what she does.

Correct Answer: B

Treating your dog with respect means recognizing her preferences and honoring them as much as you can. This includes not poking her or pulling on her tail, letting her move away if she wants a break from your company, and understanding that putting your face close to hers can seem threatening to her. It does not mean you have to always speak in complete sentences – dogs learn sounds, so a clear, short word is much easier for her to recognize as a command. It also does not mean you have to reward her for everything she chooses to do, even if she misbehaves.

Question 11: The key to managing interactions between your dog and any children she might encounter is to remember that ... (Choose the one best answer.)

- A:** Dogs are exceptionally tolerant of children, so there is rarely cause for concern when a child interacts with a dog.
- B:** Children know instinctively how to communicate with dogs, so there is no need to teach children how to behave around dogs.
- C:** Dogs are more likely to become aggressive without warning, and tend to become harder to control, when approached by children than when interacting with adults.
- D:** Children are especially vulnerable to being bitten by a dog, and tend to be injured more seriously when they are bitten.

Correct Answer: D

Children are especially vulnerable to being seriously injured by dog bites, but you can reduce the chances of your dog biting a child if you supervise the interactions carefully. Children may act in ways that are uncomfortable for your dog, and may not recognize the warning signs that tell you when your dog is becoming annoyed. Teach children to interact with your dog in ways that both she and they can enjoy, and give your dog a break from the children when you see that she is getting tired of them.

Question 12: If my dog bites someone, I should call 911 and contact the study team. (True or False?)

Correct Answer: True. Dog bites are very serious. If your dog bites anyone, the first thing you should do is call 911 to obtain medical help for the person who was bitten. Then, you should contact the study team.

Question 13: Training is something best left to professionals. If your dog is properly trained before you get her (and you can assume that she will be), there is no point in trying to do any further training yourself, unless you have taken formal courses in dog training. (True or False?)

Correct Answer: False. Training is an ongoing process that you must expect to continue to carry on; it is not something that can be provided as a “once and done” service by someone else. Your dog will be well-trained by the time you get her, but that is just a start, to make sure that she will be familiar with the basics of behaving appropriately (“obedience training”), and with the basic requirements of her job with you. You must continue to train her, to keep her in practice, to customize her training specifically for how you and she work together, and to build your relationship with her. It will most likely also be fun for both of you. You don’t have to take formal courses in dog training to be effective – you only have to pay attention to what she does and be consistent about how you respond.

Question 14: What is the most important thing to keep in mind about training your dog? (Choose the one best answer.)

- A:** Consistently reward behaviors you like and make sure that behaviors you don’t like are not rewarded.
- B:** Consistently use the same reward whenever you train your dog.
- C:** Training sessions must be long enough, at least half an hour each.
- D:** Only behavior during formal training sessions should be rewarded
- E:** If your dog has trouble doing what you command him to do, stop the training session right away without giving him any further commands.

Correct answer: A

The most important thing to keep in mind is to consistently and immediately reward your dog whenever he behaves the way you want him to behave, and to make sure that he does not get a reward whenever he behaves in a way that you don’t want him to behave. It doesn’t matter whether you think you are conducting a formal “training session” or not, and it does not matter what the reward is, as long as your dog considers it a reward. Keeping formal “training sessions” short (no longer than 15 minutes) makes it easier to keep them enjoyable (a reward in itself). Making sure to end each training session with a command that earns your dog a reward, also rewards him for working with you during the training session.

Question 15: What is the best strategy for choosing the commands you will use? (Choose the one best answer.)

- A:** Think up new words for the commands that your dog already knows, so that she learns to behave you specifically.
- B:** Use different tones of voice at different times, so that your dog will learn to focus on the words and not get distracted by your tone.
- C:** Use the commands that your dog's vendor or VA trainer tells you for the behaviors she already knows, and choose short clear commands for any new behaviors you want to teach her.
- D:** Use only words that your dog has already learned, and just use them in different combinations you want to teach your dog new commands and new behaviors.

Correct Answer: C

Start with the commands that your dog's vendor or VA trainer has already taught her. Choose short, clear commands, always delivered in the same tone of voice, for any new behaviors you want to teach. Make sure that there is a distinct command for each behavior you want her to perform. Complicated commands and inconsistent sentences don't work well.

Question 16: If your dog leaves your house without your knowledge, and bites someone before you find him, who is considered mainly responsible? (Choose the one best answer.)

- A:** Your dog
- B:** You
- C:** The VA
- D:** Your dog's VA trainer
- E:** The person who was bitten

Correct Answer: B

You are considered mainly responsible for anything your dog does, but his VA trainer is there to help you. That means that you should get in touch with the study team and his VA trainer right away if anything like this happens, so that they can work with you to help you correct his behavior if problems arise. Do not delay – it's much better to address behavior issues as soon as they come up, than to wait until they become habits.

Dogs in the Research Study – Questions

Question 1: What will your role be, in your relationship with the dog that you are assigned for this study? (Choose the one best answer.)

A: Your role will be just to receive the help that your dog gives you; He will come to you fully trained, so you should not have to do any further training unless problems come up.

B: Your role will be to keep your dog in line; It will be important to keep the relationship “all business”, so your dog accepts it when you discipline him.

C: Your role will be to take care of your dog and build the best relationship you can; this is what will motivate him to do what he can to help you.

D: Your role will be to make sure that someone feeds your dog regularly and takes him to his veterinarian on schedule; As long as his needs are met, he will do for you what he knows he is supposed to do.

E: Your role will be to make sure your dog gets anything he wants, whenever he wants it; If you don't do this, he may refuse to do what he's supposed to do for you.

Correct Answer: C

The relationship that you build with your dog is the foundation for all he does for you. That relationship depends on you partnering with him personally, which includes training him, taking care of him, and playing with him.

Question 2: The purpose of this research study is to see whether partnering with a Service Dog or Emotional Support Dog partner can help Veterans with PTSD overcome the limitations that the PTSD places on their daily lives. (True or False?)

Correct Answer: True. Dogs have a long history of working with people. This study asks the question, “Can this kind of a special working relationship with a dog help Veterans with PTSD to overcome the effects of the PTSD on their lives?”

Question 3: The ADA makes special allowances for Service Dogs. What does a dog have to do, for her to qualify for accommodations as a Service Dog under the ADA? (Choose the one best answer.)

A: She has to be trained to perform a task that helps you to overcome a disability.

B: She has to be so important to you that you are unhappy if you are separated.

C: She has to do a task that makes your life better.

D: She has to have a special certificate and vest.

E: She has to be on duty all the time.

Correct Answer: A

For a dog to qualify for accommodations under the ADA, she must be trained to perform a task that makes it possible for you to manage some activity of normal living that your disability otherwise gets in the way of. It is not enough that she means a lot to you, or that she does something that makes life nicer for you. She is

not required to wear a vest or have an official certificate, and she is not required to be on-duty all the time.

Question 4: By law, where are Service Dogs generally allowed to go, where Emotional Support Dogs are generally not allowed? (Choose the one best answer.)

- A:** Into the cabin of a commercial airplane.
- B:** To live in an apartment where pets are not allowed.
- C:** Into any restaurant
- D:** Into a hospital operating room during surgery

Correct Answer: C

Service Dogs and Emotional Support Dogs are allowed by law to go into some places where pets may be prohibited. Both are allowed to fly with their human partners in the cabin of commercial airplanes, and to live in apartments where pets are not allowed. Neither is allowed in places where the general public is not allowed, like hospital operating rooms during surgery. Service Dogs are allowed to go into restaurants where pets are not allowed, but Emotional Support Dogs are not allowed to go into restaurants if pets are not allowed.

Question 5: The FHA and the ACAA make special allowance for Emotional Support Dogs. What does a dog have to do, for him to qualify for accommodations as an Emotional Support Dog under these two laws? (Choose the one best answer.)

- A:** He has to be trained to perform a specific task that helps you to overcome a disability.
- B:** He has to make you feel better when he is around.
- C:** His affection and companionship have to make it possible for you to manage some activity of normal living that your disability otherwise gets in the way of.
- D:** He has to have a special certificate and vest.
- E:** He has to provide you with emotional support that you do not get from anyone else.

Correct Answer: C

For a dog to qualify for accommodations under the FHA and ACAA, he must provide you with emotional support that makes it possible for you to manage some activity of normal living that your disability otherwise gets in the way of. It is not enough that you feel better when he is around, or that he gives you emotional support that you don't get from anyone else. He is not required to be trained to perform specific tasks, and he is not required to have a special certificate or wear a vest.

Question 6: The law requires that, when your Service Dog or Emotional Support Dog is allowed to accompany you, no restrictions can be placed on her behavior. (True or False?)

Correct Answer: False. The law allows your Service Dog or Emotional Support Dog to accompany you into places where pets are not allowed, on the condition that you are responsible for controlling your dog, and making sure your dog behaves in ways that do not endanger the health or safety of others.

Question 7: Because many pets that are passed off as Service Dogs or Emotional Support Dogs are poorly trained and even aggressive to people and other dogs, you should be prepared to protect both yourself and your VA study dog by recognizing and avoiding dogs that are behaving inappropriately, even if they are wearing service dog vests. (True or False?)

Correct Answer: True. Many pets get passed off as Service Dogs or Emotional Support Dogs are poorly trained and even aggressive to people and other dogs. You must be prepared to protect yourself and your VA study dog from some fake Service Dogs and fake Emotional Support Dogs. You can also do a great service to all those who depend on authentic Service Dogs and Emotional Support Dogs, by remembering that your work with your dog can be a valuable example to the general public of how these dogs contribute to improving life for everyone.

Question 8: If you are assigned an Emotional Support Dog, and your relationship with your dog is so strong that you can't deal with the thought of not being able to take it with you into a grocery store, it's okay to say that he's a Service Dog, because of the enormous service that your dog does for you. (True or False?)

Correct Answer: False. It may be tempting, but it is illegal, and can result in your having to leave the study and your dog getting assigned to a different study participant, if you try to pass your Emotional Support Dog off as a Service Dog. Don't do it!