

Why Do Dogs Do That?

Suggested Grade Levels: K-6

Subject: Language Arts

Character: Kindness/Empathy

Materials and technology to be used:

- "Dogs True or False?" quiz x1 per student
- Whiteboard/markers or chalkboard x1
- Sticky Notes x3 per student
- Pencils x1 per student
- Individual whiteboards/markers or True/False paddles (may use optional "True and False Template") – x1 per student

Objective(s):

This lesson will provide students with real answers to the curious traits, behavior, languages, characteristics, and genetics of dogs.

Anticipatory Set/Hook:

Arrange the students' desks in a large circle, or simply ensure that there is enough room that all students can be facing each other. Leave an area in the center of the students open and clear. Pose a thought for students to ponder: "Have you ever wondered why dogs do the things they do? What could they be thinking? What are they saying when they smell each other or you? Why do some have short hair and some long hair? Why do they look the way they do?" Tell students that today they are going to explore why dogs do the things that they do.

Lesson Beginning:

- 1. Tell students that each dog has a unique personality, one of a kind. I.e... One dog likes to cuddle while the other likes to play ball and explore. Another dog may be very protective of your household while yet another may wag and invite any stranger inside.
 - Ask: "What makes each dog different?" Have students discuss this very broad
 question with a partner or small group. Call on volunteers to share with the whole
 class. There will be numerous different answers, and most will probably be correct.
- 2. Provide students with a bit of background information (simplify for younger students as necessary):

Every dog was born with a partially predetermined character depending on the heredity of their

breed or breeds. Some dogs are workers, some are bred for companions, and some may be sports stars! However, each dog's experiences since birth have helped mold that personality, as well. These experiences include how the mother raised the litter and at what age each dog left the litter. The experiences a puppy has had during their critical period of development (birth to 16 weeks) have influenced how your dog may look at the world today and how he chooses to react to it.

- 3. To explore the concept above, tell students that they are going to think about three questions: "Why do dogs bark?", "Why does my dog prefer my bed to his?" and "Why do dogs like to dig?" Write these three examples in three different columns across a whiteboard.
- 4. Pass out three sticky notes to each student. Have each student respond to each question on a sticky note, no need for names. If they do not have an answer, ask them to just write down any thoughts on the question that they may have. Have students stick their notes in the corresponding columns on the board. Remove the stickies and read the thoughts out loud.

Discuss...

Why do dogs bark?

It is normal for dogs to bark. Birds sing, cows moo, dogs bark. Too much, too loud, or at the wrong time can be a problem, though. Dogs may be barking for the following reasons:

- a. Attention Seeking: "Will somebody please pay attention to me!"
- b. Separation Anxiety: "Will my special person please come back?"
- c. Lack of Activity: "I'm bored; barking is my recreation. I have nothing else to do."
- d. Excitement: "Do I need a reason?! I'm just happy and excited today!"
- e. Offensive Threat: "Go away! I'll chase you away."
- f. Defensive Alarm: "Get Out! Don't come any closer."

Why does my dog prefer my bed to his?

Look at it from the dog's point of view, your bed is probably more comfortable. Besides, it gives your dog a better vantage point (he can see more of what is going on) and it smells like you. Your dog may be the only one who really loves the way you smell!

Why do dogs dig?

You may like baseball or ballet; your dog likes to dig. For some dogs, it may just be too much fun to dig. There may be other reasons for dogs to dig: to get out of the yard, to get cool, to bury something, to dig things up such as a burrowing mouse or mole, etc. Some dogs dig because of boredom or frustration. Some breeds of dogs have even historically earned their living by digging and go at it with great tenacity.

5. Tell students that the fact is, you need to understand your dog to know why he behaves a

certain way. And it is fun to figure out why they do the things they do! Reading books, talking to reputable experts, and looking up the heredity of your dog (doing research!) will provide great insight into the behavior of your dog.

Middle of Lesson:

- 1. Have students take the "Dogs True or False?" quiz to find out even more answers to the curious things that dogs do. Tell students that the more they know about dogs, the better they will understand their behavior and wonderful place in our lives!
- 2. This quiz can be taken individually or in a group, written, or verbally. If you chose to give the quiz "whole-group" style, you may wish to utilize individual white boards or True/False cards or paddles for your students. This will encourage participation and allow you to assess your students understanding.
 - *See the attached template to use for True/False cards or paddles*
- 3. Make sure students understand that they are going to get *some* questions answered that a lot of people have about dogs, but it is impossible to cover *all* the questions that they may have. They can always research further on their own...

End of Lesson:

- 1. Provide the guiz answers and discuss.
- 2. Ask students: "Which answers surprised you?" Turn and talk with a neighbor. Call on a few volunteers to share their thoughts.

Closure:

- 1. Engage students in a "Brainwriting" activity:
 - Provide 1 minute for students to reflect in their brain on what they learned today,
 and then 3 minutes to write their thoughts down.
 - Have students write down any remaining questions that they may still have about why dogs act the way that they do. Pull one question each week for a special "Dog Trivia" question of the week.

Extension:

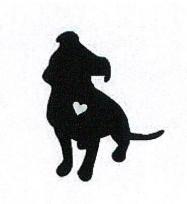
"Dog Trivia" can be played with the whole school! Post the question outside of your classroom and give all students in the school a chance to answer. Hang an envelope or place a basket under the question to gather answers. At the beginning of the next week, announce the winner of each question. This activity will help teach other students about the wonderful world of dogs!



<u>Dogs – True or False?</u> <u>Quiz</u>

- 1. All puppies are born with blue eyes. T OR F
- 2. Dogs with black tongues have Chow in them. T OR F
- 3. All Pit Bulls will attack other dogs. T OR F
- Table scraps are always bad for dogs. T OR F
- 5. Always wipe your dogs' feet after a walk in the winter. T OR F
- 6. Only puppies can learn new tricks. T OR F
- 7. Dogs are color blind. T OR F
- 8. A warm nose means a dog is sick. T OR F
- 9. A wagging tail means a dog is friendly. T OR F
- 10. When a dog scoots it means a problem. T OR F
- 11. Spaying or Neutering your dog will make them fat and lazy. T OR F
- 12. My dog is an indoor dog. He does not need heartworm prevention medication. T OR F
- 13. Fleas and ticks are only a problem during warm weather. T OR F
- 14. Dogs eat poop for fun. T OR F
- 15. Dogs eat rocks, lick concrete, or eat animal poop because of nutrient imbalances. T OR F
- 16. Dogs have poor taste buds and rely on other senses to help them "taste" their food. T OR F
- 17. Dogs lick to heal wounds. T OR F
- 18. Dogs eat grass when they are sick. T OR F
- 19. Not all dogs like to be petted on their heads. T OR F
- 20. An old dog cannot learn new tricks. T OR F

- 21. A dog shouldn't sleep with you or be allowed on furniture, or it will think it is the boss and will misbehave. **T OR F**
- 22. When your dog has a potty accident, it is important that you DO NOT rub its nose in it to let the dog know what it did. This does not work. **T OR F**
- 23. Shelter dogs have too much baggage. It's better to adopt a puppy to start with a clean slate. **T OR F**
- 24. Not all dogs should enjoy being around other dogs. Not all dogs need to go on outings with other dogs, such as to the dog park. If a dog doesn't enjoy other dogs, that is okay. **T OR F**
- 25. My dog knows it was bad after it goes potty in the house. The dog's guilty face will say it all. **T OR F**
- 26. When a dog chews up shoes or destroys furniture it is because it is punishing the owner. **TOR F**
- 27. A dog can't really be happy unless it can run off-leash. T OR F





Dogs - True or False? Quiz Answer Key

1. All puppies are born with blue eyes. TRUE

All puppies have light blue eyes when they are born due to the lack of melanin going to the irises. It could take as long as three months for you to see your dog's permanent eye color fully develop.

2. Dogs with black tongues have Chow in them. False

There are over 27 breeds of dogs that have the birth mark of black on their tongues... including but not limited to purebred Golden Retrievers, purebred Labrador Retrievers, purebred German Shepherds, and more. Actually, Chows have black/purple tongues, so the likelihood of maybe some Chow in a dog is possible when there are purple tongues, however, it could also be Shar Pei. Black on the tongue of a mix is not uncommon and you should consider the temperament of the dog rather than the color of the tongue.

3. All Pit Bulls will attack other dogs. FALSE

Like any breed, if a dog is raised with good socialization during its formulative time it will be good with other dogs. However, even dogs who have come from abusive homes oftentimes still maintain a friendliness towards other dogs.

4. Table scraps are always bad for dogs. FALSE

Some human foods are okay for dogs to eat, as a special treat. The premium diet for dogs today is "raw" and it literally includes all types of vegetables and fruits. So, you can add some leftover potatoes or green beans to your dogs' food... it is healthy for them. Ask your veterinarian, first, before ever giving human food to your dog and NEVER give a dog cooked bones of any kind.

5. Always wipe your dogs' feet after a walk in the winter. TRUE

The de-icers used on the walks and streets are harmful to your dog's feet and in some cases can be toxic. If the dog licks it's foot, be ready to head to emergency. It is always safer to wipe the feet than to ignore it. And remember to keep your dog's toenails trimmed.

Only puppies can learn new tricks. FALSE

Old dogs will respond faster and with greater dedication to training and trying to please their new owners. There is no such thing as an old dog that cannot be trained or re-trained. You can find the greatest satisfaction and bond with a senior dog.

Dogs are color blind. FALSE

While they cannot distinguish the myriad of colors our eyes can, they can distinguish some colors and have better peripheral vision than humans. They are red-green color blind only and see a brighter less detailed world than humans.

8. A warm nose means a dog is sick. FALSE

A warm nose is no indication if a dog is sick or not. However, lethargy, runny nose, lack of appetite, light or white gums, not drinking, are signs of sickness and you should get your dog to a vet asap.

9. A wagging tail means a dog is friendly. FALSE

A wagging tail is one of the many signs of body language all persons should learn. A downward tail wagging back and forth like a pendulum on a clock is a sure sign to go the other way. The dog is not sure what the situation is and what he will do but it is not in your best interest to push this.

10. When a dog scoots it means a problem. TRUE

When you see your dog "scoot", get it to a vet.

11. Spaying or Neutering your dog will make them fat and lazy. FALSE

Spaying/Neutering is one of the most important surgeries that you should have done for your dogs and cats. Not only does it help solve the pet overpopulation crisis, but it leads to a longer, happier, and healthier life for your pet. Spaying/neutering will also prevent certain forms of cancer and other health issues from developing in your pets.

12. My dog is an indoor dog. He does not need heartworm prevention medication. FALSE

Heartworms are carried by mosquitos and those pesky bugs do come inside. Even one quick bite can lead to this horrible disease. Heartworm is serious, expensive, and painful to treat and will kill a pet if untreated.

13. Fleas and ticks are only a problem during warm weather. FALSE

If weather alone were enough to keep insects from thriving, we wouldn't have fleas and ticks at all! In inclement weather, these pests find places to hide – and survive – until it's nice out again.

14. Dogs eat poop for fun. TRUE

Coprophagia or eating their own excrement is probably the most disgusting habit a dog will get. It's really hard to diagnose and can come from a variety of reasons. Going from feeding a puppy three times a day to only once or twice a day might encourage this to fill their stomachs. They may learn this great thing from other dogs just as a pure habit. Mother dogs will also clean their pups and eat their excrement to keep them clean so there is the thought that this habit is inherent, and some females never outgrow this need... yet it does not explain male dogs with this desire. There are so many thoughts on how to stop this like products on the market, feeding pineapple, etc. the one sure way to stop this behavior is to basically pick up the poop as soon as the dog is done and get rid of it. Staying on top of this and watching your dog so it does not seek it out is the only true way to stop this. It's retraining and consistency, and the dog learning the term "leave it".

15. Dogs eat rocks, lick concrete, or eat animal poop because of nutrient imbalances. FALSE

No one really knows why dogs do this. Some veterinarians believe they eat "things" out of boredom. The truth is, if you feed a dog a good well-balanced diet and provide plenty of exercise, this will reduce the chances of your dog eating un-natural things.

16. Dogs have poor taste buds and rely on other senses to help them "taste" their food. TRUE

Dogs have very poor taste buds so they "taste" through their sense of smell.

17. Dogs lick to heal wounds. True & False

While licking can in fact help with some minimal healing, it can also lead to lick sores and can even infect an existing wound. If it becomes habitual, it may be the result of a behavioral or stress induced issue. Licking is often stress related.

18. Dogs eat grass when they are sick. FALSE

As descendants from wolves, a daily part of the diet included berries and grasses. So, it is quite normal for a dog to eat some grass. Excessive amounts might need to be examined by a vet. There is Chlorophyll in grass and that is a naturally occurring healing agent... so there is some truth in grass POSSIBLY helping with an upset stomach.

19. Not all dogs like to be petted on their heads. TRUE

While some dogs are accepting of this, not all will. Depending on a dogs' past experiences they may be hand shy. The safest way to pet a dog is going under the chin. Remember their ears are small and dogs are susceptible to ear infections which will hurt if you touch their ears.

20. An old dog can't learn new tricks. FALSE

Old dogs not only learn new tricks, but they thrive when trained.

21. A dog shouldn't sleep with you or be allowed on furniture, or the dog will think it is the boss and will misbehave. FALSE

Just like humans, dogs simply want a comfortable place to lie down. If comfort can be combined with being next to their beloved human, whether it is right next to you on the couch, or even on top of your lap, then they're all for it. In rare cases, dogs will guard their sleeping and resting areas, and will show aggression when humans approach these sacred areas. This type of behavior will require remedial training. But for the average Rover, sleeping in bed or resting on the couch has no adverse behavioral effects.

22. When your dog has a potty accident, it is important that you DO NOT rub your dog's nose in it to let it know what it did. This does not work. TRUE

When you rub a dog's nose in her own mess, it often sees no association between that and having had a potty accident. Nor does rubbing its nose in the accident teach the dog not to potty on the floor again. Instead, rubbing a dogs nose in the accident teaches the dog that humans are dangerous and unpredictable, and it will likely begin to hide in safety by sneaking into another room to go to the bathroom, making housebreaking even more difficult.

23. Shelter dogs have too much baggage. It's better to adopt a puppy to start with a clean slate. FALSE

Many shelter dogs are well-behaved pooches who, for an endless list of possible reasons, could not be kept by their original owners. Older shelter dogs make ideal candidates for people wanting to skip the puppy stages of chewing, potty training, and mouthing. The interview process at most shelters also pairs canine candidates with the family setting that will best suit the dog's temperament, which can in turn create cohesion from the beginning.

24. Not all dogs should enjoy being around other dogs. Not all dogs need to go on outings with other dogs, such as to the dog park. If a dog doesn't enjoy other dogs, that is okay. TRUE

Not all people are social butterflies, and neither are all dogs. Some dogs may prefer solitude and only a small, select group of people/dogs. Dogs also have their own preferences when it comes to other canines. Breeding can play a big role in their sociability, with terriers being notorious for quarrelsomeness with other pooches. Other times, whether from lack of socialization as a puppy or simply an individual preference, dogs may not enjoy canine comradery. Even though plenty of dogs enjoy the dog park, not all of them enjoy the idea of dozens of other dogs frolicking around them and would instead prefer a quiet walk with their owners.

25. My dog knows she was bad after she goes potty in the house. The dogs guilty faces will say it all. FALSE

Dogs show a perceived "guilty face" not because they feel an actual emotion of guilt, but they are actually showing appeasement behaviors in response to their owners intimidating body language. Whether we want to or not, it is difficult not to display negative body language when we're upset with our pets. A 2009 study by researcher Alexandra Horowitz at Barnard College in New York revealed that the "guilty look" dogs display is solely attributed by humans and has no relation to whether the dog is responsible for an offense. The study found that dogs who had not actually eaten the forbidden treat but were scolded by their misinformed owners for eating a treat, showed guiltier-looking body language than dogs who had eaten the forbidden treat. The guilty look is simply a response of the dog to its owner's behavior.

26. When a dog chews up shoes or destroys furniture it's because the dog is punishing the owner. FALSE

Dogs chew on shoes, furniture, and other human items not to punish their owners, but simply because it feels good on their teeth, it relieves boredom, releases energy and, in some cases, may indicate separation anxiety.

27. A dog can't really be happy unless it can run off-leash. FALSE

Leashes are made for a dog's safety. They should be perceived as tools that keep your dog from running into oncoming traffic, going up to unknown dogs or people, and prevent them from running way. Although regular off leash play in a fenced area is essential for a dog's well-being, while out in public, dogs can learn to be perfectly content on a leash at their owner's side.



