

The Zen of Dog Training: Doggie DNA

Humans and canines. Both are social beings, both are built for expression. Behavior is expression. Action and reaction are forms of expression. Movement is expression. Expression is a release of energy and can be made physically, emotionally and creatively. Everything that moves through and projects from people is a form of expression, inspired by instinct, spirit, thought and feeling. And because people and dogs are built for expression, they must be provided opportunities and outlets in order to do so or else they suffer.

Providing dogs with opportunities to express who they are as a dog, breed and individual is not only an essential ingredient to their happiness and fulfillment as a valued family member, but also a key element in helping them reach and maintain a calm and balanced state of mind, which we want. What if Mozart was never able to express himself and share through his natural gift of music? If Maya Angelou was never able to express herself through her gift of word and inspiration? Or if Monet couldn't express himself through color? They may not have died from it, but they would have lived with the frustration, stress,

resentment, anger and sadness from the inability to do so. What people are born with, what is literally a part of them, always wants to be expressed and will always find a way to shine through. Each person brings a special sauce to life. It's something we were created to share in the only way we uniquely can.

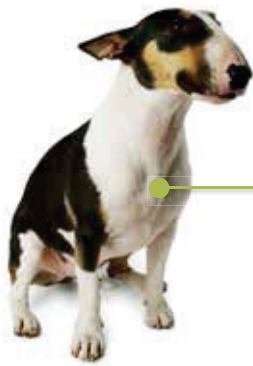
Dogs are no different.

Dogs have been bred over thousands of years to perform certain types of tasks and jobs. Some of the most common breed types are:

By Kimberly Artley

Editor's note: Meeting and fulfilling a dog's instinctual needs as a member of the canine species, as well as the crucial part that humans play in helping them achieve balance and overall health, were covered in the winter 2014 and spring 2015 editions of *The Virginia Maryland Dog Magazine*. This article looks at what dogs bring genetically as a breed.





Terriers

The word “terrier” is derived from the Latin word “terra”, meaning “earth”. Terriers were bred to hunt and dig up vermin and small critters, which is why many have such a strong desire to dig. Some Terrier breeds include the Wire Fox Terrier, Norfolk Terrier, American Staffordshire Terrier, Border Terrier, Bull Terrier and Wheaten Terrier.



Sporting

Sporting dogs were bred for stamina, hunting, flushing out and retrieving game. These dogs are naturally very alert, have high energy, are very active, and typically enjoy water and swimming. The Sporting group includes Spaniels, Retrievers, Setters and Pointers.



Hounds

Hounds were bred for tracking, locating and chasing animals in the field. To “chase and find” is in their DNA. They perform this with intense focus, so off-leash activities should be secure and supervised. Some Hound breeds include the Beagle, Coonhound, Bassett Hound, Bloodhound and Pharaoh Hound.



Working Dogs

Working dogs were bred to do a variety of jobs, from farmhand work to service dog duties to military and police dog responsibilities. They are typically highly-focused, intelligent and fearless, though their personalities range from mellow to intense. These dogs crave having a job to do, and don't particularly do well living in the unemployment line. Working breeds include the Rottweiler, Portuguese Water Dog, Doberman Pinscher, Boxer, Malamute and Husky.



Herding Dogs

Herding dogs also make great farmhands and are considered the most intelligent of all the breed types. This high-energy group was bred for rounding up herds and flocks. They run, bark, nip at the heels and make strong eye contact with the animals they're corralling. The Herding breeds include the Corgi, Border Collie, Briard, German Shepherd, Belgian Malinois and Australian Shepherd.

Eventually, these breeds started catching each other's eye and mixing and mingling with each other to create the wonderful mutt!

It's tough to be a dog living in the urban jungle. The typical lifestyle of the modern day American is wrought with have-tos and immediacy. Some people are so focused on earning and gain that their own self-care and time and energy investment in others becomes a chore. For some, this creates issues of resentment, impatience and frustration, or they simply delegate to someone else. It's here that people miss out on the most valuable and special part of being a parent, guardian, caretaker, and companion. The building of trust and respect. The bond. Partnership. And one of the most beautiful illustrations of relationship in life.

Many people tend to fall in love with the look of a dog. The aesthetics. They see a movie such as "101 Dalmatians" or "Beverly Hills Chihuahua," for example, fall in love with a certain breed of dog that films showcase, then run out to purchase their illusion of perfection; forgetting that movie dogs are highly-trained, and the result of someone's invested time and energy. This can lead to more puppy mills and backyard breeding activities to meet the demand, which could result in unhealthy and behaviorally-challenged dogs. Some people buy into the pop culture fairytale with little regard to what that specific breed of dog will need for fulfillment, which usually ends up with a bored, frustrated, misbehaving dog. More often than not, it's the dog that gets the blame and subsequently banished to the backyard for life, tossed into the shelter system, or bounced from home to home.

These actions could be prevented if the human learns how to meet and fulfill the dog's needs as a dog, as a breed, and makes the effort to raise the dog with love and in respect. When people fail to uphold their end of the bargain, neglecting their responsibility as a canine companion and caretaker, they set both themselves and their dogs up for failure.

A dog's health and quality of life is dependent upon the choices people make and on what they provide and do not provide, do and not do. When people do not provide, dogs suffer; possibly ending up in a high-kill shelter, getting labeled or blamed, banished or

isolated—when the dogs' behaviors were their way of expressing that their needs were not being met.

It is the responsibility of people, as dog "parents", guardians and companions, to provide their dogs with what they need to reach and maintain a healthy, balanced, joyful life. That's the contract people enter into when they welcome them into their home and force them to live a life that is far from instinctual.

While dogs may be "pets" to some people, they are still living, breathing, feeling, intelligent and sentient beings that have ingrained needs. Providing an outlet for dogs to express what comes so naturally to them will satisfy that craving and instinctual need within them.

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If there's a wonderful mixture of breeds in a dog, play around. Explore activities to see what their natural inclination is to perform and enjoy, such as: sheep herding, search and rescue exercises, agility classes, swimming, fetching items in the water, dock-diving, putting a backpack on dogs and allowing them to carry things such as water bottles, keys and wallets, trotting on a treadmill, playing fetch, running, biking, and hiking. Some other stimulating activities can be to leave treats under plastic cups spread around the house or yard (the dogs learn to find the treats and how to tip over the cups), or playing "hide and seek" with the dog's favorite toy, treat or family member.

There are several methods to play to a dog's genetics and breed-specific needs. This is something a dog's human companion should never fight or depress. When people learn to honor and respect dog as an animal of a different species, breed or mixture of breeds, and the unique individual they are, everyone wins. Trust and respect is established, and the extraordinary bond that only exists between human and canine prospers. 🐾