
WHY DOES MY DOG DO THAT?

You've got questions. We have the answers.

by the
AMERICAN KENNEL CLUB



Dogs exhibit all sorts of bewildering, funny, sometimes worrisome, quirky behaviors.

Here are some of the most common and mysterious canine habits, and the reasons behind them.



WHY DOES MY DOG CURL UP IN A BALL WHEN HE SLEEPS?

It might seem like your dog would be more comfortable sprawled out on the couch than curled up in a little ball in the corner—and he probably would be! But some dogs sleep curled up nonetheless. Why? Blame evolution!



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Dogs in the wild will dig a nest to sleep in, and curl up in it—especially if it's chilly. This will help keep them warm and also keep their most vital organs tucked away from predators. So there are two good reasons why dogs developed this behavior. If your dog stretches out when he sleeps, he's either really hot or he feels safe and secure.



You might want to get your dog a small, round dog bed that he fits in, which will make him feel cozier. Or you could give him a blanket and let him “dig” his own little nest.



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WHY DOES MY DOG EAT GRASS?

First of all, despite what you may have heard, dogs do not engage in this behavior to make themselves throw up. Dogs on well-balanced diets and in remarkably good health regularly eat grass, and many dogs can routinely eat grass and not vomit. Research has revealed that most grasses will not make dogs throw up, and other studies have shown several wild canid species who also commonly eat grass.

So the idea that dogs eat grass because they are missing something in their diet does not stand up under scrutiny for a variety of reasons. Likewise, the notion that grass is used by dogs needing to vomit cannot be proven.



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Why do they eat it then? As gross as it sounds, some dogs might just like it—just as they savor the flavor of dirty socks and underwear. Hey, there's no accounting for taste. But be careful when your dog does this, particularly teething puppies—excessive ingestion of leaves, sticks, grass, and other plant material can lead to a blockage.



WHY DOES MY DOG BEG WITH HIS EYES?

The pleading gaze of a begging dog can be irresistible. And this is no accident. During his long partnership with man, the dog has perfected cunning methods of exploiting the human neurosis that associates food with affection. In prehistoric times semi-domesticated canines first cultivated human beings as a food provider. As the two species grew closer, dogs modified begging behaviors to maximize results: The more pathetic a dog seemed, the more scraps were tossed his way. Dogs have since refined this approach into a low-risk, high-reward hunting technique.



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It's a deceptive way to hunt, but don't be fooled: Begging is not an emotional crisis or a test of your love. It's what scientists might call an evolutionary survival strategy, or what the rest of us might call a scam. Allowing your dog to "guilt" you into over-feeding him, or serving him a steady diet of table scraps in a misguided show of affection, can have harmful or even fatal results.



So don't take it personally when the little con artist under the table goes into the old whimper-wheedle-and-whine routine. Simply ignore it, and find healthier ways of bonding with your pet.

Otherwise, you risk loving your dog to death.



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WHY DOES MY DOG LICK ME?

As you might have noticed, dogs just love to lick humans! Why all this licking? Well, the behavior is deeply ingrained in a dog. It's visible early on, when puppies will lick each other as a way of interacting and of grooming each other. They sometimes lick their moms as a way of asking for some milk. When dogs are in packs, they will lick a dominant dog to ask for permission to eat communal food. So sometimes your dog wants something when he licks you.



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But there are other reasons for this sloppy behavior. Sometimes your dog just wants your attention. At other times, he might lick you as a way of playing with you (instead of biting you, which is how he plays with other dogs). Some researchers say that licking is just another way that dogs explore their environments.

One thing's for sure: The more you respond positively to your dog's licks, the more likely he is to lick you. It sure is one way of getting your attention!



**NEED ADVICE ON
CURTAILING YOUR DOG'S
PESKY BEHAVIOR?**

With the [AKC's GoodDog! Helpline](#), training and behavior experts are only a phone call or instant message away. Find out more about this service by visiting akc.org/helpline.



For more fascinating answers like these,
check out *What's He Thinking?*





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WHO AND WHAT WE ARE:

The AKC is a not-for-profit organization and the largest purebred dog registry in the world. We are the sports-governing body for over 22,000 dog events a year, including conformation (dog shows) and exciting sports like agility, obedience, rally, tracking, lure coursing, earthdog, herding trials, among others.



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But the AKC is so much more! Here are just some of the ways we support and enrich the lives of dogs—purebreds and mixed-breeds alike—and their families. We:

- Created the [AKC Humane Fund](#), which supports breed rescue activities, assists shelters that permit domestic-abuse victims to bring their pets, and educates dog lovers about responsible dog ownership.
- Offer the [Canine Good Citizen®](#) program: A 10-step test that certifies dogs who have good manners at home and in their community. Over 725,000 dogs across the United States have become Canine Good Citizens, and 42 states have passed resolutions recognizing the program's merit and importance.
- Founded [AKC Reunite](#), which has brought more than 400,000 lost pets back together with their owners.
- Created the [AKC Canine Health Foundation](#), which funds research projects and clinical studies. Since 1995 the AKC has donated over \$24 million to the CHF. (The AKC is the only registry that incorporates health-screening results into its permanent dog records.)
- Conduct thousands of kennel inspections annually to monitor care and conditions at kennels across the country and ensure the integrity of the AKC registry.
- Offer the largest, most comprehensive set of DNA programs for parentage verification and genetic identity to ensure reliable registration records.
- Support one of the world's largest collections of dog-related fine art and artifacts at the [AKC Museum of the Dog](#), and we have the world's largest [dog library](#) at AKC headquarters in New York, both of which are open to the public.



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THANK YOU FOR READING!

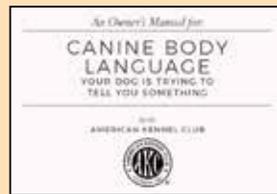
We hope this information was valuable to you in helping your puppy live a long, healthy, happy life. Below, find additional books in our Owner's Manual series designed to strengthen the bond between you and your furry family member.



5 TRICKS TO SHOW OFF



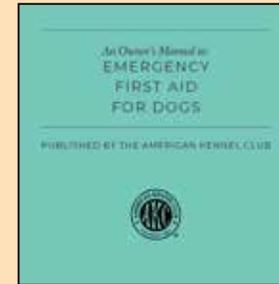
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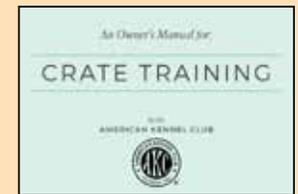
CANINE BODY LANGUAGE



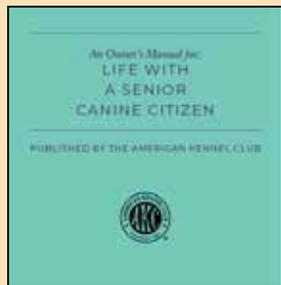
CANINE GOOD CITIZEN



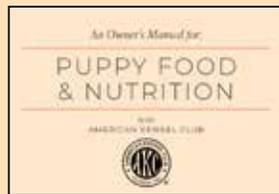
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WHY DOES MY DOG DO THAT?



WHAT'S HE THINKING?



PUPPY SOCIALIZATION