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Why Spoil Your Dog?

There are many reasons to spoil your dog; however, the most important in my opinion is because of the strong emotional bond that exists between a dog and his owner.

Dogs are one of the most popular companion animals for many reasons. To start, a dog offers his owner unconditional acceptance. In addition, a dog is always happy to see you and has unlimited affection to offer. There are few greater things than to walk into the door at night after a hard day's work and be greeted by unlimited enthusiasm and affection.

Many web rings are dedicated to dogs. They list anecdotes, have discussion forums and offer top ten lists. Here is one such list from Gizmo's Fun House:

Top Ten Reasons Why Dogs Are Better Pets Than Cats:

1. Dogs will tilt their heads and try to understand every word you say. Cats will ignore you and take a nap.
2. Cats look silly on a leash.
3. When you come home from work, your dog will be happy and lick your face. Cats will still be mad at you for leaving in the first place.
4. Dogs will give you unconditional love until the day they die. Cats will make you pay for every mistake you've ever made since the day you were born.
5. A dog knows when you're sad and he'll try to comfort you. Cats don't care how you feel, as long as you remember where the can-opener is.
6. Dogs will bring you your slippers. Cats will drop a dead mouse in them.
7. When you take them for a ride, dogs will sit on the seat next to you. Cats have to have their own basket or they won't go at all.
8. Dogs will happily come when you call them. Cats will have someone take a message and get back to you.
9. Dogs will play fetch with you all day long. The only things cats will play with for any period of time are small rodents or bugs – preferably ones that look like they're in pain.
10. Dogs will wake you if the house is on fire. Cats will quietly sneak out the back door.

Seriously though, some research has shown that dogs are able to convey a depth of emotion towards his human companion not seen to the same extent in any other companion animal. In addition, dogs have been an integral part of human history and have proven themselves to be extremely useful in a variety of settings. Dogs have been known to put their own lives in peril to ensure their master's safety. Dogs will do anything if they know it is what their masters expect them to do and they ask for nothing in return.

And it is for this loyalty and unconditional love that dogs deserve to be spoiled – regardless if they are a housedog or a rescue dog. For over 20, 000 years, dogs have willingly and lovingly worked side-by-side with man. They deserve to be rewarded with love and tokens of appreciation.

The History of Dog/Human Relations

When livestock became domesticated around 5,000 BC, dogs acted as protectors and guards. In both cases, dogs were rewarded for their work with food and shelter, creating an insubordinate relationship to man and causing the dog to repeat good work in order to survive.

However, dogs became more than just a means to an end. In the 5th century BC, the Greek fortress of Corinth was attacked. But thanks to the fifty guard dogs, the town was saved. Although only one dog survived the fight, it was awarded a pension for life and a silver collar. And from this day forward dogs were revered as more than just instruments; they were seen as a crucial component to the safety and well being of mankind.

Because of their excellent ability to hunt, 10th century monasteries began to breed and sell dogs to wealthy French nobility. These dogs were so appreciated by their masters that it was not unusual to see as many humans as dogs in church on Sundays!

It was the Renaissance period that saw the creation of the companion dog. Hunting dogs were bred for temperament and size. The French and English were especially fond of their dogs. In fact Charles IX of France declared a royal day of mourning when his Griffon died.

But it hasn't been until recently that the dog has transcended to position of family pet to a full-fledged member of the family. Dogs sleep, eat and play with their owners, something that was almost unheard of even 100 years ago. Some dogs even have their own beds, most have their own dishes and all have their own purpose in life.



**“Back when I was a Boy, We didn’t get it so easy,
and I sure am thankful it’s not that way anymore.”**

Dogs as Helpers

Besides hunting and guarding, dogs have recently expanded their repertoire to include acting as the eyes and ears for their masters. The first seeing-eye dogs were trained in 1819 in Austria when Johann Wilhelm Klein founded an institute for the blind, although a wooden plaque from the medieval period has been found depicting a dog leading a blind man, which suggests that dogs were used as guides much earlier than once thought. Despite the fact that there was a great need for guide dogs, Klein's training techniques did not gain popularity until 100 years later.

Following the First World War, a great many soldiers were being admitted to hospitals suffering a side effect of mustard gas exposure: blindness. And it was in one such hospital that a German doctor brought back the practice of using dogs to help the afflicted soldiers, completely by accident.

Having been called away from assisting a blind patient take a stroll around the hospital grounds, the doctor sat the soldier down leaving his dog to keep the patient company. Upon his return, the doctor got the distinct impression from the way his dog was acting that he was looking after the soldier.

This fuelled the doctor's curiosity to see if dogs had been used or could be trained to assist the blind and in 1923 he founded the first guide dog training center in Postdam, Germany where, over the next decade several thousand dogs were successfully trained to assist the blind.

More than 50 years later, in 1979, dogs began to be used to aid the deaf. They are trained to respond to certain sounds and signal through touch and posturing to let their hearing impaired owners know when the doorbell rings, a fire alarm sounds or even when a baby is crying. And unlike seeing-eye dogs, hearing aid dogs do not have to be a certain size; as long as they are friendly and easily trained, they can be taught the crucial techniques a hearing aid dog needs to know.

Dogs have also been valued members of the American Armed Forces for the past 50 years, due largely to the fact that they are alert, loyal and have a great sense of smell. In this time, over 50,000 dogs have served their country in wartime by sniffing out enemies and bombs, locating falling soldiers and comforting the wounded until help arrived. Dogs have even been known to drag the injured to safety – American dogs that went over to Vietnam were credited with preventing at least 10,000 deaths by doing just that.

In addition to soldiers, dogs also serve the civilian population as rescue and police dogs. In times of disaster, dogs have gone into very dangerous places such as disaster sites, buildings toppled by earthquake or towns devastated by fire to search for people trapped in the rubble. In addition, dogs are often used during foot chases when perpetrators flee from the police. These dogs are trained to chase and obtain the criminal until police can arrive on the scene. One such dog, name Jake, helped his policeman owner catch 235 criminals in his five-year career. Other dogs are used to sniff out drugs and explosives, track lost people and help with crowd control.



Dogs and Health

It is now a proven fact that dogs have a direct affect on people's health. There was an older man that used to live down the street from me. He had a wonderful Dalmatian-hound mix that went with him everywhere. After many years of battling throat cancer, he finally had to have a tracheotomy. Thanks to this operation he was able to still get around and be part of the community. Then one day, his doctor told him that he would have to get rid of his dog. It appeared that his dog's hair was getting caught in his trachea tube and could potentially cause an infection. The man was heartbroken but did what his doctor thought was the best – he gave his dog to his grandson. Within a month, he passed away. After speaking with his daughter I learned that it was the dog that had kept him going and without her, he didn't have the fight to go on.

This is not an atypical story. You hear stories of the health benefits dogs bring to people all the time. Research has shown that dog owners tend to have lower blood pressure, lower cholesterol, less psychological stress and lower rates of isolation and loneliness. Seniors are particularly positively affected by owning a dog. They are often in better health than their peers and they are less prone to becoming a victim of crime.

Many healthcare facilities are now using dogs as a therapeutic tool. Animal-assisted therapy involves having a skilled animal handler into the facility to spend time with patients. This is a very useful therapy tool for children and seniors that are hospitalized for a prolonged period time. Dogs can help reduce the isolation that long-term patients sometimes feel and they alleviate the boredom of the hospital setting. And sometimes patients feel that they can freely express their emotions to a dog as opposed to the medical staff.



Don't be fooled the humble dog brings fantastic health benefits.

What Dogs Can Teach Us

If you pay close attention to the way your dog behaves and sees life, you may be surprised to discover that dogs have tapped into the secret of living a very happy and fulfilling life.

For instance, dogs teach us to show how happy you are to see or talk to your loved ones. When someone walks into your house or you meet in a restaurant, greet them with enthusiasm and affection. They will appreciate this gesture as much as you appreciate the greeting you receive from your dog. Also, if a friend or loved one is having a bad day, just listen while they vent. If you can, extend a comforting hand.

Dogs can also teach us to take joy in the simple things. Next time you go for a car ride with your dog, observe how happy she is when the wind blows against her face. Also, note the enthusiasm your invitation to go out in the car is greeted with. We'd all be happier if we could appreciate these small things.

The basics to a dog life – napping, eating and playing – are something that busy humans need to do more of. Take advantage of the warm weather, dance around when you are happy and take a long relaxing walk.

Lastly, be loyal. Dogs are so highly revered because of their loyalty to the ones they love. Imitate this. In addition, always be yourself. People can sniff out a fake from a mile away.



If A Dog Were Your Teacher

You sure would learn more than you think.

So, Why Spoil Your Dog?

It is for all these reasons that dogs should be revered and spoiled. They have done so much for humanity that it would downright rude not to acknowledge them for their selflessness and devotion. And because it is so easy to make a dog happy, there are hundreds of ways you can spoil your dog. But how do you know when you've spoiled your dog enough? Take note of the following list from Gizmo's Fun House and if you can relate to more than one of the list items, you know you have achieved your goal:

Signs You Spoil Your Dog:

1. You think begging for table scraps is beneath him so you let your dog eat at the table with you.
2. You take him to the supermarket and let him pick out his own dog food.
3. Your family comes home from work or school, looks at the stew on the stove and asks: "Is this people food or dog food?"
4. You bought matching His and Hers placemats for your dog and yourself.
5. At dinner parties you always double-check the butter for visible lick marks before putting it on the table.
6. Your dog gets to vote on where to spend the next family vacation.
7. You don't care if you or your spouse is comfortable at night, just as long as the dog has enough room on the bed.
8. You complain about the rising costs of groceries but you don't think twice about spending a fortune on doggie treats.
9. Your dog always gets the best spot on the couch.
10. He has his own Web site.



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