

HAPPY DOG INSTITUTE'S SPRING TRAINING

SPRING 2026 NEWSLETTER



LIVING WITH DOGS

Teaching Your Dog to Do Nothing

You know what might be the most underrated skill a dog can learn? Doing nothing. Really. A dog who can settle quietly in a café, hang out on a mat while you chat with a friend, or chill after a walk? That's gold. Calm might not look impressive or fancy, but it's the foundation for just about everything else.

What does calm actually look like? It's not a frozen sit or a "stay" held under pressure. It's soft muscles, slow breathing, maybe a lazy tail thump. A dog who can take a deep breath, glance at the world, and decide it's fine. Emotional regulation is something we build over time, not something all dogs automatically know how to do. This is especially true for puppies and bouncy adolescent dogs.

One big challenge for many dogs is that modern life doesn't offer much rest. There's always a new sound, a new visitor, a new adventure. Without time to unwind, dogs can start to run on fumes. They become jumpy, barksy, or restless, not because they're "naughty," but because their nervous systems never get to reset.

You can help by making calm a daily practice:

- **Teach a relaxation cue** like lying on a mat or settling on a bed. Reward slow breathing, quiet, and stillness.
- **Mix activity with rest.** After play or walks, allow for plenty of downtime so arousal levels come back down.
- **Use natural calmers.** Chews, licking mats, and sniffing are great ways to calm busy minds and bodies.
- **Model it yourself.** Your dog takes many of their cues from you. Aim for slow movements, soft voices, and predictable routines where possible.

A calm dog is one who can think, listen, and enjoy life more. So celebrate the "doing nothing" days. They're often where real training progress begins.



Class Curriculum

1. Living with Dogs
2. Did You Know?
3. A World of Dogs
4. Dogs in Action
5. Healthy Dog
6. Dog in the Spotlight
7. Tips & Tricks

"No matter how little money and how few possessions you own, having a dog makes you rich."

- Louis Sabin



Australian Kelpie

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Did You Know?



Puppy Facts

- Puppies are born blind, deaf, and toothless, but able to smell.
- Puppies begin developing permanent teeth around the 12-week mark.
- Puppies' eyes and ears begin to open at 10 to 16 days of age.
- Puppies spend on average 14 hours of every day sleeping.
- The growth rate of puppies varies widely, depending on the size of the dog. Birth weights can multiply more than tenfold within the first 7 to 8 weeks.
- Puppies go through several developmental stages early in life: neonatal (0-2 weeks), transitional (2-4 weeks), socialization (3-12 weeks), and adolescence (6-18 months).



A WORLD OF DOGS

Do dogs have a sense of humor?

If you've ever had a dog steal your sock and dart away with that unmistakable glint in their eye, you've probably wondered: are they laughing at me? While dogs don't giggle in the human sense, growing evidence suggests they may, in fact, have a sense of humor. Or at least a version of it that looks suspiciously similar.

Research into canine play behavior shows that dogs use exaggerated gestures, like play bows and bouncy movements, to signal fun and prevent misunderstandings. Some studies even suggest that dogs possess a "play face," a relaxed open mouth resembling a grin, seen most often when they're engaging socially. Patricia Simonet, a bioacoustician, famously recorded a distinct "play pant," which is a breathy exhalation used to invite play and defuse tension among dogs. When those recordings were played back to shelter dogs, many responded with visible enthusiasm, wagging and play-bowing to the invisible jokester.

Trainers and behaviorists have long observed dogs using humor-like behaviors, too. Think of the dog who gleefully instigates a chase game only to swerve just out of reach, or the dog who pounces on his sleepy playmate to get a reaction. These aren't just random antics. They're also social strategies, designed to connect and entertain.

Of course, a dog's humor has limits. Teasing can tip into stress if a game feels unpredictable or confusing. The magic lies in mutual enjoyment, that shared spark when you both understand it's all in the name of fun. Some dogs seem born comedians, inventing games to keep themselves and others entertained, while others may prefer to sit back and be curious observers.

So while dogs may not be writing stand-up routines anytime soon, they do seem to share our love of play, silliness, and maybe even a good laugh. Turns out, your canine family clown might just be in on the joke.

DOGS IN ACTION

An Urban Adventure Sport for Dogs

Have you heard of dog parkour? This canine activity turns everyday surroundings into a playground. Parkour (from the French *parcours*, meaning “course”) began as a human sport built around agility, strength, and confidence. The canine version follows the same spirit, encouraging dogs to climb, balance, jump, and explore obstacles.

Confidence through movement: Dog parkour isn’t about daring stunts. It’s about helping dogs become more aware of their bodies and the world around them. Balancing on a low wall, stepping onto a park bench, or weaving through posts builds coordination, trust, and problem-solving skills.

Everyday adventure: You don’t need special equipment or a big budget. City sidewalks, parks, and even playgrounds offer endless opportunities. A sturdy log becomes a balance beam, a rock becomes a perch, and a curb makes the perfect “pause box.”

Safety first: Start low and slow. Surfaces should be stable, dry, and non-slip, and jumps shouldn’t exceed your dog’s shoulder height. Spot your dog as you would a child learning to climb. Always prioritize safety and calm over speed or height.

A team sport: The bond between dog and handler is at the heart of parkour. Encouragement, treats, and trust turn exploration into teamwork.

From shy rescue dogs to energetic athletes, parkour offers something for everyone, and a reminder that the world itself is one big adventure playground.



DOG IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Australian Kelpies

Tough, intelligent, and endlessly energetic, Australian Kelpies are the working heart of rural Australia. Bred to herd sheep across vast, rugged landscapes, they’re known for their stamina, quick thinking, and remarkable work ethic. These dogs don’t just follow directions; they make decisions on the move.

Kelpies thrive on having a job to do, whether that’s herding stock, mastering agility courses, or tackling puzzle games. Without enough exercise and mental stimulation, their boundless energy can quickly turn into mischief. They’re happiest when challenged and included in daily life.

Despite their intensity at work, Kelpies can be affectionate, dedicated companions at home. They bond deeply with their people and love being part of the action. Their short double coat is easy to maintain, though regular brushing helps manage shedding.

For those who value brains, drive, and heart in equal measure, few breeds compare. To meet an Australian Kelpie in need of a home, visit a shelter or rescue near you.



HEALTHY DOG

Brushing Up on Dog Dental Care

It’s easy to overlook your dog’s teeth until you catch a whiff of bad breath. But dental health is about far more than smell – it affects your dog’s overall wellbeing.

Check regularly: Lift your dog’s lips every week or two. Look for yellow buildup, red gums, or broken teeth. Small changes caught early can prevent painful infections.

Brush up: Daily brushing with a dog-safe toothpaste is the gold standard. Chews, dental wipes, or rinses can help, but nothing replaces the brush.

Prevention matters: Left unchecked, plaque hardens into tartar that can lead to gum disease and even affect the heart or kidneys.

A clean mouth means a healthier dog (and fresher kisses, too).



To meet an Australian Kelpie, search online for a rescue group near you.

TIPS + TRICKS

Toy Rotation Magic

Dogs, a bit like toddlers, get bored with the same old toys. A toy rotation system keeps things interesting and prevents clutter, all without spending more.

Start simple: Divide your dog's toys into small groups and store most of them away. Every week or two, swap a few out. When "new" toys reappear, your dog will rediscover them with fresh enthusiasm.

Add variety: Mix textures and play styles, such as tug toys, chews, puzzles, squeakers, to encourage different interactions.

Try a toy swap: Trade a few favorites with a friend's dog. The novelty of new smells and a "borrowed" toy keeps things exciting!

Rotating toys keeps playtime engaging and helps you spot worn or unsafe toys before they cause trouble.

Meet the Team at Happy Dog Institute

Ashley Alden (She/Her) | CCS, PSDT-A | Instructor

Ashley Alden is a distinguished graduate and team member of the Northwest School of Canine Studies, a professional member of the Association of Pet Dog Trainers, and a supporting member of the International Association of Animal Behavior Consultants. She recently completed her associate certification at the Peninsula School for Dog Trainers (PSDT-A).

Paul Grosart (They/Them) | BS, CPDT-KA, IAABC-ADT, AKC CGC | Evaluator Instructor

Paul is a Certified Professional Dog Trainer through the Certification Counsel for Professional Dog Trainers, and an Accredited Dog Trainer of the International Association of Animal Behavior Consultants (IAABC). They have spent the last 4 years of their professional development focusing on service dogs, and learning best training practices to ensure the highest working success rate.

Jodi Halvorson (She/Her) | CDW, SAMP | Instructor, Adventure Guide

Jodi, a longtime client and Agility student at HDI, is our newest addition to the team. She's a dog-savvy, dog-loving outdoor enthusiast (which is putting it mildly). Jodi goes adventuring almost every weekend, and has gone fast packing with her own dog on the Pacific Coast Trail into Canada. She is currently training for a 100 and 250 mile trail race, is Canine and Wilderness First Aid certified and is a Certified Dog Walker (CDW).

Emma Holly (She/Her) | MS, CPDT-KA, CSAT, IAABC-ADT | Co-Owner, Behavior Consultant

When she was a kid, Emma was the one at family parties off in a corner with the dog. Not much has changed, though now she's in the corner with her dogs and a computer, running the Happy Dog show. When you contact us, Emma is likely the first person you'll be talking with.

Heather Ringwood (She/Her) | BA, FDM, CPDT-KA, AKC CGC Evaluator | Co-Owner, Director of Training

Specializing in Agility and Advanced Manners training, Heather's heart, love, and training focus is in showing others how to have fun with her dogs. She studied Dog Behavior and Canine History, and has a degree in Dog Training & Business. After college, Heather trained assistance dogs for the hearing impaired.

To learn more about our team, visit happydoginstitute.com/about/

Basic Weekly Overview

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
<u>Evening Classes</u> Puppy Primer 8-16 weeks old Open enrollment Puppy Life Skills 16-24 weeks old starts every 6 weeks Private Sessions Available	<u>Classes All Day</u> Focus & Control for Teens 6-12 months old Foundation Skills for Adults 12+ months old Sports Prep for all Ages Runs quarterly Private Sessions Available	<u>Classes All Day</u> Masters Nose Work Advanced Nose Work Intermediate Nose Work Intro to K9 Nose Work Private Sessions Available	<u>Evening Classes</u> Chaotic Canine 9+ months old Runs every 7 weeks Private Sessions Available	<u>Evening Classes</u> Sports Prep for all Ages Runs quarterly Beginning Rally Runs quarterly Continuing Rally classes for ongoing students	<u>Classes All Day</u> Puppy Primer 8-16 weeks old Open enrollment Puppy Life Skills 16-24 weeks old starts every 6 weeks Focus & Control for Teens 6-12 months old Foundation Skills for Adults 12+ months old	<u>Daytime Classes</u> Stranger Danger Starts every 6 weeks Introduction to Cooperative Care Runs quarterly Private Sessions Available
	  	 		 	 	 