

# The Rover Report

from Raising Rover



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## ✧ Highlights ✧



### LIVING WITH DOGS

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#### Tots & Tail-Waggers

To a dog, a baby is a very strange creature—tiny, roly-poly, emitting coos and gurgles, and kicking and grasping at everything. What’s more, a baby is an attention magnet and a routine changer. Once baby arrives, life as Fido knew it is never again the same. Some dogs take this in stride; others struggle with the new world order. But babies and dogs can live happily together. Some pointers:

**Before baby.** Well before your baby arrives polish your dog’s basic manners. Make sure he comes when called, sits when asked, and knows loose-leash walking. Practice walking your dog with the stroller, and having him sit for people coming in the door while you hold a doll. Arrange for a dog walker to take your dog out regularly for at least the first couple of months—a well-exercised dog will have a much easier time adjusting to a changed routine at home. And introduce some of those changes in routine now. Put your dog in his confinement/safe area for 10–15 minutes regularly with a stuffed Kong or chew bone.

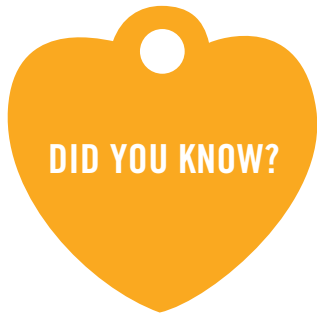


**After baby.** Dogs don’t experience Othello-style jealousy, but they do notice when they get much less love and attention, so give your baby and your dog attention at the same time. Feed your dog before feeding the baby in the same room, and praise your dog while carrying your baby. Avoid fawning over your dog when baby is sleeping; instead lavish attention when baby is awake. That way, Fido learns to associate good things with baby’s presence.

**The number one rule:** Never leave your baby alone with your dog. However wonderful your dog is around your baby, it’s not safe to leave them alone together. Dogs don’t always realize children are miniature humans. Kids run and shriek, just like prey, and they smell funny, too. And children in general, small children especially, have to learn to interact appropriately with dogs. Your best bet is to always supervise.

*continued on page 2*

“Dog lovers  
are a good breed  
themselves.”  
- Gladys Taber



### These Doggie Traits & Skills?

**Dogs don't** understand "right" and "wrong." They are amoral. (Not immoral!)

**Dogs do** divide the world into good-for-dogs, bad-for-dogs, and neutral.

**Dogs master** reading body language and understanding hand signals.

**Dogs are less terrific** at reading our minds and understanding verbal language.

**Dogs can** navigate complex social worlds—among other dogs.

**Dogs can't** think in abstract concepts the way humans do.

**Dogs are** highly social creatures. Marvelous trial-and-error learners. Easy to motivate.

**Dogs are not** born to please us. Innately able to appreciate the value of Italian shoes.



## A WORLD OF DOGS

### Knowing Your Dog Inside Out

Many mutt-owners have played the guessing game at one time or another. Where did that short, curled-up tail on an otherwise shepherd-like dog come from? Or those gangly legs on a beagle mix? The wide bully-breed smile on a wirehaired terrier? Feathering on a boxer? Well, for a number of years now, it has been possible to get the answer—or at least something close to. DNA tests to determine canine genealogy are becoming more common. Results aren't guaranteed to be one hundred percent scientifically accurate, but that just means you won't be able to prove your dog's ancestry in a court of law.



Early services covered anywhere from 39 to 68 breeds, but within the last year tests have been launched that cover more than 170 breeds. And where before, a blood sample had to be collected by a veterinarian, all that's required today is a cheek swab from your dog, a process you can carry out at home. The swab is placed in a collection bag which is sealed and mailed off, along with a check (for around \$80–\$130, depending on the service) to a laboratory. Three weeks later, your dog's ancestry report arrives in the mail. Aside from revealing the origin of physical traits, such a report can offer useful clues about behaviors like digging, barking, and herding. If you know your dog has hound parentage, for example, engaging in tracking, trailing, or other scent activities might make him more content—dogs given an outlet for their innate abilities often become calmer and better behaved in general.

For some people, playing guess-what's-in-my-dog is part of the charm of having a mutt. For others, finding out the answer is well worth the cost of the test. And apparently, quite a few people give canine genealogy tests as a present—something a little different for the dog lover who has everything. If you have a curiosity itch to scratch or fancy a unique gift idea, don't just pick any old company online. This is a new and unregulated industry. Do some careful research first or ask your veterinarian to recommend a reputable testing service.

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## DOGS IN ACTION

### Running With Your Dog

Dogs make terrific running partners. They happily get up at the crack of dawn and hardly ever grumble about uphill routes.

Generally, working breeds make the best runners—your Labradors, collies, shepherds. Hounds are less ideal as they might take off on unscheduled hunting

expeditions. But no hard-and-fast rules exist; Greyhounds can be swell joggers, and so can Boston Terriers and toy poodles. The questions to ask are: Does your dog love to run? Can you train him to respond to you reliably in public? Is he healthy and physically capable of running long distances?



Watch out for joint problems, especially in big breeds, and if your dog is a puppy or adolescent, wait until he's fully grown before you start running with him. Consider working with a trainer or taking a basic obedience class to practice loose-leash manners, running hands-free with the leash clipped to your belt, and/or strengthening your dog's recall. Then, start slowly and build endurance. Sore pads tell you your dog has done too much too fast. Most importantly, look out for overheating. Always bring water out on the trails, take frequent breaks, and be careful not to overdo it on warm days. For more tips, check out [runtheplanet.com](http://runtheplanet.com)'s articles on running with dogs.



## HEALTHY DOG

### Why Groom?

Even if you make regular trips to the groomer, there are good reasons to groom your dog at home, too. A dog with a clean, healthy coat feels better in herself, and brushing and bathing your dog promotes skin health and gives you quality time together. You can also take the opportunity to check for ticks, flea infestations, and skin irritations.

If your dog is new to grooming, start slow and first teach her to love being handled all over. Reward gentle touches of ears, paws, tail, etc. with tasty treats, then progress to brushing and brief periods of holding. Be sure to get the right tools for your dog's coat—brushes and combs come in many versions—and always use a dog blow dryer that delivers only air not heat. You can find detailed DIY grooming instructions many places online. Try the grooming section of the ASPCA's website: [aspc.org](http://aspc.org).

## DOG IN THE SPOTLIGHT

### The Maltese

This silky-haired native of the island of Malta is among the oldest of all breeds, thought to have been around for 28 centuries. A dainty lady's-powder-puff of a dog, the Maltese is as decorative as she is gentle. With such aristocratic looks, it's hardly surprising so many royal houses have, at one point or another, been home to a Maltese: France, Thailand, Egypt, Portugal, England, the list goes on.

The Maltese, a popular family and lap dog, mostly eschews sweaty dog sports for dignified dog shows. Famous modern Maltese include New York governor David Paterson's 6-pound menace, Cheerio, known to be very feisty indeed, and Trouble, who inherited \$12 million from Leona Helmsley.

To give a Maltese a second chance, connect with the American Maltese Association's rescue branch: [americanmaltese.org/ama\\_rescue.htm](http://americanmaltese.org/ama_rescue.htm)



## OUR SERVICES

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### Like Cats And Dogs...

To add a cat to a dog household or vice versa, first look for good candidates. Easygoing dogs without strong predatory instincts, for example, and laid-back cats or cats with previous dog experience. Then:

- ✓ **Be patient.** Keep the two apart for the first week. Introduce them with the dog on leash. Reward gentle investigation and respectful behavior. Repeat several times before dropping the leash and letting it drag. (Never force your cat to be close to your dog by holding or caging her.)
- ✓ **Create a kitty refuge.** Have a dog-free room (use baby-gates, cat doors) for your cat. She needs a place to relax before venturing into 'dog territory.' Put her food, water, and kitty litter in this room.
- ✓ **Keep building bridges.** As your cat and dog get used to each other, continue to monitor interactions and regularly praise and treat them for playing nice.

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