

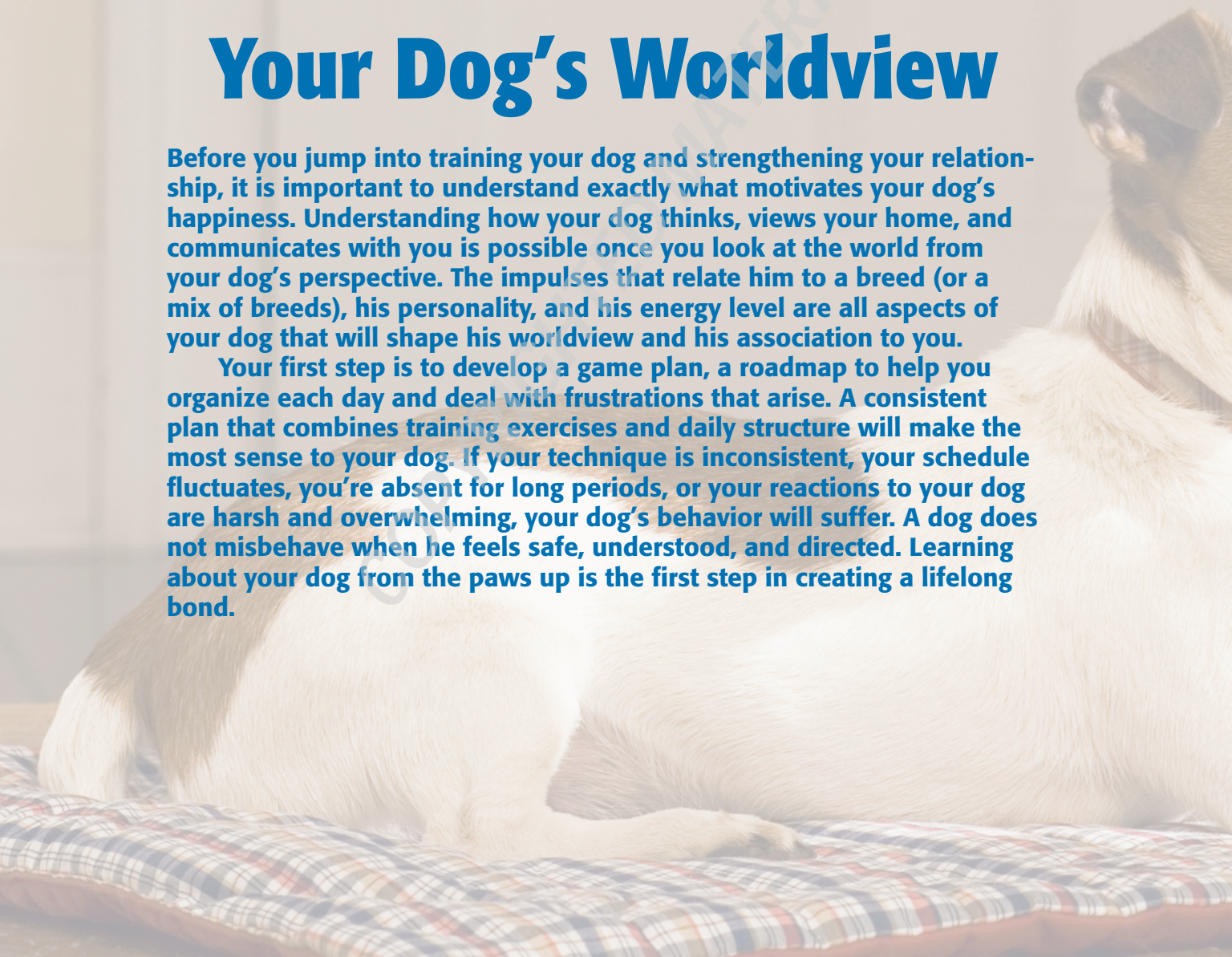
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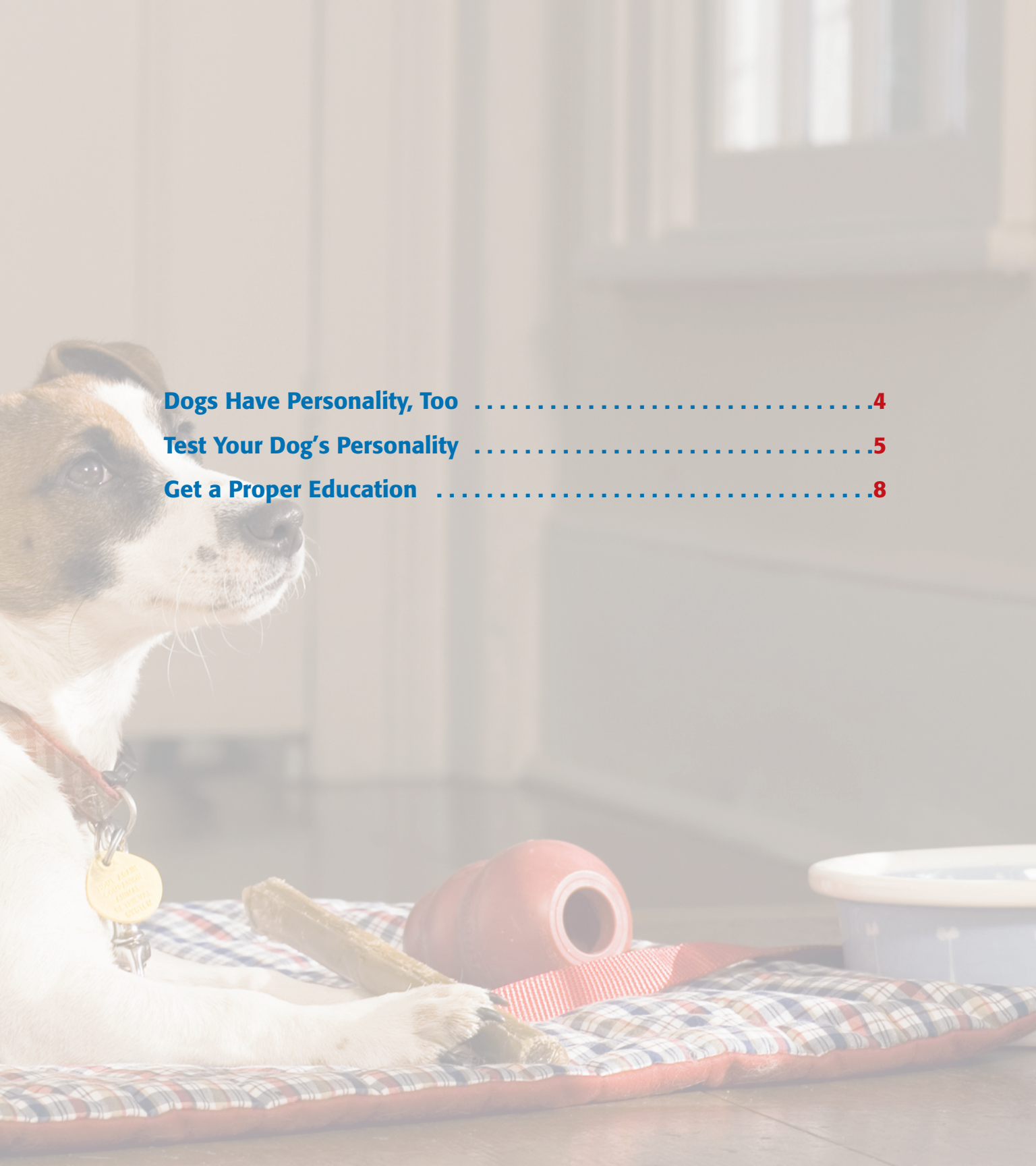
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Your Dog's Worldview

Before you jump into training your dog and strengthening your relationship, it is important to understand exactly what motivates your dog's happiness. Understanding how your dog thinks, views your home, and communicates with you is possible once you look at the world from your dog's perspective. The impulses that relate him to a breed (or a mix of breeds), his personality, and his energy level are all aspects of your dog that will shape his worldview and his association to you.

Your first step is to develop a game plan, a roadmap to help you organize each day and deal with frustrations that arise. A consistent plan that combines training exercises and daily structure will make the most sense to your dog. If your technique is inconsistent, your schedule fluctuates, you're absent for long periods, or your reactions to your dog are harsh and overwhelming, your dog's behavior will suffer. A dog does not misbehave when he feels safe, understood, and directed. Learning about your dog from the paws up is the first step in creating a lifelong bond.





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Dogs Have Personality, Too

Every dog is unique, regardless of breed. Like a child, your dog needs to be loved for who he is, and you need to keep this in mind as you train him. You can't train every dog or puppy the same way—each one learns differently based on identifiable personality traits as well as breed characteristics. Here are six different personality descriptions. Consider where your dog fits in.

BOSSY

These dogs take themselves very seriously. Strong-willed and determined, they simply ignore anyone they don't respect. A dog with this personality requires a strong, consistent training program and is happiest when everyone involved takes the same approach.

COMEDIAN

These jokesters are always dancing on the edge of good behavior and will reveal any inconsistency within your approach or within the family. Engaging, they thrive on interaction and may be naughty simply to get attention. A comedian needs clear direction, consistent follow-through, and a calm approach. Being too stern can backfire as this dog will get hyper when a lesson becomes too rigid.

JOE COOL

This easygoing lot takes life in stride and may not pay attention to your concern, energy, or disapproval. These dogs often prefer to nap during lessons and can be challenging to motivate. Be persistent with your lessons; left undirected they can easily get distracted and find themselves in harm's way.

EAGER TO PLEASE

Dogs with this personality put your approval high on their priority list. The drive for attention is so great that these dogs may indirectly learn such routines as jumping up when greeting to get attention that don't meet with everyone's approval. Training need only be presented and reinforced in a consistent manner for this dog to cooperate.

SWEET PEA

These endearing dogs are gentle and loving, often preferring to view life from the sidelines. They prefer not to make waves and can sometimes appear overwhelmed if lessons are too strict. Adoring and sweet, they can be needy if ignored. A calm, praise-heavy training approach works best to bring out the best in this personality type.

TIMID

Dogs in this group do not tolerate new situations, dogs, or people well. Calm familiarity is reassuring to them. To an outsider, a timid dog may appear abused, as he cowers and hides at the slightest distraction. Consistent, affirmative lessons will help this dog establish a stronger sense of himself.



To determine a dog's or puppy's personality, you can do a series of exercises. Test A is best done on a puppy under 5 months; Test B is for dogs over 5 months.

Test A: Puppies Under 5 Months

1. Watch your puppy interact with other puppies. Is he

- a. Bossy, biting and climbing on the others' backs?
- b. Playful, responding to the others' interactions or carrying toys?
- c. More interested in you?
- d. Laid-back and relaxed?
- e. Content to sit alone?
- f. Fearful?

2. Cradle your puppy in your arms (if you can). Does he

- a. Squirm and bite to be freed?
- b. Mouth playfully, then relax?
- c. Relax immediately and lick your hand?
- d. Relax and look content?
- e. Look submissive, licking your hand with his ears back?
- f. Look afraid?

3. Shake a set of keys above your puppy's head without his knowing it. Does he

- a. Respond assertively, jumping up to bite the keys?
- b. Try to play with the keys?
- c. Look to you?
- d. React calmly?
- e. Look confused?
- f. Act fearful—tail tucked, ears back, hunched down?

4. Gently grasp the scruff of your puppy's neck, just behind his ears. Does he

- a. Turn to defend himself?
- b. Lay his ears back and reach up to playfully interact?
- c. Quickly lower himself to the floor and roll to one side playfully or lick your hand?
- d. Relax?
- e. Roll submissively to one side, and possibly pee?
- f. Look frightened—roll to one side, tail tucked under belly, ears pinned back?

5. Fall to the floor and pretend to grasp your knee in pain. Does he

- a. Pounce and bite you?
- b. Playfully run to you with his tail wagging?
- c. Run to you, putting his head under your body?
- d. Not respond?
- e. Act confused?
- f. Run to a corner, tail and ears down?

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

Test Your Dog's Personality *(continued)*

Test B: Puppies Over 5 Months and Adult Dogs

1. Call your dog in an enclosed space. Does he

- a. Completely ignore you?
- b. Look and consider, perhaps staying just out of reach?
- c. Race right over or make a game out of keep-away?
- d. Slowly come or allow you to approach?
- e. Come quickly with a lowered posture signaling submission (if he left your side in the first place)?
- f. Get skittish?

2. Approach your dog while he is chewing or playing with a toy. Does he

- a. Protect the toy with a stiffened body?
- b. Playfully move his head so the object is just out of reach or tug to keep the toy?
- c. Welcome your approach or play a familiar game of keep away or tug?
- d. Lay his head over the toy or give the toy up without a struggle?
- e. Give the toy up while licking your hand or wagging his tail submissively?
- f. Look as if you're about to hit him or race away with the object fearfully and stay just out of reach?

3. Wake your dog from a nap (clap your hands above his head). Does he

- a. Jump up aggressively?
- b. Wake quickly and prepare to play or look for a toy?
- c. Get up and come to you?
- d. Only partially get up?
- e. Look confused and either come to you or move to a safe place away from the noise?
- f. Jump up and look frightened?

4. Take a box of cereal to your dog's level and give him one treat at a time. Does he

- a. Demand the box?
- b. Take the treat and playfully try to stick his nose in the box?
- c. Take one treat at a time, following your hand as you reach in for the next treat?
- d. Take the treat or, if hungry, nose the box?
- e. Take the treats one at a time?
- f. Take the treat quickly or take it and go to the box for more with a look of panic?

5. Fall to the floor and pretend to grasp your knee in pain. Does he

- a. Approach you and sniff?
- b. Playfully run to you with his tail wagging?
- c. Run to you, putting his head under your body?
- d. Not respond?
- e. Act confused?
- f. Approach you momentarily and then pace the room?

Interpret the Results

The answers to these questions will help you assess the puppy's or dog's personality.

- **Mostly A's: Bossy.** A dog who tries to control or dominate situations, is headstrong and self-assured, may challenge directions, and submits only to a consistent approach
- **Mostly B's: Comedian.** A playful dog who puts fun above obedience
- **Mostly C's: Eager to Please.** A dog who seeks your approval and is dependent on your interactions
- **Mostly D's: Joe Cool.** A laid-back dog who always approaches life in that manner. Although it sounds dreamy, it can be frustrating if you crave interaction or involvement.
- **Mostly E's: Sweet Pea.** A reserved dog who is cautious and depends on direction
- **Mostly F's: Timid.** A timid dog who may let his fears override his trust if not worked with consistently

Few dogs get straight scores. Like human beings, they are a mix of traits.



Get a Proper Education

If you find that you need training help beyond the scope of this book, finding a training school or private trainer can be one of the best investments you'll make. Look for an individual who shows compassion for both you and your dog—someone who responds openly to your questions on everything from potty training to leash walking.



Find Additional Training Help

PRIVATE INSTRUCTION

It is important to like and agree with the person you choose to help you handle your dog. There are many good dog trainers, but finding an individual who can teach *you* is just as important. Here are a few questions to help you pinpoint your search:

- How long have you been in this business?
- May I speak to someone regarding your techniques?
- What books or websites do you recommend?
- How do you discipline a dog?
- What is your experience with my breed (or with shelter dogs or mixed breeds)?

It's best to find someone who is willing to answer these questions openly. A good trainer is usually busy helping dogs, so be respectful of her time: wait to ask for specific advice about your dog until you meet her face to face.



GROUP CLASS

Look for a class with six to eight dogs that groups dogs by age and ability. If you have a puppy, enroll him in a puppy kindergarten class. It is good for socialization. Ask if the class allows for off-leash playtime, and if you have a smaller breed, ask if there is a separate room or area for your dog to play in.

If your older dog is afraid or aggressive toward other dogs or has an extreme issue such as excessive barking, ask how the instructor deals with that situation. Also inquire if the instructor uses a specific training collar. In my classes, I offer a choice of five collars, since each dog is unique and needs specific equipment to help him learn. Finally, ask about the instructive philosophy for discipline—does the teacher discipline dogs in class?

When asking these questions, ask yourself if you are comfortable with this person and her answers. If you're not, look for other groups; you have choices.

