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PRESIDENT'S CORNER continued

How to Create House Rules for Your New Puppy

By Jan Reisen, Updated: Aug 11, 2026 **AKC**

You're getting a new puppy! This is an exciting time, and it's easy to daydream about all the fun things you'll do with a dog in your life.

There's a lot you can do in preparation to make sure that your puppy's introduction into the household goes smoothly. It starts by creating some house rules before your puppy even comes home.

Why Do You Need Puppy House Rules?

Dogs have their own natural behaviors, not all of which will be acceptable in their new household, and some behaviors could even be dangerous, destructive, or unhealthy. By creating a set of house rules, you'll be letting your puppy know, right from the beginning, what is and is not acceptable.

This is all new for the puppy. They have to adjust to new owners and a new environment. If everyone in the family is consistent with rules, it will help the dog learn exactly what you expect of them, and what they can expect of you. The best way to do this is by creating house rules for your puppy ahead of time.

How Do I Create House Rules?

All family members should sit down and figure out the house rules together. Just as when you define expectations for your kids, consistency is key, and if the whole family agrees on the rules, it's more likely they'll stick to them.

Then you'll need to decide which are the most essential rules. Obviously a 20-page manifesto of what your dog can and cannot do will be confusing for everyone, including the puppy. And it'll make it much harder to stay consistent. So, what's important to you?



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What Rooms Will the Puppy Have Access To?

Some people are comfortable with puppies having free range from the beginning. Others establish certain areas of the house as no-dog zones, such as the kitchen or a baby's room. You may want the puppy to stay on one floor only. For many families, it's easiest to keep the puppy to a small area of the house during house-training.

Will the Puppy be Allowed on Furniture?

Whatever you decide is OK for a tiny, adorable puppy may not be quite so great for a full-grown dog. It's important to decide from the beginning what the rule is. You can teach them to stay off furniture completely, or you can train them to stay off the furniture unless you give a specific command. Or, you may decide they are allowed to get on one specific piece of furniture, but not on others. And for some people, furniture is a perfectly acceptable place for the dog to hang out. Whatever your preference, make this rule before your puppy comes home.

Who in Your Family Is Responsible for What?

It's easy enough before the puppy comes home for family members to say they'll always feed the dog or always take the dog out, but the reality is

quite a different matter. Decide now, before the puppy becomes part of the family, what each person's responsibility is.

What Will Your Morning Routine Be?

It can be hard enough coordinating schedules in the morning, especially in large families. Decide early on when your puppy will go out and be fed.

What Will Your Evening Routine Be?

Who feeds the dog and when? Do they get a long, leisurely after-dinner stroll or a quick trip outside to take care of business? Do they have a set bedtime or just go to sleep when they feel like it?

Where Will the Puppy Sleep?

Will they be crated downstairs, away from the bedrooms? Will they be crated in someone's room? Will they sleep on a dog bed in the hall? Will they sleep wherever they want? Even cuddled up next to you in bed? Many owners choose to crate the puppy at night, especially until they're house-trained.

How Will You Handle Treats and Table Scraps?

Allowing your puppy to do this even once can set up expectations, and they may hang around the table begging at every meal. Aside from the fact that human food may not be suitable for dogs, this habit can get annoying quickly. Decide what the family rule is before the puppy comes home.

What Commands Will You Use?

What commands will you use for basic obedience, like sit, stay, and come? Make sure to establish basic commands and/or signals that everyone in the household will use consistently.

Should Your Puppy Be Allowed to Jump?

As cute as a tiny puppy is when he greets you ecstatically, is this a behavior you want to encourage? In most cases, probably not. There's nothing cute about almost getting bowled over by a 75-pound German

Shepherd Dog. If you want to teach your dog not to jump, start as soon as they come home.

Once you've decided on the rules, post them in a visible place, like on the refrigerator, as a daily reminder to everyone of what their responsibilities are.



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House Rules for Humans

House rules for your puppy aren't the only rules that need to be set. Family members, especially children, must also be clear on safety and acceptable behavior.

Children Should Learn How to Handle the Puppy

As adorable as they are, puppies aren't new plush toys or playthings. Teach the kids not to pull the dog's ears or tail or otherwise treat them like an inanimate object.

Let the Puppy Eat in Peace

Disturbing a dog when they're eating can lead to anxiety and even food aggression.

Don't Hit or Yell at the Dog

They don't understand what's they have done wrong, it teaches them nothing, and will cause trust issues.

Don't Leave Things on the Floor

Puppies are natural chewers and will probably go after anything left on the floor; they don't know it's your favorite shoe or new iPhone. For their safety (and your own sanity), pick it up and put it out of reach.

Bringing a new puppy into the home is a real game-changer: the depth of your feelings for him and the joy he adds to your life may surprise you. You can facilitate a happy homecoming and an easier adjustment if you create and stick to some basic house rules from the very beginning. Your relationship with your dog will thrive on sensible, consistent guidelines.

Fun Day











How to Set Realistic Training Expectations for Your Dog

By Sassafras Patterdale, CPDT-KA, CTDI, Updated: Aug 11, 2026 **AKC**

Do you feel like your dog isn't living up to your expectations? Realistic training expectations help dogs learn more successfully and reduce frustration for both dogs and owners. Dogs may struggle when distractions increase, skills haven't been fully taught, or training progresses too quickly. By focusing on gradual learning, consistent practice, and goals that match your dog's abilities, you can build confidence and create a more positive training experience.

When Your Dog 'Knows' a Behavior but Doesn't Perform It

A good indication that you may have set your expectations for your dog a little too high is if you find yourself getting frustrated because your dog isn't doing a behavior that you're convinced they "know."

Dogs aren't spiteful, and they aren't trying to embarrass us during training. They don't selectively forget cues just to make us look bad. If you're asking your dog to perform a specific behavior and they don't do it, the criteria have likely shifted to a level beyond what they can currently achieve. In dog training, criteria refers to the specific standard a dog must meet to earn reinforcement for a behavior — for example, holding a sit for 10 seconds instead of three. When criteria jump too high too fast, a dog can appear to "forget" a skill they've only actually partially learned.

For example, if you've only practiced tricks in your living room, taking your dog to a busy park or training center and asking for those same behaviors may not go well. Your dog may not yet know how to focus with that level of distraction.

If your dog isn't responding to a cue, a few common causes are usually behind it:

- They don't fully understand the behavior yet

- They haven't learned to work around the distraction level you're presenting
- The reward you're using isn't valuable enough in that environment

Rather than becoming frustrated, adjust your criteria and help your dog succeed under the new conditions.



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Make Sure You've Actually Taught the Skill

Whether you're working on basic manners or advanced competition skills, it's important not to expect your dog to do something they haven't been taught.

This sounds obvious, but because our dogs are so closely connected with us, it can be easy to forget that they aren't mind-readers. This issue can become especially noticeable in multi-dog households. Just because you taught one dog a behavior doesn't mean the others understand it.

It can be easy to feel discouraged when your dog doesn't respond as expected, but the real issue is usually a skill gap, not defiance. It isn't fair to expect dogs to perform behaviors that haven't been clearly taught and practiced.

Set Goals That Match Reality

Setting realistic expectations doesn't mean lowering your standards. It means being honest about the work required to achieve your goals.

A well-trained dog is the result of consistent effort. Training is a team activity, and attending class once a week is rarely enough by itself. Regular

practice between classes helps dogs understand and retain what they learn.

It's fine to have ambitious goals for your dog, but those goals should reflect your dog's current age, temperament, health, level of training, and your own experience. If you're unsure whether your expectations are realistic, consider consulting a professional trainer. They can help you evaluate your goals and create a plan that's fair for both you and your dog.



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Why Moving Too Fast Can Backfire

Training progress can be exciting, especially when you're eager to advance quickly. Whether your goal is a well-mannered family dog or success in dog sports, it's important to build a strong foundation before moving on.

Rushing through fundamental skills can create learning gaps that need to be corrected later. In many cases, slowing down early saves time and setbacks in the future.

Setting unrealistic expectations can also affect your dog's physical well-being. In some high-impact sports, asking too much of a young or physically immature dog can increase the risk of injury. Only introduce activities such as jumping or weave pole training at appropriate developmental stages to help protect your dog's long-term health.

Keep Training Positive and Productive

Training sessions should leave dogs feeling confident, engaged, and eager to learn. They shouldn't leave them discouraged or shut down.

One of the best ways to maintain a positive learning environment is to work at a pace your dog can follow. Increasing difficulty too quickly can leave dogs confused and frustrated.

When dogs repeatedly encounter challenges they aren't prepared for, they may become reluctant to participate in training altogether. By setting achievable expectations and celebrating small successes, you can keep training enjoyable and rewarding.

Avoid Comparing Your Dog to Others

The internet has made it easier than ever for dog owners to connect and share achievements. While this can be inspiring, it can also create unrealistic expectations.

It's easy to compare your dog's progress to another dog online, especially when you see polished videos and impressive accomplishments. However, those posts rarely show the full story, including setbacks, mistakes, and the amount of training behind the scenes.

Instead of comparing your dog to other dogs—or to an idealized version of the dog you wish you had—focus on your dog's individual progress. Pay attention to what they already know, build from those successes, and create training goals that reflect where they are today.

Key Takeaways

- Dogs often struggle when distractions, environments, or expectations change faster than their training progresses.
- Never expect a dog to perform behaviors that haven't been clearly taught and practiced.
- Realistic goals should reflect a dog's age, temperament, health, and training experience.
- Rushing training can create learning gaps and, in some cases, increase the risk of physical injury.

- Comparing your dog to others can lead to unrealistic expectations and unnecessary frustration.

From the Desk of Lynne Rosebrock, Owner at Animal Care Center Mariposa and Owner at Carroy Kennels Irish Wolfhounds

First-time owners are not foolish. They simply don't know what unethical breeders hope they never learn.

1. "AKC registered means well bred."

Registration is not proof of health, structure, or temperament. A pure bred dog can still be a poorly bred dog. Some registration papers are only good enough to use to line the bottom of a bird cage.

2. "The perfect color means the perfect puppy." Color should be the very least important part of choosing a puppy. Designer colors often mean the puppy is not, in fact, pure bred ... or at least not bred to the breed standard ... it does NOT mean it is more valuable.

3. "The breeder is nice, so they must be ethical."

Kind words are not the same as responsible choices.

4, They have a nice website and everything on it must be true.

5. "The parents look healthy." "The breeder's vet said they were ok to breed." Looking healthy is not health testing. See what the National Breed Club recommends for complete testing for that breed and then ask to see actual results.

6. "The puppies sold fast, so they must be high quality."

Popularity is not proof. Marketing can fill a waitlist too.

7. "They love their dogs, so they must breed responsibly."

Love matters, but love without knowledge and restraint can still cause harm. Reputable breeders love the breed and work to protect and preserve it's best qualities.

8. "I only want a pet, so none of this matters."

Family pets deserve healthy bodies and stable minds just as much as show dogs do.

How to Stop Puppy Mouthing and Teach Better Bite Habits

By Stephanie Gibeault, MSc, CPDT, Updated: Aug 07, 2026 **AKC**

Puppies explore the world with their mouths, so mouthing hands, feet, and other objects is completely normal, and play-biting is a natural part of development. Teething, which can last for up to six months, can make puppies even more likely to chew and mouth things to ease discomfort.

However, those sharp puppy teeth can hurt, and you don't want your dog to continue the habit into adulthood. An important step for any new puppy owner is teaching them not to mouth humans. By consistently teaching appropriate behavior and providing healthy outlets for your puppy's energy, you can reduce mouthing and help your puppy develop better bite habits.

Why Puppies Mouth and Bite

Puppies use their mouths to investigate their environment, play with littermates, and cope with teething discomfort. Mouthing and gentle play-biting are normal behaviors during puppyhood, but that doesn't mean they should be encouraged when directed at people.

One of the most important lessons a puppy can learn is that human skin and clothing aren't appropriate chew toys. Teaching this skill early helps prevent unwanted habits from continuing as your puppy grows.



Chris Amaral/Getty Images Plus

Stop the Fun When Mouthing Starts

Attention is rewarding for puppies, so it's important not to accidentally reinforce mouthing behavior. Whenever your puppy bites or mouths you, stop all interaction with them. This teaches them that mouthing or biting causes play and attention to end.

You can tuck your hands away, stand still, or briefly turn your back for a few seconds. Consistency is key. The more predictable your response, the faster your puppy will understand the consequence.

To help teach bite inhibition (the use of a gentle mouth), say "ouch!" or "yip" in a high-pitched voice whenever your puppy bites you. This mimics the behavior their mother and littermates used when the puppy bit too hard, and it will help them understand the importance of a gentle mouth. However, this noise can overexcite some puppies. If that happens, walk away or calmly place them in their crate for a brief break instead.

Use Calm Movements and Gentle Handling

Fast-moving hands and feet can trigger a puppy's instinct to chase and grab moving objects. If you're waving your hands around or quickly pulling away, you may unintentionally encourage play-biting.

Instead, set up your puppy for success by using calm, smooth movements. When you handle your puppy (for example, when you're grooming or petting them), do so gently and slowly.

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Make Rest Part of the Daily Routine

Overtired puppies are often mouthier puppies. Like young children, puppies can become cranky and impulsive when they don't get enough rest. To prevent that, schedule time every day for them to nap or wind down in their crate.

Most puppies need up to 18 hours of sleep per day. Establish a routine for your puppy that includes scheduled nap times and quiet crate breaks. Consistent rest can help reduce overstimulation and make self-control easier for your puppy.

Use Up Their Physical and Mental Energy

A puppy with excess energy is more likely to engage in unwanted behaviors, including mouthing and nipping. Providing both physical exercise and mental enrichment can help prevent problems before they start.

Good outlets for stimulation and exercise include:

- Puzzle toys
- Training sessions for cues like “sit” or “down”
- Romps in the backyard
- Structured play

Teach your puppy to play appropriately. After playing calmly, you can then ask for a sit. When your puppy responds correctly, reward them with another opportunity to play.

As your puppy learns the rules of engagement, you can gradually increase the excitement level while still maintaining control.

Have a Plan to Direct Your Puppy’s Energy

Having a plan in place makes it easier to respond calmly when your puppy becomes mouthy. For example, have toys or a pouch or container full of treats in every room. The faster you offer an acceptable alternative, the easier it is for your puppy to learn what behavior earns attention and rewards.

Even better, anticipate your puppy’s periods of high activity, so you can prevent mouthing in the first place. If you know your puppy gets mouthy after being released from their crate, have a toy ready to distract them as soon as you open the door.



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Distract Them With Treats

There will be times when your hands need to be close to your puppy, such as during grooming or petting. In those situations, treats can help keep your puppy focused on something other than your fingers.

Offer small treats while handling your puppy gently. This not only reduces opportunities for mouthing but also creates positive associations with being touched, examined, and groomed.

Teach Children How to Interact With Puppies

Children often move quickly, make loud noises, and engage in energetic play, all of which can encourage mouthing behavior in puppies.

It's important to teach children how to interact safely with your dog. For example, don't let them chase or harass your puppy. Encourage children to move slowly and calmly, be gentle, and keep loud noises to a minimum.

Most importantly, always supervise interactions between children and puppies. This helps keep both safe while teaching your puppy appropriate behavior around people.

When to Seek Extra Training Help

Most puppies outgrow excessive mouthing when owners consistently teach appropriate behaviors and provide enough exercise, enrichment, and rest. However, if your puppy's biting seems unusually intense or you're struggling to make progress, working with a qualified trainer can help address the behavior before it becomes a long-term habit.

Key Takeaways

- Puppy mouthing is normal but should be redirected away from people.
- End play and attention immediately when biting occurs to avoid reinforcing the behavior.

- Adequate sleep, exercise, and enrichment can significantly reduce excessive mouthing.
- Keep toys and treats readily available so you can quickly redirect biting.
- Consistent training and supervision help puppies develop appropriate bite habits as they mature.

Why Do Dogs Roll in the Grass? Is This Normal?

Sometimes, it can be a sign of stress, but most of the time, it just feels good!



By Yvonne Villaseñor. Reviewed by Dr. Jo Cornett, Updated, May 5, 2025



Photo by Getty Images/Chewy

Q: I can always expect my pup to roll in the grass whenever we go outside. He seems to really love his grass-shimmy time, even if it's a little muddy! Why do dogs roll in the grass? And is it normal?

A: Yes, it's completely normal for dogs to roll in the grass! Typically, dogs enjoy doing it because it's fun for them and feels good or they're marking their scent, among other reasons.

We spoke with a dog trainer and a veterinarian to learn more about this super cute—and sometimes stinky!—behavior.

Why Do Dogs Roll in the Grass?

Does your canine companion find a plush patch of grass to roll on no matter where you go? There are a few explanations as to why they might do this.

Here are some common reasons your dog may roll around in grass.

Scent Masking

Scent masking is when a dog disguises their scent with environmental odors to protect themselves from potential prey or rivals.

Used as a survival tactic by wolf ancestors, dogs might use smelly materials, like grass, manure, or dead worms to mask their own scent.

Communication

If you notice your pooch is having a wag-worthy time when rolling in the grass, they could be trying to share a message with their doggy friends. (We'd like to think that this could be a basic introduction of who they are and their favorite foods.)

"Dogs have scent glands on their bodies that they use to communicate with other dogs," says Amanda Farah, CPDT-KA, a certified dog trainer and the coordinator of national training and behavior for Best Friends Animal Society based in Kanab, Utah.

"A dog who rolls in the grass may be leaving their own scent behind so other dogs know they were there, or they may be covering the scents of dogs who were there previously," she adds.

Skin Relief

The texture of grass can provide a lot of comfort to a dog who feels itchy.

Rolling in grass allows them to get those hard-to-reach spots, like along their back and the base of their tail, acting as their personal back scratcher.

“Some dogs have figured out that when they’re itchy, certain surfaces are more satisfying to rub against,” Farah says. “Carpet, sand, and grass are favorites of many dogs.”

If your dog spends a lot of time rolling in grass or rubbing on other surfaces, it’s recommended to consult a vet to rule out potential skin conditions, allergies, or fleas.

Enjoyment

This behavior could simply come down to dogs just loving it—so much so that you can even see them smiling as they roll! After all, we know the smallest things can bring our fun-loving pups the greatest joy (like worn socks and random sticks).

The tactile sensation could feel good, similar to us stretching, says Sabrina Kong, DVM, a veterinarian based in California, and veterinary consultant at WeLoveDoodles.com.

Not to mention, the scent of grass, and scents in the grass, can be fascinating for them to sniff out—and even eat.

You can bring the outdoors in and give your dog a safe place to roll with indoor “grass,” like the Pevue Pet Products turf.

“Like us, dogs are social creatures, so some dogs like to roll when they see other dogs rolling,” Farah says. “Maybe they’re all attracted to the same scent for other reasons, but maybe they’re just jumping on the trend.”

Should I Stop My Dog From Rolling in the Grass?

The short answer? It depends. Generally, rolling in the grass can be safe, seemingly endless fun for dogs. However, there are some cases where it’s best to keep them from doing so for their safety.

When It’s OK To Let Them Roll

Some dogs especially revel in the chance to frolic and roll in the grass. If you notice your happy pup rolling and enjoying themselves, you

can definitely let them continue the behavior—just make sure they are on a flea and tick prevention.

When You Might Want To Stop It

Our experts recommend intervening in your dog rolling in the grass in the following instances:

- **If it's excessive:** While rolling in grass is typically harmless, watch for excessive rolling that disrupts daily life or accompanies additional symptoms—specifically skin issues like redness or odor—or stress signals such as panting or whining, Dr. Kong says. Obsessive rolling after walks could indicate allergies or anxiety.
- **If there are hazards:** Your pup should avoid rolling in the grass if it's chemically treated with pesticides or fertilizers, mold, or littered with hazards, like sharp debris or parasites, Dr. Kong says.
- **If it's muddy or gross:** Muddy grass could get moisture in the ear and that could lead to an ear infection, especially in floppy-eared breeds, and if there are any foxtails in the grass, they can embed in the skin, Dr. Kong says. It's also a good idea to redirect your dog's desire to roll in the grass if there's something foul in it that you'd rather not wear all day, Farah notes. A prime example of this is if your dog tends to roll in poop!

Dr. Kong recommends using a dog leash in risky areas and doing post-roll checks to inspect your dog's fur, paws, and ears for ticks, foxtails, burrs, or irritation.

You can protect your dog from external parasites with flea and tick medicine.

How To Redirect the Behavior

If you'd like to stop your dog from rolling in the grass, the quickest way to focus their attention elsewhere is to be more fun and interesting than the grass, Farah says.

She shares these tips on how to redirect your pup's grass rolling:

1. **Watch for the telltale signs that your dog is about to roll.** It begins with intense sniffing, and then you might see that shoulder start to dip a bit.
2. **Instantly become the most interesting person at the park.** Put on your happy, playful voice, loosen up your own body language, turn your body away, and begin to run slowly in the other direction while using your best "play with me" voice.
3. **When they follow, reward with a dog toy or dog treats.** Leaving behind an area with a scent is a big-deal accomplishment.

Other training cues that Farah recommends include:

The "Leave It" Cue

This is the best time to use this cue, Farah says.

When doing so, speak in an upbeat, request voice rather than a serious warning tone.

This safe cue should always be something your pup finds fun—not stressful—to keep the cue strong, she explains.

Because scents can be extremely rewarding for a dog, remember to give them grace if it's difficult for them to resist. Reward them with a high-value treat, like Hill's Natural Jerky Mini-Strips, if they do it with minimal hesitation.

With this cue, simply say, "Let's run!" to your dog, then turn and take off running.

Farah trains this on a leash during a walk and recommends waiting for your dog to come with you. Alternate giving "run" and "walk" cues for a fun game.

When you need to move away from something quickly, having a dog who knows and loves the “let’s run” cue is valuable, she says.

FAQs About Dogs Rolling in Grass

Q: Why do dogs rub themselves on grass?

A: Dogs can rub themselves on grass for several reasons, ranging from scratching an itch, and because it’s fun or feels good, to masking their scent and communicating with other dogs.

Q: Can rolling in grass be a sign of allergies?

A: Yes, sometimes rolling in grass can be a sign that a dog has allergies—especially if it’s excessive or you notice they roll and rub their body on various surfaces.

Q: Should I let my dog roll in wet or muddy grass?

A: It depends. You can let your dog roll in wet or muddy grass but be mindful of the cleanup involved—as well as potential hazards like pesticides and fertilizers, parasites, and bacteria. It’s also important to note that some dogs can be allergic to grass.

Shamrocks & Shennanigans: PA Renn- Faire





Why Does My Dog Lick the Furniture?

By Jan Reisen, Updated: Aug 11, 2026 **AKC**

We know dogs like to lick things, and it doesn't stop at peanut butter treats. While occasional licking of the sofa, carpet, pillows, or other household items is often harmless, persistent furniture licking can sometimes signal boredom, stress, anxiety, obsessive behaviors, or an underlying medical issue. Understanding the cause is the first step toward helping your dog and protecting your belongings.

When Furniture Licking Is Normal

Licking is a natural behavior for dogs. They lick to groom themselves, enjoy interesting tastes and smells, explore their environment, and show

affection. Dogs also tend to enjoy the taste of human skin because of its salt content.

An occasional lick of the sofa or a favorite chair isn't necessarily unusual. However, if your dog is frequently licking furniture, carpets, cushions, or pillows and seems unable to stop, it may indicate a deeper behavioral or medical issue.

Boredom and Lack of Stimulation

Some dogs lick furniture simply because they're bored. When they don't have enough mental or physical stimulation, repetitive behaviors can become a way to pass the time.

If your dog's furniture licking is occasional and easily interrupted, increasing enrichment may help. Provide interactive toys, games, treats, and opportunities for exercise to keep your dog mentally engaged when you're not around.



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Anxiety, Stress, and Self-Soothing

Stress and anxiety are common reasons for excessive licking. Changes in a dog's environment or routine can lead them to seek comfort through repetitive behaviors.

Dogs are creatures of habit, and disruptions such as moving, welcoming a new family member, changes in household schedules, visitors, or unfamiliar noises can make them anxious. Repetitive licking releases endorphins, which may help dogs self-soothe during periods of stress.

In many cases, licking the sofa or other furniture begins as an occasional response to loneliness, boredom, or anxiety. Over time, however, it can become habitual.

Increasing exercise, socialization, and enrichment can often help reduce stress. Activities such as dog sports, play sessions, play dates, training exercises, and puzzle toys can provide healthy outlets for your dog's energy and attention.

Exercise is a well-known stress reliever for both dogs and humans. Even if it doesn't completely eliminate the behavior, it can improve your dog's overall physical and emotional well-being.

Canine Obsessive-Compulsive Behaviors

In some dogs, excessive furniture licking may be a symptom of canine obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD).

Signs that furniture licking may be compulsive include:

- Difficulty interrupting the behavior
- Intense or aggressive licking
- Appearing unusually focused or disconnected while licking
- Returning to the behavior repeatedly despite redirection

In humans, this can be compared to the difference between occasionally biting your nails when anxious and feeling unable to leave the house without repeatedly checking whether the door is locked.

No specific breed is inherently more susceptible to canine OCD, but some dogs may be more prone to compulsive behaviors. Dogs that have experienced highly restricted, unstimulating environments, such as prolonged chaining or confinement without adequate exercise and socialization, may develop stereotypies. A stereotypy is a repetitive, specific, nonfunctional behavior that is performed over and over, such as constant furniture licking.

Even after moving into a loving, enriching environment, these behaviors can become deeply ingrained and difficult to change.

That said, compulsive disorders can also occur in dogs raised in stable, caring homes. In these situations, increased stimulation alone may not resolve the issue. A veterinarian can discuss possible treatment options, including behavior modification strategies and anti-anxiety medication when appropriate.



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Medical Conditions That Can Cause Licking

Persistent furniture licking isn't always behavioral. Some physical health issues can also trigger the behavior.

Dogs have sensitive digestive systems, and dietary changes or eating something unusual can disrupt the balance of bacteria in their intestines. Excessive licking of soft surfaces such as furniture, rugs, or bedding may indicate nausea or gastrointestinal discomfort.

Older dogs may develop canine cognitive dysfunction, often referred to as dog dementia. Cognitive changes associated with aging can sometimes lead to repetitive or compulsive behaviors, including excessive licking.

It's also worth factoring in your dog's overall health, age, and any existing medical conditions.

How to Figure Out Why Your Dog Is Licking Furniture

Identifying the underlying cause gives you the best chance of reducing or stopping the behavior.

If boredom seems likely, redirect your dog toward a toy, puzzle, game, or other enriching activity. If stress appears to be the trigger, consider whether there have been recent changes in your dog's environment or routine. Something that seems minor to you, such as increased visitors, loud outdoor noises, or schedule changes, may be significant to your dog.

When emotional triggers are involved, removing the source of stress may not always be possible. In those cases, increased enrichment, exercise, and positive distractions can help.

If your dog isn't experiencing boredom or anxiety, consider potential medical causes. Digestive issues, nausea, cognitive dysfunction, and other health concerns may contribute to persistent licking behaviors.

Whenever you're unsure, consult your veterinarian. They can help rule out medical conditions and determine whether anxiety, compulsive behaviors, or another issue may be responsible.



Cavan Images/Getty Images Plus

When to Contact Your Veterinarian

As a general rule, occasional furniture licking that can be easily interrupted is usually not a cause for concern.

Consider consulting your veterinarian if your dog:

- Licks furniture frequently or for long periods
- Cannot be distracted from the behavior
- Appears distressed or anxious
- Shows other signs of illness

- Is an older dog developing new repetitive behaviors

Persistent licking that leaves behind damp cushions, soggy armrests, or damaged furniture may be more than a nuisance. It can be a sign that your dog is experiencing emotional distress or physical discomfort and needs additional support.

Key Takeaways

- Occasional furniture licking is generally normal and may simply reflect curiosity or exploration.
- Repetitive licking is often associated with boredom, stress, anxiety, or insufficient stimulation.
- Some dogs develop compulsive licking behaviors that are difficult to interrupt.
- Gastrointestinal issues, nausea, and cognitive dysfunction can also cause excessive licking.
- Veterinary evaluation is recommended when the behavior becomes frequent, intense, or difficult to stop.

Update on the AKC Canine Health Foundation Epilepsy Initiative

By Sharon Albright, DVM, CCRT, Published: Sep 26, 2018 **AKC**



Canine idiopathic epilepsy, recurrent seizures with no identifiable underlying cause, remains a common concern of dog owners and veterinary professionals. Despite the development of new anti-epileptic drugs, many dogs' seizures remain uncontrolled using currently available therapies. To address this major health concern the AKC Canine Health Foundation (CHF), along with its donors, has invested over \$673,000 since 2017 in the following research projects seeking improved diagnostics, novel therapies, and a better understanding of the genetics and pathophysiology of canine idiopathic epilepsy.

[Grant 02248: Identification of a Novel Juvenile Myoclonic Epilepsy Gene and Its Underlying Disease Mechanism](#)

Investigators at the University of Helsinki and the Folkhälsan Institute of Genetics explored a genetic mutation causing juvenile myoclonic epilepsy (JME) in Rhodesian Ridgebacks. Five publications have resulted from this study describing the utility of video electroencephalography (EEG) to determine if unusual behavior was actually a seizure, documenting the clinical and EEG characteristics of JME, and describing the causative gene mutation and proposed mechanism of disease. Since JME is a common form of human epilepsy, this research has the potential to impact both dogs and humans.

[02249-A: Studying the Role of the Gastrointestinal Tract in Canine Epilepsy](#)

Investigators at North Carolina State University sought to determine if the intestinal bacterial population affects the development and progression of epilepsy in dogs. They compared the fecal bacterial population of epileptic and non-epileptic dogs, specifically looking at differences in the amount of *Lactobacillus* group bacteria present. They also explored the effects that anti-epileptic medications had on the *Lactobacillus* population. The increasing evidence supporting this important interaction between the gastrointestinal tract and the brain was presented in a CHF-sponsored webinar titled "What's Feeding Those Seizures? An Update on Refractory

Canine Epilepsy and the Potential Link to Gastrointestinal Health.” Watch on demand at akcchf.org/vetvine.

[Grant 02252: Investigating a Ketogenic Medium-Chain Triglyceride \(MCT\) Supplement for the Treatment of Drug-Resistant Canine Idiopathic Epilepsy and Its Behavioral Comorbidities](#)

Investigators at the Royal Veterinary College, University of London examined the effects of dietary supplementation with a medium-chain triglyceride (MCT) on seizure control and quality of life in dogs with refractory epilepsy. Despite high doses of anti-epileptic drugs, these dogs continue to have seizures and suffer side-effects of the medication(s). Therefore, investigators tracked changes in anxiety, cognition, and stress in addition to seizure frequency and severity during this study. The first of several publications anticipated from this project (Berk, B. A., et al. (2018). Investigating owner use of dietary supplements in dogs with idiopathic epilepsy. *Res Vet Sci*, 119, 276–284) describes their survey results, detailing how and why epileptic dog owners use different diets and dietary supplements.

[Grant 02257: Identification of Genetic Risk Factors for Canine Epilepsy](#)

Investigators at the University of Missouri, Columbia are using whole genome sequencing to compare genetic variations present in epileptic dogs versus non-epileptic dogs. They are specifically looking for genes that could affect the function of ion channels and neurotransmitter receptors, potentially altering the seizure threshold. A case study has been published documenting a novel genetic mutation found associated with neuronal ceroid lipofuscinosis (NCL) in a young Cane Corso. NCL is an inherited disease, also seen in people, that results in seizures and neurologic decline caused by the accumulation of fatty acids and proteins within nerve cells. Continued exploration could benefit both dogs and humans.

[2323: Efficacy of Cannabidiol \(CBD\) for the Treatment of Canine Epilepsy](#)

[2533-E: 2018 Summer Veterinary Student Educational Grant](#)

Investigators at Colorado State University are exploring the efficacy of cannabidiol (CBD), a prominent non-psychoactive component of the *Cannabis sativa* plant, in treating canine epilepsy. This is one of the first controlled studies on the use of CBD in canine epilepsy. Dr. Diane Brown, CHF CEO, and Dr. Stephanie McGrath, principal investigator, discuss this groundbreaking clinical trial in this AKC article:

<https://www.akc.org/expert-advice/health/alternative-medicine/cbd-oil-for-dog-seizures/>. To support the next generation of canine health researchers, CHF provided funding for a summer veterinary student intern to work on this project.

CHF continues to find and fund new research in support of the canine [Epilepsy Research Initiative](#) to improve the understanding of and treatment for idiopathic and refractory epilepsy in dogs. Research grants will be awarded to peer-reviewed studies with the greatest potential to advance canine health. CHF remains committed to improving the health of all dogs by funding high-quality research to prevent, treat and cure canine idiopathic epilepsy and other diseases. View our full research portfolio at akcCHF.org/researchportfolio.





2026 Meeting and Events

January 11	Regular Meeting
February 8	Regular Meeting
March 2026	<u>St. Patrick's Day Parades</u>
• March 7	Alexandria, VA
• March 8	Annapolis, MD
• March 14	Manassas, VA
• March 14	Gaithersburg, MD
• March 15	Baltimore, MD
• March 21	Harrisburg, PA
March 8 & 9	<i>Irish Wolfhound Assoc of the Carolinas Specialty Durham Kennel Club, 7318 Guess Road, Durham NC</i>
March 14	Westminster Celtic Canter
March TBD	<i>Ellicott City Historic Downtown</i>
March 29 & 30	<i>Specialty Harford County Equestrian Center, Bel Air, MD (Meeting Following Judging)</i>
March 29	<i>Irish Wolfhound Association of Lake Erie Specialty New York State Fairgrounds</i>
April 17 & 18	Dills Celtic Festival, Dills Tavern, 237 Baltimore St, Dillsburg, PA
May 2 & 3	Faerie Festival Marshy Point Rocky Point Park in Baltimore County, MD. 2200 Rocky Point Rd, Essex
May 17	Show Wrap Up Meeting
May 18-21	<i>IWCA National Specialty Purina Farms St Louis, MO</i>
May 29 & 30	Annapolis Irish Festival, Anne Arundel County Fairgrounds, 1450 Crownsville, MD
June 13 & 14	Carroll County Celtic Festival, Carroll County Ag Center, Westminster, MD
June 21	Regular Meeting
June 20	Penn Mar Irish Festival, Shrewsbury, PA
June 27 & 28	<i>Celtic Fling (with a concert on Friday night) PA Renn Faire grounds</i>
August 9	Regular Meeting
September-13	Fun Day
September 19 & 20	<i>PA Renn Faire Shamrocks and Shenanigans Weekend</i>
October 4 & 5	<i>Irish Wolfhound Assoc of the Delaware Valley Specialty</i>
October 18	Regular Meeting
November 13, 14 & 15	Maryland Irish Festival, Timonium, MD
November 22	Regular Meeting
December 13	Holiday Party WE NEED A VOLUNTEER TO HOST or RESERVE A PLACE
December 12	<i>Druid Hill Winter Solstice 5Miler , Baltimore, MD</i>
December 28	<i>Military Bowl Parade, Annapolis, MD</i>

**Dates, Time, or location to be determined and subject to change on some events.
Need Volunteers to Host meetings.**



The Baltimore St. Patrick Parade
and the Shamrock 5K Race:
Sunday, March 14, 2027

PARADE FUNDRAISERS

Saturday, August 22, 2026

1:00pm–6:00pm

DOCK OF THE BAY

9025 CUCKOLD POINT ROAD

dockofthebay.net/

Thanks for another great fundraiser!

Sunday, November 8, 2026

1:00pm–5:00pm

TOWSON REC ROOM (RECHER THEATRE)

512 YORK ROAD

therechermd.com

Sunday, February 7, 2027

11:00am–4:00pm

KELSEY'S RESTAURANT & IRISH PUB

8480 BALTIMORE NATIONAL PIKE

kelseysrestaurant.com

Sunday, February 21, 2027

1:00pm–5:00pm

RACERS' CAFE

7732 HARFORD ROAD, PARKVILLE

facebook.com/racerscafe

Sunday, February 28, 2027

3:00pm–7:00pm

MICK O'SHEA'S IRISH PUB

328 N. CHARLES STREET

mickosheas.com

ALL DATES AND TIMES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE.

For schedule updates, check our webpage: irishparade.net

Shamrock 5K Registrations at <https://www.charmcityrun.com/>

Like us on Facebook! facebook.com/BaltimoreParade

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Like us on Instagram/Threads! instagram.com/BaltimoreParade

St. Patrick Celebrations, Inc.

2026-09-05

