





Bedard, Sherry  
Sherry's Secret Dictionary  
A guide to your dog  
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*Don't you wish your  
dog came with a  
dictionary!*

*Now he can!*

*Sherry's Secret Dictionary* allows you to find your dog's misbehavior in the table of contents. The many possible solutions to your pet's problems are all listed and explained in easy terms on the page indicated by the dictionary.

It's as easy as that. After all, not all dogs learn the same way! This book uses the secrets of dog trainers and veterinarians to make you and your dog happier.

### **About the Author:**

Author Sherry Bedard works as a dog trainer and a teacher. She teaches animal behaviors and body language. Her work at the humane society has shown her firsthand the need for easy-to-understand solutions to simple and common canine misbehaviors. Bedard plans to continue educating the public about canines and their behavior in an effort to reduce the number of abandoned and neglected dogs. A Montreal native, she still calls Montreal home.

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# Sherry's Secret Dictionary

By

Sherry Bedard



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# Preface



Understanding the world of dogs is fairly easy, but professionals tend to complicate the information when trying to explain how to correct their canine's misbehaviors. As a young child, I always loved studying the psychology of domestic animals.

At the age of eighteen, as manager of a pet store, I began to see the need for point-form information on the care and understanding of domestic animals. In today's society, people don't have the time to read a long book on dogs and the possible solutions to their problems. With the cost of living, people don't always have the money to pay a profes-

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sional dog trainer. I currently work as a teacher at both Vanier College (Montreal) and at a humane society, and frequently create short, easy-to-read texts for my classes I have seen the effects these short texts have on the lives of my students. Not only do they read the material, they also put it into practice and get results!

While helping out at a local veterinarian, I noticed that their owner's misunderstanding caused most canine misbehaviors. Most of the problems people were experiencing with their beloved dogs were common problems that could be either avoided or easily corrected, like chewing, digging, barking, etc. This gave me inspiration to write a book in dictionary form, made easy to read and understand, on solving the most common canine behavioral problems. This book will save time, because the problems are categorized in alphabetical order and listed in the table of contents with several point- form solutions. Dogs are much like humans; every dog learns differently. This means that one solution may work for one dog, but not for another.

This book may also save money. Professional dog trainers can be costly. This book is designed to give readers the same solutions provided by a professional trainer, but at a much lower cost. My main objective in writing this book is to improve the quality of life for both dog and owner, by giving easy to understand solutions to simple misbehaviors

# **Understanding the Natural Behavior of Dogs**

## **Instinctive Behavior**

Dogs do not behave in a rational way, planning how to spend the time ahead of them. They just react to what is going on around them, according to the strong, natural instincts they have inherited. We must always remember that the pet dog still has the instincts of his wild ancestors, often weakened by centuries of domestic breeding, but still present. Some breeds have been bred to retain particular instincts useful to man. The hounds have strong instincts to follow scent, the guarding breeds have strong protective instincts, and the gun dogs instinctively carry things.

The wild ancestors of the dog are thought to be very similar to the modern wolf, and we can understand our dogs better by studying the instincts of the wolf. Generally, if a dog is causing problems, it is because his natural instincts are not being satisfied. The dog is left alone

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too much, has no leader, has nothing meaningful to do, doesn't have the opportunity to meet other dogs, etc. Such frustration may cause the dog to behave destructively, to bark a lot, or to show aggression. Often, obedience training, carried out regularly, will cure these problems; it supplies the dog with company, leadership, and activity.

Below are a number of instinctive behaviors that should be considered when attempting to understand how a dog reacts and behaves (remember we do not know what a dog actually thinks; we can only observe behavior).

These behaviors can be classified as: The Pack Instinct, the Instinct for Freedom, the Territorial Instinct, the Sexual Instinct, and the Instinct to Hunt.

### **The Pack Instinct**

Wolves live together in small groups, composed of members of an extended family. They hunt together, and they help each other rear the cubs. Within the group, a "pecking order" is established with a "pack leader" (alpha dog). Each individual varies in the strength of its instinct to dominate or to submit. Most are happy to follow a leader.

A consequence of pack lifestyle is that the wolf (or dog) is essentially a communal animal (likes company and living in a group). In or-

der to live and work together, the wolves need to communicate with each other. They have a range of noises they can make, but they can also communicate very well by means of body language - the movement of the ears and lips, the posture of the body, the angle at which the tail is held, and so on. We should therefore develop our observation of our dog's body language, and also remember that the dog will in turn be reading our (often unintentional) body language.

## **The Instinct for Freedom**

Wild animals have a strong instinct to flee if danger threatens. In the domesticated dog, breeding has generally weakened this instinct. But, it is still present, and may be quite strong in some individuals. Whenever a dog is fenced-in or put on a lead, this instinct is frustrated and may result in aggressive or destructive behavior.

## **The Territorial Instinct**

The wolf is a territorial animal. The area around his den is defended against intruders, especially of the same species. This is why domestic dogs will behave quite differently when they are on their own ground from how they behave elsewhere. When you first bring your dog to classes, he will probably not be as aggressive as he might be at home (the club being neutral ground). This also explains why dogs often bark at intruders at home, like the milkman, the mailman,

or the garbage truck. This behavior is often reinforced since the intruder tends to go away, thus convincing the dog that it's protective, territorial behavior actually works. It also means that if you want to introduce a second dog into your family, it is much better for the first meeting of the dogs to take place on neutral territory, rather than at your home.

### **The Sexual Instinct**

If a dog is to be kept as a companion, it is better to have him or her fixed. Entire bitches come into season twice a year, and have to be very securely confined for three weeks to ensure they don't have unwanted puppies. Entire male dogs are inclined to wander, and may show unpleasant levels of aggression. Fixed dogs or bitches are happier animals, as their instincts are not being frustrated. Contrary to popular belief, they will not get fat, unless overfed or under-exercised.

Unwanted puppies are a major concern in our community, with the Pounds and SPCA Shelters playing host to far too many dogs each year. Feral dogs (those that have been dumped to fend for themselves) are also an increasing problem in rural areas.

### **The Instinct to Hunt**

A wolf would spend a lot of his time hunting for food, but the domestic dog does not have the need, or generally the opportunity, to hunt. We can still see the instinct in the urge to chase moving objects,

such as balls, joggers, bicycles, cars, etc. We can use this instinct when teaching our dogs to come to us; they are much more likely to come if we run away from them than if we move towards them. Teaching a dog to retrieve is using its natural instincts to catch prey and return with it to the den. The hunting instinct is stronger in the breeds that are bred for hunting.

The instinct to hunt (having to work for food) can also be used when training a dog. The dog should be asked to perform some task in order to get food (even dinner). This need not be arduous, and the task can be as simple as a short stay while the food is prepared. Dinnertime is also the perfect opportunity to get some training done, as the dog's motivational levels will be high.

