



## GUIDE TO BECOMING A PROFESSIONAL DOG TRAINER – *SAMPLE*

### Breeds and the Genetics of Behavior (from Phase 1) How Breeds Came to Be and the Behavioral Implications



**Assigned Video:** After reading this section, you will learn how dogs evolved from wolves when you watch the PBS documentary, *Dogs and More Dogs*, in your CATCH Trainer’s Library. In this video, you will meet Dr. Ray Coppinger, a leading expert who our school founder had the honor of studying village dogs with in Mexico City.

Now, let’s first take a look at the wide variety of breeds that came from early domesticated dogs. Picture a Bulldog compared to a Sheltie, or a Chihuahua compared to a Husky. How did these members of the same species come to look so amazingly different?



English Bulldog



Shetland Sheepdog



Chihuahua



Siberian Husky

The wide variation we see in dog breeds today is a result of artificial selection: *humans intentionally, selectively, breeding for specific traits they found in the dogs around them*. Humans first created *specific breeds* to carry out specific tasks. The traits they selected for were 1) physical traits, and 2) behavioral traits.

For a simple example, imagine you were a farmer who wanted a few dogs to help rid your hay storage building of rats. You ask each of your neighbors which one of their dogs kills the most rats, and then you “select” the most accomplished male and female rat-killers to breed to one another. This mating will

produce a litter of puppies that are instinctively very good rat hunters (they have the natural traits without being taught). All of these puppies will be good rat killers, some will be very good, but one will be *the best*. Maybe the best one is an even better rat hunter than his parents. That means he is likely the very best in the area. This is the dog that sets a new standard for excellence in rat hunting, due to his exceptional physical and behavioral traits for the task. That means he is the dog that will be picked to father (sire) the next generation. Who will he be selectively bred to? He will be mated to the best female rat hunter, of course. Now, project this scenario out for several generations. Generation after generation, the best rat hunting dogs are being selected by farmers to breed with other farmers' best rat hunters. The best physical and behavioral traits for rat-hunting continue to be selected for. These specific traits have now become intensified and common in what is now much like a uniform "breed."



**Pretty cute for a rat hunter, don't you think?**

What traits might the best rat hunters have? Small, quick, alert, focused, tireless, strong chase instinct, fast digger, kills what it catches with a quick shake and/or bite. Sound like any Terriers you know? You can see how dog breeds become very specialized in: 1) physical traits, and 2) behavioral traits, when you continually selectively breed the best performers for a specific function. As a result of repeatedly selecting for specific traits for hundreds (or in some breeds thousands) of years, these traits are embedded in the genetic programming (hard-wiring) of the breeds we have today.

The key information here for dog owners and trainers is that **the behavioral tendencies of breeds are based on the purpose they served for humans hundreds of years ago**. Some of these behavioral tendencies are still useful, but most don't fit in with modern society and have become either an interesting part of the breed's personality or a difficult issue for a pet owner who just wants a companion. (Most dogs were bred to do much more than just be a companion.) There are always exceptions to the rule, but for most dogs, they are going to display the physical and behavioral traits that their ancestors have carried in their genetic code for hundreds of years. In summary, when considering how a breed is likely to behave, look at the original purpose the breed was bred for.

Let's look at a few examples to understand **how selected breed traits might play out in a modern situation for a pet dog and its owner**:

- The **Vizsla** was bred to work with a hunter in wide open spaces all day with unlimited endurance and zest for the hunt. Given large amounts of exercise and mental stimulation in large spaces, this breed is likely to be satisfied and easy-going at home. However, if not given a chance to be mentally and physically active every day, this breed will easily be frustrated, destructive, anxious, and unable to think clearly. Many other breeds whose function was to be highly active outdoors (e.g., retrievers, pointers, herding dogs) have the same negative consequences when their needs for energy release are not met.

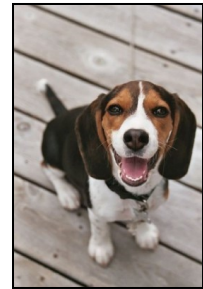


- The **Labrador Retriever** was bred to be comfortable around loud noises (guns) and to jump into icy cold water to grab nets or game in its mouth and bring it back to a hunter. It is therefore easy to teach a lab to fetch, and many retrievers

**Labs are goofy and fun-loving, but can also be very physical, and "serious" about retrieving.**

will play fetch with their owner for hours on end, which makes for an easy way to exercise them. On the other hand, the typical lab is very high energy and not physically sensitive (remember tolerant of loud sounds and icy cold water). This insensitivity coupled with a zest for activity can mean lots of jumping and body slamming into people and kids if not trained carefully. Also consider the selected passion for retrieving objects. This means that labs like to put everything in their mouth. Again, this usually means everything goes into the lab's mouth, constantly – from toys and furniture to your arm, clothing, remote control, shoes, and more.

- The **Beagle** was bred to have a tireless focus on trailing the scent of a hunted animal, and for making a constant “baying” sound that made it easy for hunters to follow their progress. The incredible scenting ability of this dog means that every time her nose is engaged, you will have a very hard time getting any other communication through to her. In other words, the nose is priority – your words are easily ignored. The good news is she will be very motivated to train for food rewards as the strong sense of smell apparently comes with a love for all things delicious. But, it also means Beagles will seek out food everywhere else they can find it – on the street, in garbage cans, and on your table. Then there is that baying. It may be useful to a hunter in pursuit, but in an apartment that sound can carry a long way, and go a long way towards irking neighbors.



**Got a treat? Beagles love food. But, if they pick up the scent of an animal to trail, all else may soon be tuned out.**

## Body Language and Behavior (from Phase 2)

### Eyes

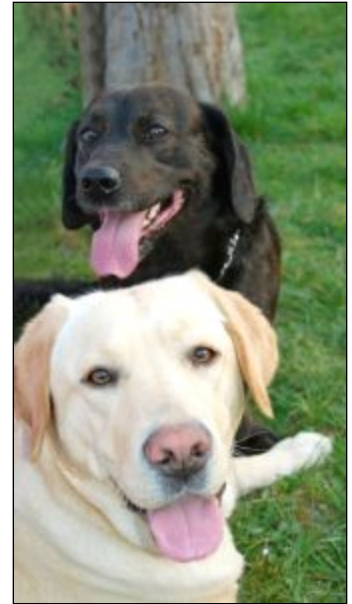
Just like with humans, eyes can be a “window into the dog’s soul.” That’s not scientific, but it rings true! What is scientific is that eyes can tell you a lot and while you can often “feel” what the eyes are “saying”, you need to look closely to observe subtle details in them. For our purposes, you need to recognize four different basic eye states:

- **Soft Eyes**
  - Relaxed, partially closed, or even squinty - not wide
  - Usually seen with relaxed facial features, no tension around eyes
  - Signifies a relaxed dog in a non-threatening state, or appeasement
- **Hard Eyes**
  - Open wider than normal – sometimes just a little, other times very wide
  - Usually seen with tension in the facial muscles around the eyes
  - Pupils *may* be contracted, but not a defining characteristic
  - Signifies stress or threat of conflict
  - Can look like a frozen, lifeless stare. It’s hard to pinpoint what is happening in the eyes, but trainers agree they “feel it” when the eyes “go cold” ([www.patriciamccconnell.com](http://www.patriciamccconnell.com)).

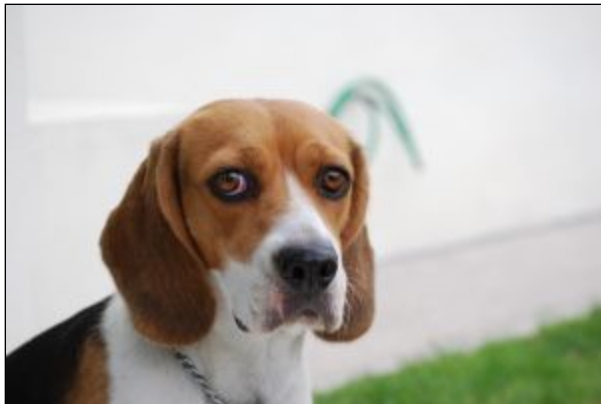


**Classic soft eyes – partially closed (squinted) on a very relaxed, smooth face (no facial tension ridges).**

- **Dilating Pupils**
  - The dark circles inside the eyes (pupils) are open wide
  - Signifies low light, or stress, or excitement (wide range here)
- **White in Eye**
  - When you see more “white” in the eye than usual
  - Also called crescent moon eye because the white in the eyes can look like a crescent
  - A lot of white in a hard eye is often called *whale eye*
  - White in the eye often signifies stress or threat but it can appear for any or all of the following reasons:
    - The dog has hard eyes (open slightly more than normal)
    - The facial muscles and skin are tense, pulling the eyelids open more than normal
    - The dog may be holding his head firmly in one position (such as over a food resource he was chewing) while orienting only his eyes in the direction of a competitive threat that is coming from an angle not directly in front of him.



**Above: Dog in front has soft eyes, relaxed ears, and no facial tension. Dog in back is more stressed about the camera: ears back, long lips, and facial tension lines.**



**This dog is worried. Note wide eyes with white, ears slightly back, closed mouth, and facial tension lines.**



**Notice the comparably soft eyes on Betsy the hound with CATCH student Morgan. Maybe Betsy is a little stressed by the camera and pose – showing appeasement?**

## Greeting Behavior

### NICE TO SEE YOU – OR NOT?

Mutual sniffing is the most commonly seen greeting behavior. This includes dogs sniffing each other’s muzzles, butts, and genital areas. Let’s look at a number of other behaviors that are common to greetings.

## Appeasement and Submission

Appeasement behaviors are similar to calming signals in that they tell the other dog, “Don’t be aggressive, I mean no harm, let’s be peaceful.” Appeasement signals help dogs stay out of conflict. A dog that gives an appeasement signal upon greeting is deferring status or control to the other dog he is meeting. Appeasement behaviors are also known as pacifying behaviors. Submissive behavior is very similar to appeasement behavior. Technically, the difference is that appeasement is designed to *prevent* an aggressive act before it starts, whereas submission is shown to a dog that is *already* acting aggressively – in order to “turn off” the aggression. If one dog threatens, and then the other presents a submissive behavior such as lowering his head or rolling on his back, then the dog that threatened is likely to be calmed and the situation is defused.

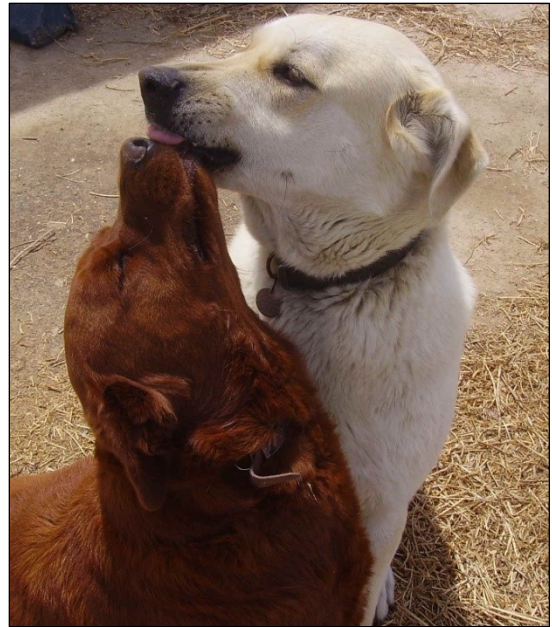
Examples of common appeasement behaviors:

- Lowering head or body
- Averting gaze
- Ears back
- Tongue flick
- Wagging tail
- Rolling on back
- Submissive urination

Some submissive behaviors can be easily confused with different signals. Two examples are the **submissive grin** and **submissive urination**.

As discussed earlier, a submissive grin is when a dog pulls up his front lips to reveal his front teeth and it is often misinterpreted as a threatening snarl (when it is in fact just the opposite). You can tell a submissive grin from a snarl in a few key ways:

- A submissive grin usually includes showing a lot of the *front* teeth, directly under the nose, whereas a snarling dog is often showcasing his sharp canine teeth by lifting his lip from the side.
- A submissive grin is often accompanied by other submissive body language such



The dog on the left is showing appeasement to the dog on the right in this greeting. The dog on the left is pushing so forcefully up and in that you might also call this “obnoxious submission”. This tactic may be used to gain access or space without eliciting an aggressive response.



Look at the tail heights of these dogs and also notice which ones are initiating the action (who is sniffing who). Based on what you see, which two dogs do you think are more confident-assertive in this situation and which two are showing appeasement (more passive-submissive)?

- as the dog being on its back; squinty eyes; ears back; lowered head or body; lowered tail, etc.
- Sometimes a dog may show a submissive grin, but still have hard eyes or some other sign of stress that can make it hard to tell whether he is snarling or not. Use the overall picture of the body and the *context of the situation*, as always, to determine if it makes sense for the dog to be submissive in that situation.

Submissive urination is often confused with a housetraining mistake. It is not. Submissive urination is a *communication signal* where the dog is actually “being polite” by saying, “I mean no harm, let’s be peaceful”. Submissive urination may be seen when a dog is on its back, but it is also commonly performed by dogs that are standing and that is when owners get it confused with a housetraining mistake. Unfortunately, many owners make the problem worse by getting loud or physically threatening, which in turn makes the dog even more submissive, and more sensitive to having the behavior triggered again in the future. Sensitive dogs may submissively urinate at the slightest trigger, such as a hand coming towards their head to pet them. We’ll cover more on this in later discussions about behavior problem solving.



### Assigned CATCH Videos

***\*Enrolled students go to the online Student Center and click on this phase to access your videos.***

1. [Dog Body Language Simplified](#) with CATCH School Director, David Muriello CPDT-KA
2. [Greeting Behaviors – Observational Skills Exercise](#) with CATCH School Director, David Muriello CPDT-KA

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