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— EST. 2013 —



5 THINGS YOUR DOG WISHES YOU KNEW



*Because understanding your dog
changes everything.*

Positive reinforcement

| Fear-free

| Joyful learning



WELCOME!



I'm so glad you're here.

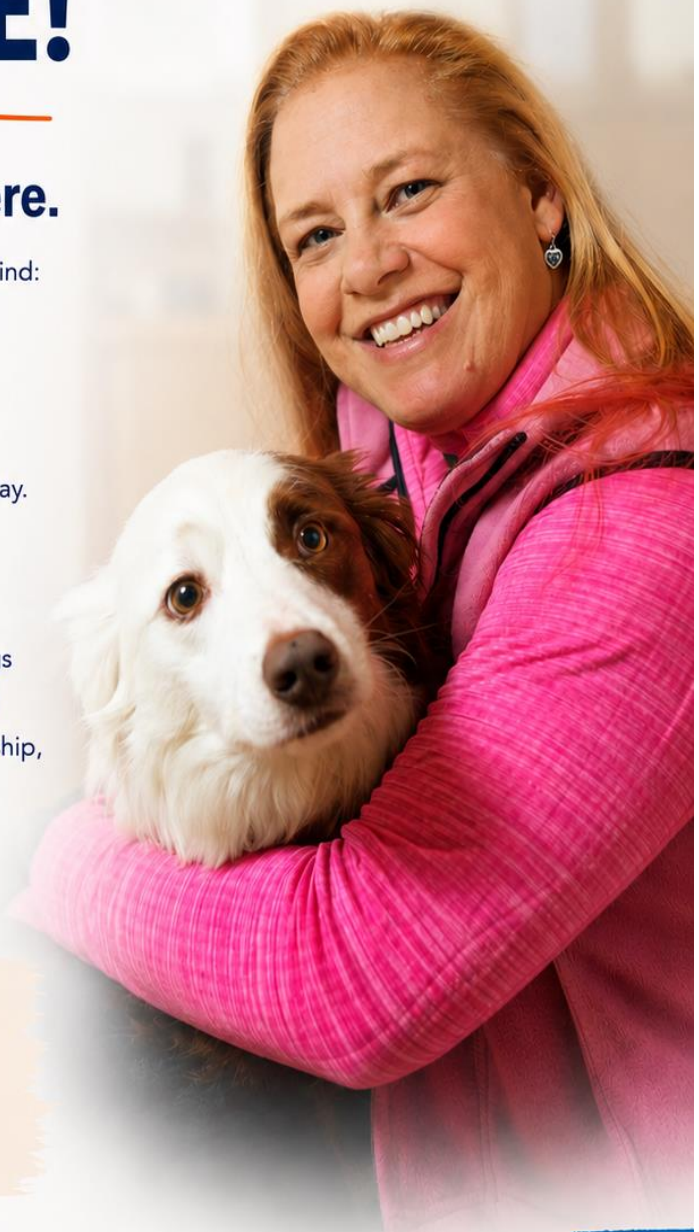
This guide was written with one goal in mind: to help you understand your dog a little deeper and build a connection that lasts a lifetime.

Dogs communicate with us every single day. When we learn to listen, everything changes—for them and for us.

Inside, you'll discover five important things your dog wishes you knew. These insights can transform your training, your relationship, and your everyday life together.

Let's get started.

“Training isn't about making dogs perfect. It's about helping them feel safe, understood, and confident.”



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changes everything."*

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1

I LEARN BEST WHEN I FEEL SAFE

Safety is the foundation
of everything I do.

When I feel safe,
I can think, learn,
and enjoy
new experiences.



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A Letter From Lisa

If you're reading this, chances are you love your dog deeply.

And chances are... there have also been moments where things felt harder than you expected.

Maybe walks feel stressful.

Maybe you've felt frustrated, embarrassed, overwhelmed, or unsure of what to do next.

Maybe you've wondered if you're doing something wrong.

Or maybe you've looked at dogs online or in your community and quietly thought:

"Why doesn't my dog do that?"

First, I want you to know something important:

You are not alone.

And your dog is not broken.

Dogs are individuals, just like people are. They learn differently, feel differently, move through the world differently, and experience life through their own unique emotions, genetics, experiences, and personalities.

Sometimes we accidentally place enormous pressure on ourselves, and on our dogs, by expecting immediate understanding and perfect results before clear communication has fully been built.

But learning takes time.

Not just for the student.

For the teacher too.

And in dog training, we are all learning together.

That's one of the reasons I wanted to create this guide.

Not to help you build the "perfect" dog you saw online.

But to help you better understand *your* dog.

Because when communication becomes clearer, relationships become stronger.

Pressure begins to fade.

Small wins become easier to recognize.

And learning starts feeling less frustrating and more joyful for both ends of the leash.

My hope is that as you read through these pages, you feel more connected to your dog, more hopeful about your journey together, and more confident knowing there is a kinder, clearer, and more understanding way forward.

Progress does not come from fear or perfection.

It grows through trust, communication, patience, and learning together one step at a time.

And honestly?

That journey is worth it.



2



I NEED CLEAR, KIND COMMUNICATION

I learn faster
when communication
feels clear and fair.

Patience and guidance
help me understand
what you need
from me.



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I'm Not Giving You a Hard Time

There are moments almost every dog parent experiences.

Your dog jumps on a guest after you just asked them not to.

They pull toward another dog on a walk.

They bark when you're already overwhelmed.

You ask for a cue they "know," and it feels like they completely ignore you.

And in those moments, frustration can rise fast.

But what we wish more people understood is this:

Your dog is not trying to give you a hard time.

They are doing the best they can with the education, experience, and communication skills they currently have.

Dogs are trying to understand a language that is completely new to them.

They are learning human rules that don't naturally exist in their world.

And at the same time, they are trying to express excitement, stress, confusion, fear, and joy in ways that are natural to *them*.

That can create a lot of misunderstandings on both ends of the leash.

One of the things that breaks our hearts most is hearing someone yell louder and louder at their dog, hoping the dog will suddenly understand what is being asked.

But communication doesn't work that way.

It's a little like trying to communicate with someone who speaks a completely different language. Saying the words louder doesn't suddenly create understanding. Clear communication, patience, guidance, and consistency do.

And the good news?

Dogs are incredible learners when we help them understand what we want *instead* of simply reacting to what we don't want.

That's when everything starts to change.

We see it every single day.

A dog who once looked overwhelmed suddenly relaxes.

A handler who felt frustrated suddenly feels hopeful again.

Communication becomes clearer.

Confidence grows.

And joy starts showing up on both ends of the leash.

Honestly, those moments are what our team lives for.

There's something incredibly emotional about watching a dog and their person finally understand each other. It feels a little like watching a child take their first steps — the amazement, the pride, the relief, the joy, and the realization of how far they've come together.

And that progress?

It doesn't come from fear, pressure, or perfection.

It comes from learning together.

The next time your dog struggles with something, pause and ask yourself:

“Does my dog truly understand what I'm asking right now?”

Sometimes that one small question changes everything.

Because when communication becomes clearer, learning becomes easier, and the relationship grows stronger too.



3



I LEARN THROUGH POSITIVE EXPERIENCES

Confidence grows
when I'm encouraged,
supported, and given
opportunities to succeed.

Every positive experience
helps me believe in myself
and take on new
challenges with bravery.



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Confidence Grows Through Encouragement

Sometimes what looks like “stubbornness” is actually stress.

Sometimes what looks like “disobedience” is uncertainty.

And sometimes the dog who seems distracted, shut down, overexcited, or unwilling to participate is simply a dog who does not feel emotionally safe yet.

Dogs communicate constantly through their body language.

Big eyes.

A stiff body.

A tucked tail.

Quickly scanning the environment.

Freezing in place.

Flattening completely into the ground during a down.

These are not signs of a dog trying to be difficult.

They are signs that a dog may be overwhelmed, uncomfortable, or unsure of what to do next.

One of the biggest misunderstandings we see in training is the belief that living beings should simply “get over” fear or discomfort if they are exposed to something enough.

But learning doesn’t work well when someone feels unsafe.

Not for dogs.

Not for people.

Not for children sitting in a classroom.

A living soul cannot truly learn in an environment where they do not feel emotionally safe.

And when dogs *do* begin feeling safe, everything starts to change.

Their body softens.

Their breathing changes.

They stop scanning every corner of the room.

Focus becomes easier.

Learning becomes faster.

Engagement becomes willing instead of pressured.

The dog begins choosing to connect with you because being with you feels safe, fun, and rewarding.

That kind of trust changes everything.

One of the dogs who taught me this lesson most deeply was my own dog, Lucy.

Lucy was incredibly sensitive to sound. Loud noises worried her from the time she was young. Yet despite that sensitivity, she absolutely loved agility. She quickly learned jumps, tunnels, the dog walk, and the A-frame with confidence and joy.

But the teeter was different.

The moment she realized it tipped and made a loud banging sound, it became scary for her. She knew exactly how far she could safely go before it started to move, and every single time she would jump off before the bang happened.

We tried rebuilding the obstacle slowly. We lowered it. We supported her. But the sound still mattered to her.

And honestly? That never fully changed.

But something else did.

As Lucy got older, there were moments where *she* chose to take the teeter. She would carefully ride it down, gently let it touch the ground, and then happily run away before the second side could bang loudly behind her.

And every single time she made that choice, we celebrated her.

Not because she performed perfectly.

But because she felt brave enough to try.

What Lucy taught me was this:

Confidence cannot be forced.

Sometimes confidence grows most when dogs are given understanding, patience, support, and the freedom to make choices without pressure.

Giving her the option gave her confidence.

Not pushing her gave her confidence too.

And that lesson has shaped the way I look at training ever since.

The next time your dog seems distracted, hesitant, or overwhelmed, pause for a moment and ask:

“Does my dog feel safe enough to learn right now?”

Sometimes slowing down, creating space, or supporting your dog emotionally creates more progress than pushing forward ever could.

Because dogs learn best when they feel safe enough to trust the process, and trust the person beside them too.



4



I'M LEARNING, NOT FAILING

Learning takes time.

Patience, consistency,
and understanding
help me grow.



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Sniffing Isn't Disobedience

One of the biggest misunderstandings we see during walks is this:

Humans often see the walk as a destination.

Dogs see the walk as an experience.

While we're focused on getting around the block, getting exercise, or getting back home before dinner, dogs are experiencing the world through their nose.

Every tree, blade of grass, drifting scent, or tiny change in the environment tells them a story.

Sniffing is how dogs gather information.

It's how they explore the world around them.

It's how they process their environment emotionally and mentally.

And for many dogs, sniffing is calming too.

Research continues to show that sniffing can help reduce stress, support emotional regulation, and create positive mental stimulation for dogs.

But sometimes during walks, conflict starts to happen because expectations become very one-sided.

We expect dogs to calmly walk beside us on a leash, often without realizing that collars, harnesses, leashes, sidewalks, and structured walks are all human ideas — not things dogs naturally understand from birth.

Dogs are not born knowing what heel position means.

They're trying to learn our rules while also experiencing a world filled with smells, movement, sounds, and excitement.

And honestly?

For many dogs, being expected to walk in a perfect heel position for an entire daily walk is exhausting for both ends of the leash.

Walks should not always feel like a race to "get it done."

Sometimes they should simply feel like time spent outside with your best friend.

Some of the most beautiful moments happen during those slower walks.

A person smiling while talking to their dog about life.

A dog looking up as if they understand every word.

A relaxed leash.

A deep breath from both ends of the leash.

A shared moment instead of a constant correction.

That connection matters.

And when dogs are given appropriate opportunities to sniff, many become more relaxed, more engaged, and easier to walk with over time because their emotional needs are being acknowledged too.

The next time you take your dog for a walk, try turning part of it into a “sniffari.”

Slow down.

Loosen the timeline a little.

Let your dog investigate safely.

Notice what captures their attention.

You may be surprised how much calmer and more connected both of you feel afterward.

Because sometimes the walk your dog needs most is not the fastest one.

It’s the one where they finally get the chance to experience the world beside you.



5



SMALL WINS CHANGE EVERYTHING



Confidence grows
one success at a time.

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Small Wins Matter More Than Perfect Dogs

One of the most beautiful parts of training is learning to notice the little moments.

Because often, the moments that seem “small” are actually the moments that change everything.

The first time you ask your dog to “watch,” and they quickly turn to look into your eyes.

The first time you give a hand signal for “sit,” and they respond without hesitation.

The first calm breath during a walk that used to feel chaotic.

The first moment your dog chooses to check in with you instead of the distraction around them.

Those moments matter.

A lot.

But many people accidentally overlook them because they’re focused on perfection instead of progress.

One of the biggest misunderstandings in dog training is believing that if a dog does something once, they should immediately be able to do it perfectly again in every environment, every situation, and every moment afterward.

But learning doesn’t work that way.

Dogs need time to process, practice, succeed, make mistakes, and build confidence through repetition and understanding.

And honestly?

Humans do too.

Sometimes social media and training culture create the impression that dogs are “fixed” overnight if you just find the right technique, tool, or trainer.

But dogs are not broken.

They are learning, and learning is not linear.

A dog who performs beautifully in class may struggle in a busy parking lot, at a park, or when guests enter the home because emotions, environments, distractions, and comfort levels all matter.

That doesn’t mean training failed.

It means the dog is still learning how to apply those skills in different situations.

One of the moments our team still talks about involved a blind and deaf dog who came into class scared and uncertain about the world.

And honestly? The owner was scared too.

Over the next six weeks, something incredible happened.

Not because the dog suddenly became “perfect.”

Not because every challenge disappeared overnight.

But because both ends of the leash began gaining confidence together.

The dog started exploring more comfortably.

The owner began understanding how to communicate more clearly.

Trust grew.

Hope grew.

And by the end of the session, both had discovered they were capable of far more than they originally believed.

That’s the kind of progress that matters most. And sometimes those “small” wins become the foundation for everything that comes later.

When people begin celebrating progress instead of chasing perfection, something shifts.

They start noticing growth instead of failure.

They become more hopeful.

More patient.

More connected.

Not just in dog training — but often in life too.

Because every dog’s journey is different.

And every team deserves the chance to grow at their own pace.

At the end of each day, ask yourself:

“What is one thing my dog did better today than yesterday?”

It doesn’t have to be big.

Sometimes the smallest moments are the ones worth celebrating most.



6



I JUST WANT TO MAKE YOU **HAPPY**

You're my world.

Thank you for loving me,
believing in me,
and never giving up
on me.

Together, we can
do anything.

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I Need You More Than I Need Perfection

Dogs do not wake up each morning wondering how to disappoint us.

Quite the opposite.

Most dogs move through life trying incredibly hard to stay connected to the people they love most.

They watch us constantly.

They study our emotions.

They celebrate our joy.

They lean into us when we're hurting.

And so often, they are simply trying their best to understand what we want from them.

What dogs need most from us is not perfection.

They need safety.

Guidance.

Patience.

Clarity.

And the feeling that no matter what is happening around them, we still have their back.

Because when dogs feel emotionally safe with us, learning becomes easier.

Trust grows.

Confidence grows.

And connection becomes stronger than pressure ever could.

Sometimes humans accidentally place enormous expectations on dogs.

We expect immediate results.

Perfect behavior.

Instant understanding.

But dogs are living souls with thoughts, emotions, fears, excitement, instincts, and individual personalities.

They are not machines programmed to always make the “right” decision immediately.

They are learning.

And often, they are learning while trying very hard to please the person they love most.

One of the most beautiful signs of connection is something incredibly small.

The soft look in a dog's eyes.

The gentle lean into their person.

The quiet comfort of simply being close.

Those moments matter more than many people realize.

Because real connection is not built through fear.

In our experience, pain creates confusion and mistrust far more often than understanding.

Dogs love us so deeply that many continue trying even after being hurt, frightened, neglected, surrendered, or misunderstood by humans they trusted.

And honestly, that kind of forgiveness is humbling.

Some of the moments that stay with me most are not necessarily the biggest wins in competition or training.

They are the moments afterward.

The celebration.

The joy.

The pride shining back through my dog's eyes because we accomplished something together.

And truthfully?

Even on the days things do not go perfectly, I still feel proud — because I know my dogs tried their best for me.

That matters too.

Maybe more than people realize.

If dogs could speak, I honestly believe many would say something like this:

"I love you more than life itself.

I'll do anything for you.

All you need to do is ask clearly, help me understand, and believe in me while I learn."

And maybe that's what this entire journey is really about.

Not creating perfect dogs.

But building relationships rooted in trust, communication, understanding, and joy.

The next time training feels frustrating, pause for a moment and ask yourself:

"Am I focusing more on perfection... or connection?"

Because years from now, your dog will not remember whether every cue was perfect.
But they *will* remember how it felt to learn beside you.



7



OUR JOURNEY IS JUST BEGINNING.

Every day is a new
opportunity to learn,
grow, and build a
lifetime of love and
trust together.

I can't wait to see
where we go.

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Continue Your Journey Together

Every dog's journey looks different.

And honestly?

That's exactly how it should be.

Some dogs build confidence quickly.

Some need more time.

Some love busy environments.

Some need help learning how to feel safe within them.

None of that makes a dog "good" or "bad."

It simply makes them individuals.

And just like people, dogs deserve the chance to learn in ways that help them feel understood, supported, and successful.

If there's one thing we hope you take away from this guide, it's this:

Progress is not built through fear, pressure, or perfection.

It grows through communication.

Patience.

Trust.

Consistency.

And learning together one step at a time.

Wherever you and your dog are right now, you do not have to figure it out alone.



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LET'S TAKE THE NEXT STEP TOGETHER



We'd love to help you
continue the journey.

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Choose Your Next Step

Just getting started?

Our Beginner Obedience classes help dogs and their people build communication, confidence, and real-life skills together in a supportive environment.

Ready to continue building your foundation?

Intermediate Obedience helps strengthen focus, reliability, and teamwork while continuing to grow your relationship together.

Looking for enrichment, confidence building, and connection?

Nose Work, Rodeo Dog, FIT Dog, and Agility offer fun ways to challenge your dog mentally and physically while deepening your bond.

Need more personalized support?

Private training sessions can help address your dog's individual needs while giving you clearer guidance and support along the way.

No matter where your journey begins, our goal stays the same:

To help both ends of the leash feel more connected, confident, and understood.

Because your dog does not need perfection to love you.

They simply need someone willing to learn beside them.

Whether your dog is struggling, learning, growing, or simply ready for the next adventure, we'd be honored to be part of your journey.

This guide was created by Lisa Kirschner.

For more positive, fear-free training, enrichment opportunities, and support for dogs and the people who love them, visit [**sitstaynplay.net**](https://sitstaynplay.net)

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