

Puppy Play During a Pandemic –and After!

This past year of pandemic lockdown has been challenging in countless ways. Many families chose to adopt a dog to help them cope, so we've had a flood of puppies and rescues finding loving homes. Dogs really do provide us with love and loyalty that is hard to match! Their need for daily walks also helps motivate us to get outside in all weather, and everyone benefits from the exercise and fresh air.

The lockdowns have also had many people working from home and feeling that this would be the ideal time to welcome a new family member. Unfortunately, the reality of pet ownership has been trying for many new guardians.

A University of Florida study found that inexperienced dog owners were often unprepared for the challenges of young, active pups or rescues as they transitioned to their new home.

The pandemic has definitely heightened these concerns, particularly around the inability to properly socialize and provide outside care for our dogs. Dog parks, daycares, and training classes have often been closed. Dogs, particularly young pups and active adults, can interrupt work-at-home routines. The lack of access to veterinarians, grooming, and play dates are another real problem. Finances have also taken a hit for many, and pet care costs are adding up – and adding stress!



Think Before You Shop or Adopt

Many puppies come from unethical breeders, particularly now, as many are looking to take advantage of the demand. Poorly bred puppies are far more likely to suffer from health and temperament issues.

For their part, rescue dogs sometimes have emotional baggage that needs to be patiently worked through, and this can really be a challenge for a first-time pet parent. Even with well-bred puppies, people aren't necessarily aware of the time commitment involved – it's almost like having a baby!

Professionals, however, can help you cope more effectively through online training and consulting. It is especially critical for owners of puppies under 16 weeks of age to get assistance in providing safe outside exposure and some degree of socialization. But don't forget about

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MARCH 2021

THE OFFICIAL SPEAKING OF DOGS MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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About Speaking of Dogs

Speaking of Dogs is a Toronto-based organization that launched in 2001 and is dedicated to educating and enlightening people about dogs through seminars, workshop forums, outreach and rescue. Our goal is to end cruelty, abandonment, mistreatment and homelessness of man's best friend.

Speaking of Dogs Rescue is the operating name of Speaking of Dogs Rescue Program, a Canada Revenue Agency-registered charity based in Ontario.

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Newsletters

If you no longer want to receive our newsletter, email newsletter@speakingofdogs.com, with "unsubscribe" written in the subject line.

Dogs Looking for Homes

A friend in need is a friend indeed

Without a doubt, a dog is a real friend. Our dogs come in all shapes and sizes, but they have one thing in common—they all need loving forever homes. Open your heart and your home to a rescue dog. You'll be glad you did. For complete information about the adoption process, please visit www.speakingofdogs.com/adoption-process. For more information on each dog, simply click on their name.

Bailey

RHODESIAN RIDGEBACK MIX
LARGE, ADULT, FEMALE

FEATURED DOG:

Bailey is an approximately 6-year-old female Rhodesian Ridgeback mix who weighs 70 pounds. She is social, loves to meet new people, and enjoys her walks and hikes.

Bailey came to the rescue from a GTA shelter, where she was stressed and not coping well with the kennel environment. Now that she's in a foster home, she is thriving and is eating, sleeping, and cuddling!

She is a moderate- to high-energy gal and requires daily walks, but she still enjoys daytime naps and quiet time. She has been known to howl sometimes when her foster parents leave, but she is becoming less vocal with time. She is housetrained and not destructive when left alone.

Bailey is a sensitive dog and needs positive training with lots of reward-based encouragement. She is learning many new behaviours and is a quick study when taught with kindness and patience. She may pull on leash if she comes upon something interesting, but she is not a constant puller.

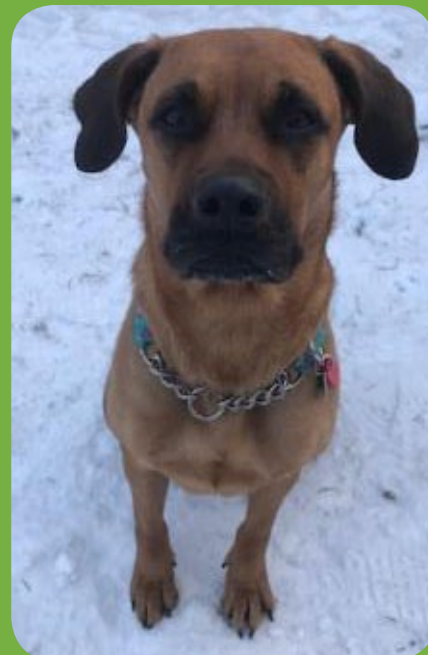
Bailey will need a forever home with a securely fenced-in yard. She very much enjoys playing chase with her balls and toys, so it would be a shame for her not to have a yard.



She is always up for a car ride and is an excellent co-pilot! As noted, however, she struggled in the shelter environment, so she would likely not do well in a boarding kennel.

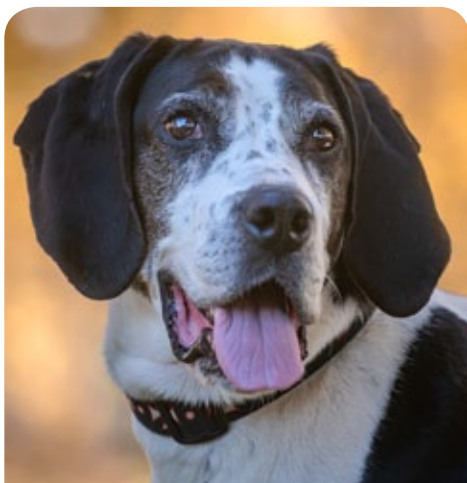
Bailey has no handling issues and loves to be brushed and petted (especially neck scratches and head rubs while resting on your lap). She enjoys cuddling on the couch with her foster family and catching up on her beauty rest during movie time.

Bailey is a lovely dog who is a wonderful mix of goofy, smart, and eager to please. Can you give her the patient, stable forever home she needs?





Ace
TOY POODLE
SMALL, ADULT, MALE



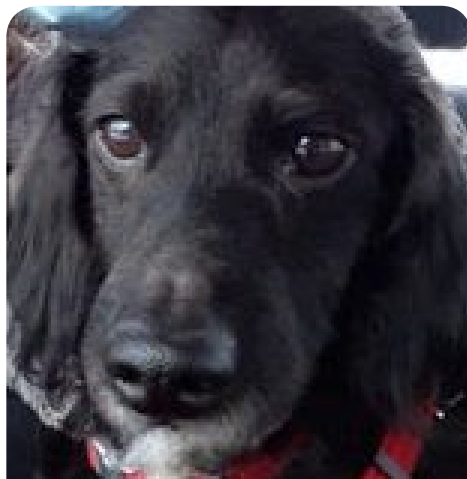
Roy
COONHOUND MIX
LARGE, SENIOR, MALE



Luna
GIANT SCHNAUZER
LARGE, ADULT, FEMALE



Rocki
BERNESE / ROTTWEILER MIX
X-LARGE, ADULT, MALE



Arlo
POODLE / SPANIEL MIX
SMALL, ADULT, MALE



Skye
LABRADOR RETRIEVER MIX
MEDIUM, ADULT, FEMALE



Beeba
HOUND / SHEPHERD MIX
MEDIUM, YOUNG, FEMALE

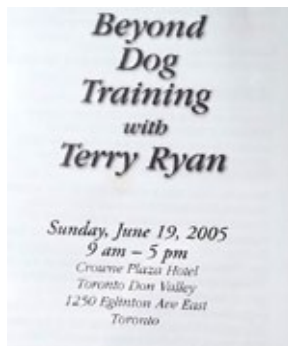
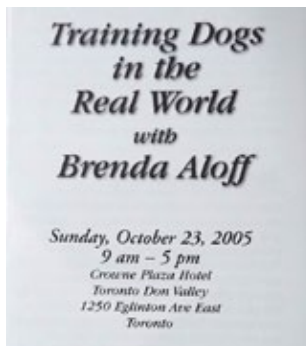


Shadow
YORKIE / CHIHUAHUA MIX
SMALL, ADULT, MALE



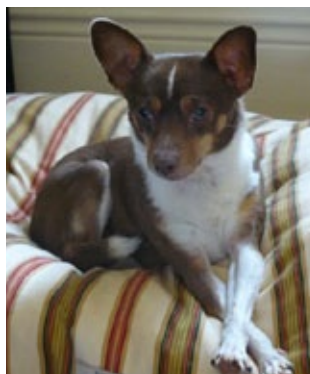
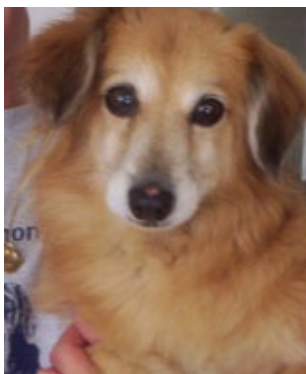
Sam
BORDER COLLIE MIX
MEDIUM, SENIOR, MALE

Speaking of Flashbacks



We were busy with seminars and making every effort to get good information about dogs out there! Most of the seminars were attended by shelter staff, dog trainers, doggie daycare workers, and dog walkers, but we had a few rescue peeps and members of the dog-loving public attend.

We were able to continue publishing the rescue directory with the help of many volunteers phoning and emailing shelters and dog rescue organizations.



In 2004, we found homes for 20 dogs and had 3 regular foster parents. By 2005, we had half a dozen foster families and found homes for 50 dogs. We were really gaining momentum and becoming an organized group of dog lovers on a mission!



In 2004, we created T-shirts with a message, and they sold well at dog events and seminars. At that time, many people didn't know what puppy mills were and didn't realize that puppy millers are motivated by greed and care very little for their animals, who live in deplorable conditions.

Ask the Trainer

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older dogs' needs! Dogs of all ages need stimulus to keep their brain engaged.

Get Creative!

In training, we look to create an "optimistic learner" in dogs of all ages. This allows dogs to learn that it's always worthwhile to investigate something new because they've been consistently rewarded in the past.

In my own training sessions, I started what I called my "found object challenge", which involves looking for things around the home, creating investigation and learning opportunities. I need not be complicated. Simple ideas like creating jumps with a broomstick and two chairs, using shipping boxes for tunnels or hiding places, creating a chute with a bed sheet over a chair, or challenging your dog with a human exercise ball or balancer for exercise can all exercise your dog both physically and mentally.

Take a look in your garage, closets, and basement for novel ideas that can translate into fun exploration. If a young child might like it, a dog will likely also enjoy it. By helping your dog be willing to try new things with you, they will be better prepared to accept the challenges of their new world when they can go out again!

Walks Aren't Out, so Get Out!

Taking walks with other owners and their dogs can still be done safely and responsibly. Walks provide an ideal play date, allowing both the humans and the dogs to keep their distance but share the experience. Six-foot leashes provide the perfect marker for proper distancing!

To help your dog be successful on walks, start walking in parallel with the other dog-and-handler pair, so that the dogs become accustomed to seeing and smelling each other without being too

close. They can share a sniff at a bush to practise being near each other, and then each of you should happily call your dog back with praise and a treat before continuing on.

About 10 minutes of these quick greetings and shared sniffs generally helps to diffuse the excitement and allows the dogs to achieve the level of calm they need to interact properly. From there, you might even be able to have some dropped-leash play in a fenced yard, allowing more active play while the handlers keep their distance.

Pause in Play!

Socially experienced dogs generally know how to slow play down, taking big bows to insert a pause or lying down for a little soft wrestling. Young dogs, on the other hand, can quickly become over-aroused, turning what had been appropriate play into a snarly mess.

You need to help your young dog (or under-socialized dog) learn to take breaks and calm things down by periodically calling them back to you for a treat and a long, slow stroke down their back. This helps settle them down while reducing their heart rate and blood pressure.

Playtime and Greeting Considerations

A dog's age affects their play style, even when they can practise appropriately with other dogs. It is really helpful to find playmates of similar age, so that the play is complimentary. As dogs age, play can change significantly, with many adult dogs over 3 to 4 years old happy to just have a quick greeting with a dog and then play with their people.

Age is, in fact, more important than size, as long as the bigger dog is able to handicap themselves and play appropriately with a smaller dog. I have seen lovely interactions

with giant breeds and tiny terriers, even at a very young age!

Be aware of the space where the greeting is happening, so that your dog doesn't feel trapped both by the leash and the surroundings. Narrow pass-through paths, corners by fences, or up against large rows of bushes can make a dog feel like they can't freely move away, tensing them up.

When pairing dogs of unequal size or different ages, you need to help them learn to self-handicap. To do this, start the play session loosely holding the leash or with it trailing. It is important to avoid putting any tension on the leash, which can stress and arouse your dog. You can also ask the more physically or mentally powerful dog to lie down to allow a more timid one to approach at their own speed (see photo at [page 1](#)). If you have a big dog, you can practise this greeting by playing with them on the ground, in order to make this a comfortable position for interactions.

Be sure to look for reciprocal play, which involves dogs taking turns chasing or being on the ground, with equal or close to equal time chasing and being on top.

Life after Lockdown!

We dream of life returning to normal, but your normal is not necessarily *your dog's* normal. Now is the time to practise the skills they'll need by providing targeted learning opportunities.

Being alone in the home every day

Even if just on a different floor from family, try to leave your dog on their own for a specific period during the day. Build up gradually until you're leaving them for the length of time that you will normally be gone. Add in time that you're home but not with them, such as having them behind a gate.

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Stranger, No Danger!

Expose your dog to more dogs and people by hanging outside of big box stores, where you can also practise leash walking around the distractions. You can also practice human greetings by asking neighbors to walk by your dog with and without stopping to greet them. Ask them put up their big furry hood, obscuring their face.

Ask friends with a calm dog to simulate a dog approach on a narrow sidewalk for you. Being prepared means that you're more able to have a treat handy and a toy to play with.

Noises and other distractions

If you live in a quiet neighbourhood, drive to streets with busier traffic patterns to help your dog become accustomed to the sounds and movement.

And let's not forget about doorbells! Have family members ring the doorbell while you practise a "go to mat and stay" cue.

Building Confidence

You'll likely have unfamiliar people and dogs approaching on sidewalks without deviating to create social distance, so you need a plan of action if you have a reactive dog. Advocate for you dog: If they're looking nervously at someone coming directly to you, raise your hand palm-out and give a firm voiced, "stop!" Allow your dog to see who's coming, check in with you, and determine if they're interested in the human or dog greeting. Strangers do not have the right to pet your dog, no matter how well-intentioned the greeter may be.

To deal with very determined people, I teach my dogs a U-turn as a game, keeping it positive. This allows me to easily move my dog out of someone's reach.

Dog lovers can be your biggest challenge, as they tell you "my dog is friendly" or "I love dogs" or "all dogs love me." Those are lines that I dread hearing when I have a nervous, less trained, or reactive dog! However, having a plan in place helps both dog and owner navigate difficult situations.

With a little creative thought and practise, we can make the new normal an excellent learning opportunity!



Lucinda Glenny, MSc. Animal Behaviour, HBSc. Psych., CPDT-KA, owner and lead trainer of Canine Campus caninecampus.ca

Age-Related Play Styles

Under 16 weeks

- Young puppies may be very cautious on their approach to dogs and new experiences in general.
- They can be very shy, very bold, or a combination of both.
- They often approach dogs directly in their face, which older dogs do not like and may result in them correcting the puppy. However, other puppies generally don't mind this type of greeting.
- Young pups are in a social fear stage, where they may take a bit to warm up to each new situation.
- They are working on the key element of bite inhibition and may grab too hard, whether its other pups, older dogs, or their humans!
- Rescues of any age may also experience these nerves, as they're adapting to their new environment. A new home can create a big relapse

in terms of maturity level as they try to settle in.

4 months to 1 year

- Pups are starting to read the dog body language "manual" and understand that they should not always charge in face-first!
- Hormones start to be a factor anywhere from 5 months on and can create inappropriate mounting that is not well accepted.
- These pups can still be easily overstimulated, so what starts as good fun can quickly escalate to challenging behaviours – with dogs and people.

1 to 2 years

- Adolescent dogs may start to want to define their role in a play pairing more strongly.
- Male-female is the least challenging play pairing.
- While still tolerant of bouncy

younger dogs, these dogs may start to show appropriate physical warnings that they don't play that way anymore. Quiet growls, stiff body, and wrinkled noses can send the message to back off without resorting to fighting. When this happens, help your dog take a break to settle down.

2 years plus

- Many mature dogs may start to be less interested in inter-dog play ; they often just prefer their people! While a sniff or greeting might be of interest, don't force your dog into an active play situation if they don't show real interest.
- It is perfectly okay for an adult dog to be disinterested in dog-dog play; this isn't a problem that needs fixing. It's about creating comfort around other dogs – not necessarily play!
- There may be increasing intolerance of being bounced at by young dogs, especially after 5 years of age.

Adoption Update

TOBY, MADDIE, & MILO

My name is Toby, and I was adopted from Speaking of Dogs Rescue in December 2017. My good buddy Joey was here when I arrived (adopted from Speaking of Dogs in March 2016), but he went to the Bridge and I was all alone. I love my dads very much, but I really missed having a canine pal.

One day my dads took me for a walk, and I met a lovely girl named Maddie. I was so excited to meet her! I raced over and was told to back off in no uncertain terms, which I did. Now we have a great brother-sister relationship, and I remember that I must respect her space.

Maddie here. Yes, Toby came on too strong when we first met, but we have an understanding and now he's always thoughtful of me. I was adopted from Speaking of Dogs in March 2020, and I often hear my dads talking about my medical care. I know they take care of me because I've never felt better



despite my “medical problems.” A new brother joined us shortly after I arrived. His name is Milo, and he's a nice enough guy. He and Toby wrestle and play most every day. I prefer to sit and relax while they carry on and act silly.

I'm Milo, and I'm the newest member of the family, arriving from Speaking of Dogs about 9 months ago. Although Maddie thinks I'm silly, I should clarify

that I am creative and imaginative and maybe a bit clownish. Even though our dads are retired teachers, it is Toby, Maddie, and me who do the training around here. We give them both A+ for giving us a charmed life, doting on us and choosing us to be part of this happy family!

Thank you, Speaking of Dogs Rescue, for finding us this Woofers Wonderland!



Happy Tails

FEBRUARY ADOPTIONS:

A big thank you to our foster parents and our new adoptive guardians for helping give these loving dogs a second chance.



Ari



Benson



Betty



Dandy May



Grace Kelly



Kenny



Koda

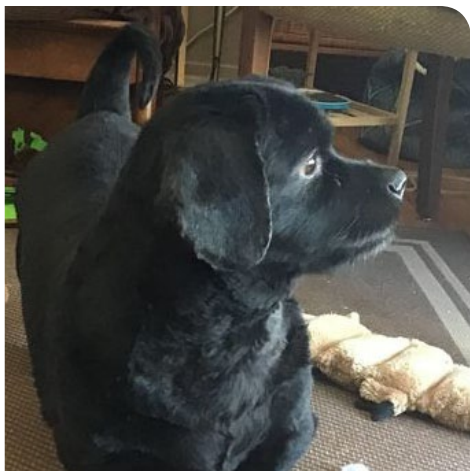


Lassie

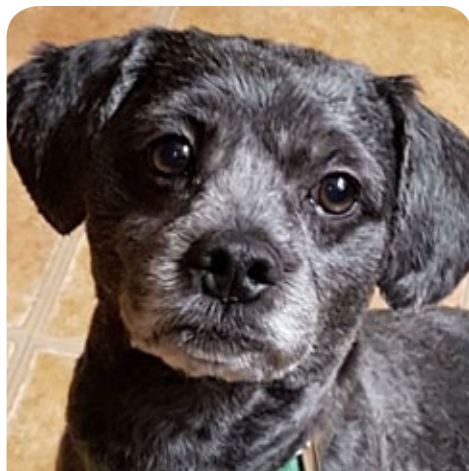


Lily Chi

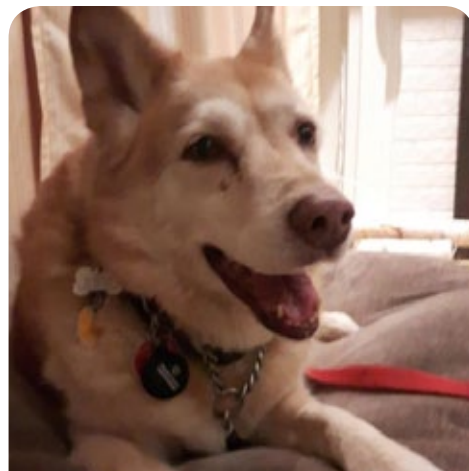
More Happy Tails



Link



Max



Maya



Molly



THE 2021 RESCUE DIRECTORY IS NOW AVAILABLE!

The Province of Ontario Breed Specific and All Breed Rescue Contacts 2021 directory is now available upon request. If you would like a copy, please email your request to info@speakingofdogs.com, and a PDF file will be emailed to you.



We Did It Again!

The Speaking of Dogs newsletter team is happy to announce we are the proud recipients of the Maxwell Medallion for best online newsletter of 2020 from the Dog Writers Association of America. We are so pleased to have been recognized with this prestigious award and thank all of our readers for their support.

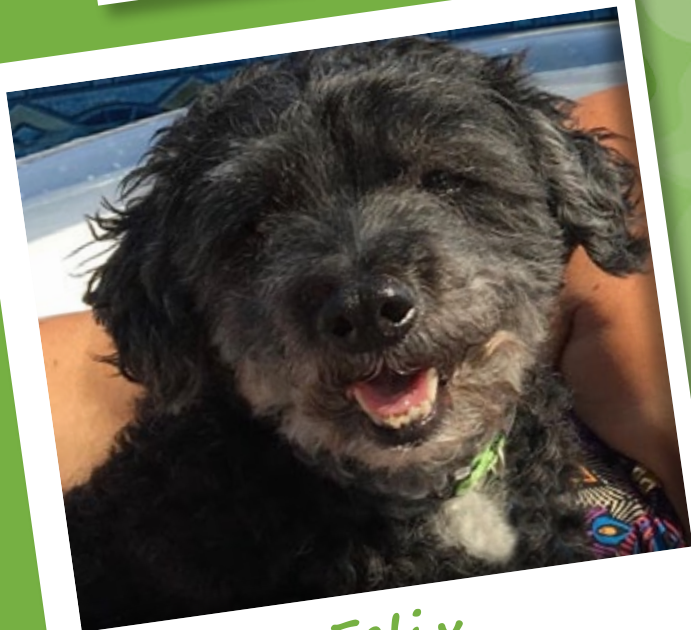
In Memoriam



Charlotte
LOVED BY WENDY NIVINS
ADOPTED JULY 2019



Bernie
LOVED BY LINDA QUIGLEY, HIS SHELTER
AND VETERINARY STAFF
FOREVER IN FOSTER



Felix
LOVED BY HELEN, RAY AND FAMILY
ADOPTED JULY 2017



Rocky
LOVED BY ERIN ROSSI AND FAMILY
FOREVER IN FOSTER