

Read the passage to learn about dogs and wolves. Then answer the questions that follow.

from **Is My Dog a Wolf?**

by Jenni Bidner

Close Cousins

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1 **I**n the days of your great-great-(add about 1,000 greats)-grandparents, wolves and dogs shared the same ancestor—the ancient wolf. Gradually, over the centuries, dogs evolved and changed to become their own species, and wolves stayed wolves.

2 Even though it has been thousands of years since dogs have been wild, many things a dog does by instinct a wolf also does.

3 How different are they? Well, you can't tame a wolf and turn it into a dog. And a dog that gets lost in the woods will not become a wolf simply because it doesn't live in someone's home. The two species have changed too much in the past thousands of years.

4 Once you understand that dogs and wolves are different, you can look at the ways they are similar. For example, a dog shares a lot more characteristics with a wolf than he does with a cat or a person.

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Can Wolves Be Trained?

5 **W**olves are very smart animals, but because they are wild, they have much less interest in being trained. They cannot easily (or as reliably) be taught to do tricks, walk on a leash, or sit on command.

6 Dogs, on the other hand, can be trained to do all sorts of things, from shaking hands and jumping through hoops, to guiding blind people, tracking criminals, and sniffing out illegal drugs.

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The Nose Knows

- 7 **D**ogs and wolves can see, of course, but their sense of smell is much more important to them. Their sense of smell is thousands of times better than ours. So, it's not surprising that they use their noses more than we do.
- 8 Think of your room. Picture your bed, desk, clothes, toys, and posters. Humans are very visual. When we think of something, we tend to picture it in our mind.
- 9 Your dog probably pictures your room by its smells as well. The smell of your shampoo on your pillow. The stink of your socks under the bed. Sounds crazy, but it's true.
- 10 Wolves use their sense of smell to find animals such as deer, which they hunt for food. They try to smell dangers, including other wolves or hunters. They also judge the health and moods of other wolves by their smell.
- 11 Dogs are so good at using their noses that many are given smelling jobs. Police dogs use their noses to detect illegal drugs and chase down criminals.

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Hear This

- 12 **Both** dogs and wolves can hear better than we can. They can detect quieter noises as well as a wider range of musical notes. That's why we can't hear a high-pitched silent dog whistle, but dogs and wolves can.
- 13 All wolves have upright pointy ears, but dogs have a variety of ear shapes. It doesn't seem to matter whether your dog has pointed ears, floppy ears, or tiny ears—they can all hear better than we can.
- 14 Wolf and dog ears also do more than just hear. Their shape and position can change, which is an important tool for communication.
- 15 Perky ears mean they are paying attention to someone or something. Scrunched-up ears, especially on dogs with floppy ears, can mean they're worried or fearful. Flattened ears usually mean a warning or aggression. However, softly flattened ears can also be a friendly sign when the dog is trying to please his leader—you!
- 16 Watch your dog's ears so you can learn this important part of dog language.

Through Their Eyes

- 17 **Dogs** and wolves don't see colors as well as most people do. They have trouble telling the difference between red, orange, green, and yellow. This means a yellow toy on a red rug might almost be invisible to them.
- 18 Don't feel too bad for them. They might not be able to appreciate the colors in your art project, but they are excellent at detecting the slightest motion—an important hunting skill.
- 19 Some dogs have better eyesight than others. Certain dogs (especially those with long noses, such as greyhounds) prefer to hunt with their eyes rather than with their noses. They're probably using both, but some dogs favor one over the other.

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Howling & Yowling

- 20 **Wolves** love to howl, which is best described as wolf singing. Howling together



seems to be a bonding experience for the whole wolf family. A few types of dogs, such as beagles and bloodhounds, love to howl as well.

21 Wolves usually bark only as a warning about possible intruders. But barking is probably the most common dog noise. In fact, dogs tend to bark **a lot**. They bark to warn you about strangers. They bark when they play. They bark when they want attention. And some bark just because they're bored.

22 Both dogs and wolves will snarl and growl as a warning to other animals, people, or things that scare them. Always take a growl seriously. It's one of the ways a dog warns you he is thinking about biting because he's afraid, feels threatened, or needs to protect his home area.

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Why Does My Dog Chew My Stuff?

23 **I**t's not because he's mad at you.

24 The wolf pup below is chewing on a deer antler for several reasons. There is some small nutritional value gained by chewing antlers and crunching on bones. It is also the way wolves brush their teeth. (The rough texture of bones scrapes the teeth clean.) But mostly, it is just fun and tastes good.

25 Most of us don't leave antlers lying around the house, so table legs, shoes, and hockey sticks probably seem like good antler substitutes.

26 Many dogs get scared or bored when they are left alone, and chewing on something can be comforting and entertaining to them. If that "something" smells like you, it is all the more appealing. So when he eats your homework, it really means he misses having you around—but don't try explaining that to your teacher.



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Why Does My Dog Dig?

27 **D**igging is a survival tool for wolves, but it's just plain old fun for dogs.

28 Wolves dig holes to hide leftover food and bones, so they'll have a nice snack for later. Some dig to catch small underground animals such as mice and moles, which make tasty snacks. Or they dig to create a cool

hole to lie in during the summer...or a warm snow cave in the winter. Adult wolves dig underground dens for puppies to provide shelter and safety.

- 29 Dogs may dig for some of the same reasons, but one thing is for sure: freshly dug dirt has all sorts of interesting smells. And dogs (and wolves) love to use their noses.

House Rules

- 30 In the wild, wolves live by wolf rules. Most of their days are spent caring for the young, resting, and hunting. Dogs, however, must live by people rules both inside and outside the home. Their willingness to do this is probably the biggest difference between the two species.