

The Mountain Dog's Guide to Dogs

Alright, so you think you're a dog. Or maybe your partner's a dog and you have no idea what to do with this information. Perhaps you're new to this or perhaps you have a good idea of where you stand. This guide will help you determine where you fall on the mountain dog scale of dog-ness. And give you some ideas of how to make that work, functionally.

Disclaimer: I'm just a dog, I don't know everything. When I write these guides I do it from my personal experience and it is in no way meant to be a formal and infallible guide about how to do anything. You should read everything related to BDSM with a healthy level of skepticism. This isn't math. There isn't just one solution. Play around until you find what feels right for you.

I'm going to outline the different kinds of dogs in order of least to most structure. With each description I'm going to also add a few ideas for handlers on how to interact with your dog.

The Roles:

The Dog: Your job is exactly what it sounds like. Being a dog. Embrace the headspace, reject your humanity and let go for a little bit. Don't try to fit yourself into one of these categories, just do what comes natural to you. Your handler can guide you if you want to try to change your behavior but you can't fight your natural tendency. The best kind of dog to be is the one that comes natural to you.

The Handler: Your job is to help the dog into headspace, protect them while they are in it, and have fun with them as they do so. Pretty Simple! (not really but I believe in you)

A note on Dogs vs. Puppies

It probably seems like this is splitting hairs here but there is a difference. All dogs can have puppy moments, but most puppies do not have many dog moments.

Puppies are the chaos of the dog world. They are playful, curious, messy, and adorable. You're likely not going to have a ton of luck training them beyond basic obedience and even then they will have the tendency to slide into the "brat" zone pretty quickly. The benefit is that they also tend to require less structure and mental stimulation. But handling them is also like chasing a toddler around all day long, it can get exhausting.

Patience is key when handling puppies.

Dogs are a bit more subdued, but can be stronger willed. They are more trainable, but also will test boundaries if allowed. They often require structure and discipline, and can become frustrated with puppies. They are more likely to be obedient rather than bratty but also may not respond well to an inexperienced handler. **Confidence is key when handling dogs.**

Puppies and dogs can both fall into any of these groups so I'm going to use the term dog to represent both groups through the remainder of this guide. Now that we've sorted that out, let's get into this!

Feral Dogs

I wouldn't call feral dogs an actual role but more like a condition that a lot of dogs find themselves in at one point or another. You could also use the term stray dog but that does not encompass the specific style of wildness that feral dogs possess. Stray dogs are just unowned but they seek ownership. Feral dogs can take care of themselves and aren't too concerned with having a human connection (or at least that is the behavior they portray). If you watch a feral dog long enough you might see that this is just a facade, but some dogs do truly want to be Feral and that is valid too.

The Dog: Feral dogs are usually in touch with their canine side but they aren't particularly interested in engaging in any sort of dynamic with a Handler. This could be for any multitude of reasons but most likely stems from a strong desire to be independent or possibly adverse experiences with handlers in the past.

The Handler: What the heck are you thinking trying to handle a feral dog? You are likely to get bit, but if you're up for the challenge you can do your best to try to coax a feral dog into befriending you. Approach these dogs slowly and calmly. Some of them are just wild by nature, but others are feral because they have been hurt. The ferality is kind of an outside wall, and if you crack it you'll probably find that they fit nicely into one of the other categories of dogs below.

Show Dogs

Show dogs are less into the dog headspace and more into the aesthetic. Most show dogs will be able to talk openly with you as if they were in human headspace and interact with people in a human way. Think Maltese energy. You're not going to find them wrassling around in the mosh pit.

The Dog: You may find yourself primarily interested in the look of being a pup without having a strong desire to put yourself into deep headspace. It's totally fine to not want to

go deep when you are first learning or even when you've been doing this for a long time. You get to express yourself however you like!

The Handler: Congratulations, this is kind of a minimal effort situation for you. It's likely that your dog really just wants to strut around being cute. And you get the privilege of having a gorgeous looking dog at the end of your leash. You still need to keep an eye on them to keep them safe, but they probably want you to show them off.

Family Pets

A pet is what most people think of when they imagine owning a real dog. You care for them and they repay you with affection, loyalty, and cuteness. Think golden retriever energy. These dogs are more likely to enjoy playing with others at a dog park and greet most strangers with curiosity and a wagging tail. The gear becomes more functional but still aesthetic.

The Dog: You probably find yourself becoming a dog and delving more into that headspace but you retain a lot of playful energy. You probably enjoy moshes and physical affection from others while desiring to please your handler with your cuteness and antics. You want playful interactions with your handler.

The Handler: If you've ever had a dog before you know exactly how to do this, don't overthink it. Throw the ball, groom them, play wrestle on the floor. Cuddle up and pet them while you watch a movie. Help them preserve their headspace and allow them the freedom to be a dog for a while. Make sure they get their shots and play nicely with others. Control their behavior in public and teach them basic commands.

A Boy & His Dog

This is a specific subset of pet dogs that I find pretty adorable. It's mischievous in nature but also wholesome. In every family/polycule there is at least one person that has this kind of relationship with the dog and it's a lot of fun.

The Dog: You are the family dog that is always tagging along with the kids on their misadventures. Sometimes you're Lassie, and sometimes you're a troublemaker too. You stay in your headspace but aren't too worried about being a good dog. You're more worried about enjoying the moment and being playful.

The Handler: You are just a kid hanging out with your best friend. You may be sneaking cookies off of the counter, or splashing in puddles. You likely end up getting your dog friend in trouble but it's not because you're trying to. It's because you're having too

much fun to worry about the consequences. Mischievous boys turn even good dogs into rascals.

Service Dogs

This is the point where being a dog starts to take on a more serious role. Service dogs are often concerned with being useful. They want to have a job to do. they want to serve. Service dogs are often more concerned about the task at hand than they are with interacting with the outside world. This can make them seem unfriendly to outside folks, but when the service dog vest comes off they slide back into the role of a family pet.

The Dog: Your headspace is usually pretty deep but you're also very aware of the world around you. you exist in order to help your Handler perform tasks. You are focused, well-trained, and generally obedient. You are generally in service to a specific Handler but can also offer your services to others as directed.

The Handler: This is where dogs start to need more structure and training. Having a service dog also offers you a benefit though, as they are often desiring and willing to perform tasks that are useful to you. Engage with a service dog by teaching them skills and tasks that you would like them to perform to make your life easier. Build a repertoire of tasks for them that you can demonstrate in public. Don't allow others to interact with them without your permission when they are in service to you. This is actually a good community service because it reminds people not to interact with actual service dogs when they are performing their duties. Consider having specific service dog gear that they wear when they are engaged in this kind of behavior, this will also let them know when they are on duty, and when they are free to play. Reward them the same way that you would a family dog.

Working Dogs

Working dogs are where the game begins to change a little bit. These dogs are often not really pets. Most real working dogs come from working lines which means that they are bred specifically to do work. Think border collie energy. They have a high drive and a high focus and traits that make them uniquely able to perform the task that they were bred to do. Working dogs being handled by pet dog owners are often destructive and troublesome because they don't have an appropriate outlet for their genetic drive to work. These dogs need structure and a firm hand in order to be successful. They may not have a desire to engage with other dogs especially when they're working although they can work with other dogs in a team to accomplish tasks. Typically, they have a different level of socialization and interaction with strangers than family pets would.

They can still have pet dog moments but they're much less common, and typically only a trusted Handler will get to see moments like that.

The Dog: When working dog headspace turns on you probably find yourself very task-oriented. Having something specific to do for your Handler is something that you need in order to manage your headspace. You probably find it difficult to mosh and be playful with other puppies. You may even come across as aloof and distant because you are not very interactive with others. You may find affection by strangers to be off-putting or distracting to the tasks you're performing at that moment. Boredom is common when you don't have something to do and you may find it difficult to relax in dog headspace until you've worked hard and earned it.

The Handler: Not everyone is fit to manage a working dog. It's a big commitment. They are needy, not in a negative way but rather a positive way. They need your structure and guidance. They need a purpose. They need to work. They love training, come up with ways to wear them out, to let them engage their mind and their body. Teach them commands in another language that neither of you know. Make up hand signals to communicate your needs silently. Challenge them physically as a training moment, make them push themselves. That's how you earn their respect. They still want affection and attention, but probably only from you and those very close to you. And they want to earn it.

Protection Dogs

Protection dogs are really a subset of working dogs but it is the type of dog that I identify with most so it gets more attention here. If you are mad about that go write your own guide, I dare you. (no really please do I am a big advocate for having more BDSM resources available from different perspectives.) A protection dog and a guard dog are kind of synonymous. This is kind of the human equivalent of a personal bodyguard. This dog usually comes to you with some training and skills that allow it to perform these tasks. However, it's up to you to put them to good use. Think working line dog / Mastiff energy. Every movement this dog makes is usually intentional. They are trained to ignore anything but threats to their handler. Kids can climb all over them without getting bit but if someone steps towards their handler in a way that is less than cordial, you're going to see a reaction.

The Dog: In this headspace you will likely find yourself strongly attuned to your handler. You will find yourself positioning in ways that are protective such as facing behind them or to their side. Your interactions with other humans and dogs will be minimal unless they seem to be threatening in some way. You will perform obedience tasks without hesitation and hold position indefinitely unless instructed to move. You may engage in

human tasks for them while still retaining headspace because the obedience extends outside of the traditional dog role and into anything else they require. You may have moments of family pet connection but only with your handler in the confines of a very safe situation. You may find yourself experiencing separation anxiety when not in the presence of your handler and therefore may only engage in dog activities when you are in their presence.

The Handler: Having a Protection dog seems super cool, but they also can be a liability if they aren't under control. They need direction in order to function because the free will button is often disconnected in their headspace. They exist to serve and find themselves feeling lost when they are not adequately directed. Position them where you want them, give them tasks to perform. Set them to guard the outside of the room you are in. Use them as a barrier to protect you from unwanted conversation with strangers. Tell them exactly how you wish them to respond when people approach. Train them to always pay attention to the nearest exit and lead you there with a single command if you wish to leave. Allow them to search an empty room before you enter it to ensure safety. Allow them to give you a signal when they feel like a situation is not safe and honor it.

There's an infinite variety of dogs so this isn't an all inclusive list. Most dogs won't fit one description exactly and will likely exhibit some of the characteristics of other types of dogs. I encourage you to work together and find a dog/handler connection that works for you!

Arf Arf Woof Bark!

-The Mountain Dog

