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## OFF THE SHELF

Meet the Dear Abby of the canine set

# An interview with Curtis the dog

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You wouldn't go to a mechanic with questions about your baldness, why ask another human about curing your pup's flea infestation, bad breath and why Poochie keeps rubbing on your good rugs.

Go to the source.  
Ask Curtis.

A Collie-Golden Retriever mix, he's become the Dear Abby of the canine set. At [www.dog-walkpress.com](http://www.dog-walkpress.com), Curtis answers questions about a dog's life.

This year, he assembled some of his best advice in his first book *Ask Curtis* (Dog Walk Press). In it, Curtis teaches other pets how to tolerate tormenting toddlers, how to deal with arthritis (does it mean your rodent-chasing days are kaput?) and, yes, why humans are so difficult to understand.

During a recent online interview Curtis shared his thought on how humans underestimate dogs, why cats remain rivals, and what's the deal with the rug-rubbing.

*What's our biggest misconception about dogs?*

That we can't read and write. Of course we can but being man's best friend and recognizing the insecure nature of humans to feel that only they can read and write, we need to keep this from them. So, most of the time, we just sit, smile and, perhaps, drool!

*Why do dogs really hate cats? It's that superior feline attitude, isn't it?*

Most of us don't really hate cats. We mostly

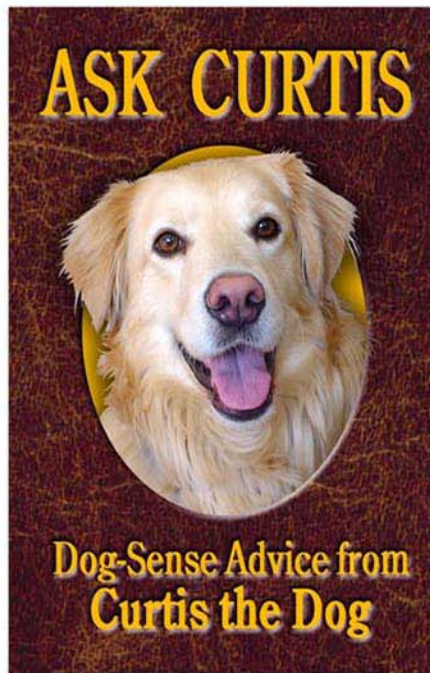
tolerate them, not really understanding their reason for being. After all, unlike us dogs, they do very little to make the world a better place. As far as that superior feline attitude, it's pretty sickening. As most psychologists will tell you, that holier-than-thou/aren't we God's gift to man stance is nothing more than a cover for low self-esteem.

*When did you get the idea to write a column?*

When a number of my canine friends suggested that I put my dog-sense to work helping dogs and other animals deal with issues impacting their happiness. After all, life's too short to be unhappy and a dog's life is especially shorter than a human's...in human years, that is.

*As a writer, what's your biggest beef with editors?*

I don't really have a beef with editors since most of them are humans who don't really understand how a dog thinks and writes. Therefore, they tend to go easy on me. That and the fact that they're afraid I might bite (though I would-



n't). Besides, we dogs like beef.

*I gotta' know this. how do you use a keyboard when you have no fingers?*

Very slowly. Actually, I use bark-activated software that translates my barks, woofs, yips and other canine sounds automatically into English and then types it out. It works pretty good most of time though there are a few bugs in it. Fortunately they're not fleas!

*What's your favorite table scrap?*

You mean they're scraps? Not to me. Humans don't realize that what they call scraps is really the best part of the meal. Well, let me bark that back. Some humans realize it and that's why

they have leftovers!

*Doesn't fetching a rubber ball get boring?*

It's boring only to the human throwing the ball. Fetching's not boring since the ball never bounces the same way twice. Besides, once I get the ball, I can do lots of different things with it. My favorite is not bringing it back and having my humans chase me all over just to get it back and

throw it again. And they say dogs are conditionable?!

*What's with rubbing their hind quarters on the rugs? You didn't learn that from your master, did you?*

Hey, you itch, you scratch. Some dogs rub their hindquarters on rugs. Some humans, especially baseball players, scratch themselves in places we only lick. And, truth be told, humans are too prim and prissy to rub their hindquarters on rugs and have to rely on remedies like Preparation H. Shame. Sometimes a good rug rub is just the ticket!

*By the way, who's really the master? Dogs can be pretty manipulative.*

Oh, come now! I'm a dog, not a cat, for Canus' sake! Humans are the masters because we need them for impawtant things like food and shelter now that we're removed from Grandma Wolf. And that's okay by us. Also, remember that the insecure nature of humans requires us to make them feel they're the masters and as their best friend, we're happy to oblige.

*What do you do to kick back and relax?*

Most dogs have no problem relaxing. Of course the little yappy hyper ones do, but not bigger guys like me. Turning around three times, lying down and curling up with a good book like "Ask Curtis" is all I need to relax, especially when my tummy is full of yummy stuff.

*So you were rescued from an animal shelter. What was that like?*

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**Curtis the Dog,  
pawthor, webmaster  
and canine sage.**



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the shelter before a wonderful human family adopted me. Being a good looking, mostly Golden Retriever mix helped. I can only bark that for a number of my fellow pooches, being in a shelter is a very traumatic experience filled with anxiety, uncertainty and fear. Most of those there were abandoned. Some were abused.

And, while we all want so very badly to be adopted by a loving family, we worry about being abandoned or abused

again. And then there's unfulfilled hope. The shelter is not a good place for many pooches. I was lucky and I'm thankful for that - every dog day.

*What do dogs do when humans leave the room? I saw that painting of you guys playing poker. How do you hold the cards?*

Close to the chest. Actually, most dogs don't play cards because we don't have very good poker mugs. Whenever we have a good paw, we always

smile and give ourselves away. When humans leave the room, we usually lie around, sleep, dream and wait for their return, though some of us, the relatively insecure ones, have been known to destroy things, rip up paper or clothing, eat wallpaper and relieve ourselves in places we shouldn't.

Personally, I like thinking about how I can be a better friend to my humans and how I can make my humans be better friends to me - and themselves!