

WORKING DOGS



BY M.G. HIGGINS



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On the Job

In a field, a man stands with his dog. He whistles at her. She runs after a flock of sheep. The sheep go where she guides them. The man whistles again. This time, his tone is different. The dog runs back to the man's side.





It is a busy day in the city. A woman walks with her dog. They stop at a crosswalk. Cars zoom by. Then the light changes. Now it is safe for them to go. The dog steps onto the street. He leads the woman across. She cannot see, so the dog is her guide.

There are 90 million dogs in the U.S. Most have one role. They are pets. Others have jobs like these two.

Working dogs have special talents. Some are natural **traits**. One is a strong sense of smell. Search dogs rely on this. They sniff for missing people. Chasing **prey** is another skill. Herding dogs chase **livestock**.



FAST FACT: The average dog is as smart as a two-year-old child.

Eager to Please

Most dogs want to please. They are **pack animals**. This means they live in groups. Dogs obey a leader. That is the alpha dog. A working dog sees its owner as the alpha. They want to do what their owner says. This makes them easy to train.

Puppies are born with many skills. They must be trained to work. This is not hard. Most are smart. They can learn hundreds of commands. Trainers offer rewards. Food is one. A toy is another. Play is often the biggest reward.



FAST FACT: A favorite game dogs play with their trainers is tug-of-war.



HAPPY DOGS

Not all people like their jobs. It can be the same with dogs. A good match is important. Energetic dogs are good for herding. They are not as good for therapy. Calm dogs are better for that. Studies show that most dogs like their work. This is a good thing for people. Dogs have been helping them for a very long time.

WORKING DOGS

Dogs are popular pets.

But some dogs do much more than play fetch. From herding on farms to helping in classrooms, working dogs have many different jobs. Search and rescue dogs sniff out people buried in snow. Police dogs chase and catch criminals. Therapy dogs offer support to hospital patients. Dogs are learning new jobs all the time. Discover how working dogs use their unique skills to make life better for people.



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