



5 Surprising Canine Lessons for Writers

By Susie Taylor

I don't know about you, but I'm always on the lookout for ways to make my writing better. Call it a hack, or a tip, or a magic wand... doesn't really matter. As long as it helps me with my writing, I'm willing to try it.

The other day, I was watching my dog play, and it hit me that I could learn a thing or two from my canine companion. Five things, as a matter of fact. Here they are:

1. Show It with Your Face

I always know exactly how my dog feels. She doesn't hide her feelings. She doesn't pretend to feel one way when she really feels another. She lets me know exactly what's going through her doggie brain by the way she acts, how she holds and wags her tail, and even how she whines.

As copywriters, we are trained to appeal to our prospects' beliefs, emotions, and desires. That means we need to be in tune with our own feelings... and also be vulnerable enough to let them show. Be like a dog. Let your emotions shine through all you do.

2. Don't Begrudge Disappointments

My dog may feel disappointment, but she doesn't wallow in it. She may feel left out because the cats got a treat and she didn't. But she doesn't hold that against me. She forgives and forgets.

When things don't go the way you had hoped or when a client doesn't like something you've written, don't hang on to it. It's not a failure, it's a lesson. If my dog won't hold a grudge against me, why should I hold a grudge against a client — or, for that matter, myself?

3. Get the “Zoomies”

When I take my dog out in the morning, I tell her, “Go ahead. Go run.” She looks at me like “Really? I can go run?” and I say, “Yes. Go run!” I can almost see the switch turn on in her mind, because she does a little jump and takes off around the yard. We call it getting the zoomies.

We all need to get the zoomies every now and then. Most days, I sit for hours at my computer. I *need* to get up and move every few hours or so. A quick trip up and down the basement stairs or a longer walk along our country road gives me just the break I need to stretch my muscles and get some much-needed thinking time.

4. Smell Every Corner

My dog could spend hours sniffing nearly every blade of grass in our yard, and we have a big yard. We live in the country, so Bryn walks around and picks up the scent of any animal that has trekked across our property in the past 24 hours — racoons, skunks, possums, deer, cats, foxes, even coyotes. Bryn knows our yard intimately, and if something has come into her territory, she finds the scent.

We need to be the same way with our research. We should know our clients as well as Bryn knows our yard. You can take research too far, but you’ll never go wrong with some solid sniffing in every corner of your client’s business. You need to know where your client has been, where she is now, and where she wants to go.

5. Chew, Wait, Repeat

My dog has toys spread all over the house. A ball on the couch, a chew rope in her crate, a cat perched high atop a bookcase. She plays with those toys until they fall apart — and then she plays with them some more.

We need to do the same thing with our projects. Once you think you’re finished, put it aside for a few hours or a few days. Then come back and



Bryn’s zest for life has taught her owner, Susie, quite a lot about making the most of each day.

chew on it some more. And yes, you may find that you need to tear it completely apart to get all the good out of it, but once you do, you’ll know you’ve put everything you’ve got into that project and your client will know you’ve given it your all, too.

We can all learn a lot from our canine companions. Take some time to observe and see what your dog, or any pet, might be able to teach you. ■