



Oct. 12. 2017

They're always watching and listening. Even when they appear to have gone completely narcoleptic, deep down in their canine brain,

there's a lobe or node or whatnot that's constantly monitoring your words and moves.

Dogs, as you recall, speak no English. Or any other known language. They don't have to make the effort. Because they can recognize more than 200 sounds you make. Like the sound, "Cheese," or the more complex sound-string "I'll just set the pizza on the counter."

Dogs learn to pair mental pictures with each of these. In the latter case, they picture themselves tip-toeing off to the back of the house clutching a cardboard box of pizza in their maw while you're fiddling around paying the pizza guy. We've all been there, right? You thought the pizza guy's eyes were wide because your Irish wolfhound is a really big dog when, in fact, he was watching his tip slipping quietly down the hall. One day we may learn to step up our game.

Here are some ways you can watch your words and sidestep those nasty surprises. Some things NOT to say to your Irish wolfhound:

### **Anything spelled out...**

We think we're being clever. Your hound just thinks you're taking a ridiculously long way around to say something he already knows.

Masher learned the word, "leash" and started going bonkers every time you used it. So you tell your spouse, "We need to get a new L-E-A-S-H because Masher just snapped another one in two. And my shoulder's making that clicking sound again."

Spell it out just a time or two more and Masher's on to you. He's waiting by the door jittering sideways because he thinks you're about to go for a W-A-L-K. Next time, pantomime your message. Skip pig latin. Our language is *all* pig latin to him anyway. Except

for those crucial sounds that apply to him.

**“Do you think Phideaux wants to go for a walk?”**

Did the sun come up today? Is ice cold? Of *course* he wants to go for a walk. He's so bored his eyes are glazing over counting dust motes by the window. Now, he has a reason to live again. His heart swells with joy. He's setting off quake monitors in five states leaping up and down.

Actually, it was a rhetorical question to your significant other. Your knees are still throbbing from the last walk. You were hoping they would take the hint. But now you've invoked the W word. *Somebody* better take Phideaux for a walk before he knocks the house down. And guess what. Since you set the fire under Phideaux, you're it. Knock back a couple of Ibruprofen for those knees and hit the pavement.

**Any combination of words with "bath" in it**

Want to see a 160-pound dog completely vanish in the blink of an eye? Tell him it's bath time. If you caught him in an awkward position where he can't flee, he'll try passive resistance and become a giant, furry Slinky. Unless you're planning on moving him outside with a forklift, bath time is off.

Maybe you meant *you* were going to take a bath as soon as your hound gets off your legs. Maybe you were hoping he'd forgotten the last time you humiliated him soaping him up and hosing him down while all the other dogs snickered and made faces. You could have been referring to how well your stocks did today on market. Whatever. The hound's seeking witness protection.

Next time? Tell him he's going for a W-A-L-K and hide the soap bucket until he's in position.

## **"Be nice to the cat"**

Some hounds get along fine with cats. Some think cats are enemies of the state. But if you have to *remind* your hound to spit out the cat, the battle's already lost. Either you didn't acclimate your hound to cats as a puppy or you've got a cat with an attitude (yes, I realize I'm being redundant) and there *will* be blood. You're way past the "play nice" stage either way. It may be time for the kitty to find a safer home. Probably in another state. Otherwise the cat might come back. He's survived Round One with a wolfhound. He's going for the title now. It will not end well.

## **"We brought you a new puppy"**

You love your wolfhound so much that you didn't want her to be lonely while you were away at work. So you got another wolfhound puppy.

And you watch the light fade from her eyes. She's thinking, "What? Was the undivided love of one giant sighthound just not enough for you?" She knows her life will never be the same again. She thinks you should name him Damien.

One day they'll be boon companions. A year or two of sheer hell later. Meanwhile, your girl is livid. It's going to take a lot of cheese and back rubs before you're on speaking terms again.

Instead, tell her you've opened a school for wayward orphans. She's the new teacher. The little fuzzball? Well, he's her first student and if she does really well, you'll bring in more students for her to boss around. Play to her strengths. Maybe she won't notice the kid's sticking around after school for an awfuuuuuu long time...