



Some Dogs Remember Words for a Veery long Time

A new study reveals that dogs that have a unique talent for learning their toys' names can remember the names for years

Some uniquely talented dogs accumulate a vocabulary of hundreds of toy names. How do they do it? Young children acquire a large vocabulary because, in addition to quickly learning words, they also remember what they have learned. Previous studies have demonstrated that Gifted Word Learner (GWL) dogs can rapidly learn object labels. Now, a groundbreaking [new study](#) published on the 4th of September in the peer-reviewed journal Biology Letters uncovers that they also have an astonishing memory and can remember object labels for at least 2 years.

While humans may be the only species that can use language, we are not the only one that remembers words!

The Study and Its Findings

All dogs can learn words that relate to actions, like sit or down but only a small group of uniquely Gifted Word Learner dogs are able to learn words that relate to objects, such as the names of their toys. In 2020 a team of researchers from the [Family Dog Project](#), at ELTE University, Budapest, challenged the owners of six of these GWL dogs to teach their dogs the names of 12 new toys in one week. The dogs lived in different countries around the world (Norway, Spain, Brazil, the US, Nederland and Hungary) so, to test if the dogs had learned the names of the new toys, the researchers ran the tests online. These online tests were [broadcasted](#) over social media, allowing dog lovers around the world to witness the GWL dogs' amazing talent. The dogs astonished viewers and scientists alike, as they demonstrated that they could learn the names of between 11-12 new toys in a single week.

After the tests were completed, the scientists asked the owners to store the toys so that the dogs could not access them. "We waited two years and then decided to test the dogs again, to see if they still remembered the toy names" says Dr. Shany Dror, lead researcher. Unfortunately, one of the dogs passed away during this time, so only five dogs participated in the new follow-up study. Because such a long time has passed some of the owners lost a few of the toys. Thus, three dogs were tested on 12 toys, one dog on 11 and one dog on five. "After two years, we all had a hard time remembering the names of the toys" says Dror, "But not the dogs! They did not seem to struggle". Remarkably, out of the five dogs tested in this study, four dogs remembered the names of between 60-75% of the toys, even after two years. As a group, the dogs performance averaged at 44% correct choices, significantly above chance level, showcasing their ability to retain and recall information over an extended period.



Can Your Dog Also Remember Things for Two Years?

“We know that dogs can remember events for at least 24 hours and odors for up to one year, but this is the first study showing that some talented dogs can remember words for at least two years” says Dr. Claudia Fugazza, the head of the research group. “The findings of our current study cannot be generalised to other dogs because we only tested GWL dogs, individuals that show a special talent for acquiring object words.”

Is your dog a Gifted Word Learner dog?

This research is part of the Genius Dog Challenge research project which aims to understand the unique talent that Gifted Word Learner dogs have. The researchers encourage dog owners who believe their dogs know multiple toy names, to contact them by email (info@geniusdogchallenge.com), [Facebook](#) or [Instagram](#).

The [video abstract](#) is available on the [Genius Dog Challenge YouTube channel](#). Pictures of the dogs can be downloaded from this [link](#) (please mind the credits written in the file names). After the embargo is lifted, a seminar about the article will be available on this [link](#).

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