

FUMC ESL June 7, 2012: Talking About Pets

Write the names of 10 animals. Next to the animal name, write a verb that describes what that animal does. The first one is done as an example.

1. monkeys - howl
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

Dog Talk: Most Dogs in the U.S. Seem to Have an Easy Life

Written by Jill Moss

Most dogs in the United States seem to have an easy life. They sleep a lot and get fed often. People take their dogs for a walk two times a day and also let them play outside. Dogs get medical care when they are sick or injured. What a great life! Right? Well, we say people with a similar, carefree existence enjoy a “**dog’s life**.” They have no troubles or responsibilities. They can come and go as they please, sleep all day, and never have to work.

But not everyone has it so easy. In fact, some people say we live in a “**dog-eat-dog world**.” That means many people are competing for the same things, like good jobs. They say that to be successful, a person has to “**work like a dog**.” This means they have to work very, very hard. Such hard work can make people “**dog-tired**.” And, the situation would be even worse if they became “**sick as a dog**.”

Still, people say “**every dog has its day**.” This means that every person enjoys a successful period during his or her life. To be successful, people often have to learn new skills. Yet, some people say that “**you can never teach an old dog new tricks**.” They believe that older people do not like to learn new things and will not change the way they do things.

Some people are compared to dogs in bad ways. People who are unkind or uncaring can be described as “**meaner than a junkyard dog**.” Junkyard dogs live in places where people throw away things they do not want. Mean dogs are often used to guard this property. They bark or attack people who try to enter the property. However, sometimes a person appears to be mean and threatening but is really not so bad. We say “**his bark is worse than his bite**.”

A junkyard is not a fun place for a dog. Many dogs in the United States sleep in safe little houses near their owners’ home. These doghouses provide shelter. Yet they can be cold and lonely in the winter.

Husbands and wives use this “**doghouse**” term when they are angry at each other. For example, a woman might get angry at her husband for coming home late or forgetting their wedding anniversary. She might tell him that he is “**in the doghouse**.” She may not treat him nicely until he apologizes. However, the husband may decide that it is best to leave things alone and not create more problems. He might decide “**to let sleeping dogs lie**.”

Dog expressions also are used to describe the weather. “**The dog days of summer**” are the hottest days of the year. A rainstorm may cool the weather. But we do not want it to rain too hard. We do not want it “**to rain cats and dogs**.”

Questions:

1. Do you have a carefree existence?
2. Do you think you have to work like a dog to be successful?
3. Do you know someone whose bark is worse than their bite?
4. What do you plan to do during the dog days of summer?

Discussion:

1. Talk about pets in your country. What animals do people keep as pets?
2. Do you think pets are more pampered in the U.S. than in other countries?
3. Would you ever keep a pet?
4. What type of animal would make the best pet?
5. Is it OK to squander your money on pets when people are starving?
6. Some people leave lots of money to their pets. Do you think that is OK?
7. Would you have an unusual pet, like a snake or a tiger?
8. Are you afraid of dogs? Would you visit in the home of someone who had a dog?
9. Are you a "dog person" or a "cat person"?
10. Is it important for children to have pets?
11. Do you think people often get pets for the wrong reasons?
12. Do you think it is OK to give a pet as a gift?
13. Are virtual pets popular in your country?