

The **dog** (*Canis familiaris*^{[4][5]} or *Canis lupus familiaris*^[5]) is a [domesticated](#) descendant of the [wolf](#). Also called the **domestic dog**, it is [derived](#) from the extinct [Pleistocene wolf](#),^{[6][7]} and the modern [wolf](#) is the dog's nearest living relative.^[8] Dogs were the first [species](#) to be domesticated^{[9][8]} by [hunter-gatherers](#) over 15,000 years ago^[7] before the development of agriculture.^[1] Due to their long association with humans, dogs have expanded to a large number of domestic individuals^[10] and gained the ability to thrive on a [starch](#)-rich diet that would be inadequate for other [canids](#).^[11]

The dog has been [selectively bred](#) over millennia for various behaviors, sensory capabilities, and physical attributes.^[12] [Dog breeds](#) vary widely in shape, size, and color. They perform many roles for humans, such as [hunting](#), [herding](#), [pulling loads](#), [protection](#), [assisting police](#) and the [military](#), [companionship](#), [therapy](#), and [aiding disabled people](#). Over the millennia, dogs became uniquely adapted to human behavior, and the [human-canine bond](#) has been a topic of frequent study.^[13] This influence on human society has given them the [sobriquet](#) of "[man's best friend](#)".^[14]