



## Are Dogs Our Greatest Invention?

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For over 20,000 years we've been engineering the ultimate tool

Link: <https://lab.sapienship.co/are-dogs-our-greatest-invention/>

### **We all know that dogs are some of our oldest companions, but what if I were to tell you that dogs are also one of our oldest technologies?**

As an archaeologist, I study the past focusing on ice age ecology and technology. But the one thing that fascinates me the most is the interaction between ancient humans and wolves, which, of course, led to the domestication of the dog.

For over 20,000 years, humans bred dogs to hunt, guard, herd and more. It's like we've been engineering the ultimate tool, one that can understand commands, bonds with us emotionally, and ever-adapts to our lives.

When ancient humans bred dogs for specialized tasks, they were actually genetically altering these animals to create specialized tools. These tools came in every size, shape and color, designed for anything from herding sheep, to family companionship.

As societies evolved, so did dogs. Classical civilizations like Rome used dogs in war and as status symbols. Wealthy Romans imported exotic breeds as a show of wealth and power. Similar to ancient China, with its unique breeds like the Shih Tzu or the Chow Chow.

Hunting dogs have always been vital. The ancient Ainu of Japan hunted boar with dogs, while European royalty bred hounds like Spaniels and Beagles for the chase. And before horses were reintroduced to the Americas by the Spanish, indigenous Americans used dogs to carry and pull loads for millennia.

Today, dogs still work alongside us. They guide the visually impaired, reduce anxiety, and even lay with dying patients in hospice care. Their bond with us has lasted millennia, testament to how this bond shaped both species. Dogs aren't just pets, they're a living piece of human history, and one of our greatest inventions.

## Questions for Discussion

- Do you have a dog? If so, what specific tasks or purposes do you think your dog's breed was originally developed for?
- Besides dogs, what other animals have humans selectively bred for specialized tasks or characteristics?
- What differences exist between dogs and other domesticated animals in terms of their relationship with humans?
- How might the domestication of dogs have changed the course of human evolution and development? What might human societies look like today if we had never domesticated wolves?
- Considering technological and social trends, how might the role of dogs in human society evolve in the future?
- As genetic technology advances, humans can modify dog breeds even more precisely. What ethical considerations should guide our decisions about how we continue to shape dog evolution?
- What can the human-dog relationship teach us about interspecies communication and cooperation? Could these lessons be applied to our relationships with other species?