

## Alpha: Examining Hollywood's tale of dog domestication

Long ago, before your four-legged best friend learned to fetch tennis balls or watch football from the couch, his ancestors were purely wild animals in competition—sometimes violent—with our own. So how did this relationship change? ...

The new drama [Alpha](#) answers that question with a Hollywood “tail” of the very first human/dog partnership.

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Just how many nuggets of fact might be sprinkled throughout this prehistoric fiction?

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Pugs and poodles may not look the part, but if you trace their lineages far enough back in time all dogs are descended from wolves. Gray wolves and dogs diverged from an extinct wolf species some 15,000 to 40,000 years ago.

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[P]hysical changes that appeared in dogs over time, including splotchy coats, curly tails, and floppy ears, follow a pattern of a process known as self-domestication. It's what happens when the friendliest animals of a species somehow gain an advantage.

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The relationship has become so close that even our brains are in sync. Witness a [study showing that dogs hijack the human brain's maternal bonding system](#). When humans and dogs gaze lovingly into one another's eyes, each of their brains secretes oxytocin, a hormone linked to maternal bonding and trust.

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We may never know the exact story of how the first dogs and humans joined forces, but dogs have undoubtedly helped us in countless ways over the years.

**Read full, original post:** [How Accurate Is Alpha's Theory of Dog Domestication?](#)