



## A Chat with Dog Trainer Gail Mirabella

October 28, 2009 Article from Time for Kids Magazine



Gail Mirabella used to train her dogs to do tricks when she was a kid. Eventually, her hobby turned into a career. Today, Mirabella works as a dog trainer for Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey circus. Backstage before a recent show, she talked to Time Magazine Kid Reporter, Cameron Young, about why she chose this career path, how the dogs are trained and her overall love for dogs.

**Reporter:** Did you always want to be a dog trainer in the circus?

**Mirabella:** When I was a little kid, I think I was about 9 or 10, I did my first dog show, a kid's dog show, and I actually took first place with the best tricks. From then on, I kind of realized I wanted to work with dogs, but who would have thought I'd be in the circus?

**Reporter:** Did you have any dogs growing up?

**Mirabella:** Absolutely. I had a white shepherd when I was a little baby. And then when he passed away, we got a couple of family dogs. When I was 14, I got my first dog for myself for my birthday. He was a big shepherd and reminded me of the shepherd I had when I was a baby. That dog actually lived to be 14 years old, and he went to college with me too.

**Reporter:** How long does it take to train a dog?

**Mirabella:** That depends on the dog. For some of the dogs that I rescued or adopted, it may take up to a year. First and foremost, I develop a bond with the dog. I become like their best friend. I have thirteen dogs and I let them all play together, but I do a lot of individual work with each dog. They know that I am the one in charge because I do all the feeding, and it keeps everyone pretty well balanced.

**Reporter:** If you weren't a dog trainer, what would you be?

**Mirabella:** A dog. Just kidding. I would probably still work with animals. I would probably be a dolphin trainer.

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Read the story. Use the information in the story to answer the questions below.

1. What made Gail Mirabella decide she wanted to work with dogs?
  - A. She joined the circus
  - B. She took first place in a kid's dog show
  - C. She didn't have any dogs when she was little
  - D. She always knew she would be in the circus
2. Gail got a shepherd for her 14<sup>th</sup> birthday. Why might this be a special gift?
  - A. She had never had a dog before
  - B. She loved dogs
  - C. She knew she would work for the circus
  - D. It reminded her of the shepherd she had when she was a baby
3. How long does it take to train a dog?
  - A. One week
  - B. One month
  - C. One trick
  - D. It depends on the dog
4. How do the dogs know that Gail is in charge?
  - A. She is the one who feeds them
  - B. The dogs will listen to her
  - C. There are thirteen other dogs
  - D. She wears a clown outfit
5. How can you tell from the story that Gail really loves dogs?
  - A. She had thirteen dogs when she was a baby
  - B. She made a joke that she wants to be a dog
  - C. She can bark like a dog
  - D. She is very serious

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### ANSWER KEY

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