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BowWOW! How does one pronounce Vizsla?

By DENISE FLAIM
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Presumably, all canines speak the same language, an Esperanto-ish pastiche of woofing, panting and the occasional belly display, which translates quite literally as, "Don't hurt me - please!"

But we humans have a more difficult time communicating when it comes to the many and varied names we have assigned to dog breeds. Salukis morph into suzukis, Ridgebacks are dubbed Razorbacks, and Rottweilers get unionized into Rottwelders.

In the spirit of interspecies interlocution, here is a list of some of the most commonly mangled dog-breed names, and how to

pronounce them:

Bichon Frise. With a French moniker that means "curly lap dog," these little white imps were once favorites of the royals, then took to street performing after Bastille Day.

Both parts of their name are routinely butchered: It is not a "bitchin' frizzy." Nor is it a "bee-JOHN freeze." It is a "bee-SHAWN free-ZAY."

Ibizan hound. This one looks relatively straightforward, but it's not. The "z" in the name of this elegant sighthound, bred to hunt small game on the Spanish island of Ibiza, is pronounced as a "th." That linguistic oddity is called a "ceceo," and has nothing to do with the much-repeated urban legend that King Ferdinand spoke with a lisp, prompting his subjects to emulate him.

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Keeshond. The national dog of Holland, this barge dweller has a stand-away coat and signature "spectacles," or black markings, around the eyes. Its name is correctly pronounced "KAZE-hawnd," though you'll also hear the more Americanized "KEYS-hawnd." Whatever you do, don't pronounce that last syllable as "hound"; it should rhyme with "bond."

The Dutch-derived plural is Keeshonden.

Petit Basset Griffon Vendéen. A Frenchified tongue-twister, in four parts: "Petit" differentiates this plucky rabbit hunter from its larger counterpart, logically named the Grand Basset Griffon Vendéen; "Basset" refers to the short legs (think Basset hound); "Griffon" is a type of rough-coated hunting dog; and "Vendéen" points to the breed's origins, France's Vendée region.

As to pronunciation, if you're ambitious, here goes: "Peh-TEE Bah-SAY Gree-FOHN Vehn-DAY-uhn." Those with less stamina can refer to these wire-haired charmers by their popular acronym, PBGVs ("pee-bee-gee-vees"). Other shortcuts: "Peebs" or "PBs."

Polski Owczarek Nizinny. On to Poland. Though this shaggy herder's name has a relatively generous number of vowels by Eastern European standards, it's still one to stumble over. Most people just call them by their acronym, "PONs." Others opt for the translation: Polish Lowland Sheepdog.

If you're a purist, it's "POL-ski ov-CHAR-ek ni-ZHIN-ee," with the "zh" sounding not quite an "s" and not quite a "z," as in "vision."

Samoyed. The correct pronunciation of this indigenous Siberian breed is "Sammy-ED," but almost everyone says "Sa-MOY-ed." You can skip the debate by calling them "Sammies."

Shih Tzu. Tread carefully here. Suffice it to say that this chrysanthemum-faced toy is properly called a "SHEED-zoo."

Spinone Italiano. Possibly the only breed routinely confused with a frozen confection. Spumoni is a molded, layered Italian ice cream; a spinone is a harsh-coated hunting dog from northern Italy.

Tervuren. This elegant herding dog hails from Belgium, but when you're sounding out its name, think of an American president. "Ter-VYUR-en" rhymes with "Van Buren."

Vizsla. These energetic redheads have cropped tails and an optimal way of pronouncing their Hungarian name: It's VEEZH-la, with that "zh" pronounced just as it is in the PON.

Xoloitzcuintle. Not a typo, but rather a hairless Mexican toy that is the Mount Everest of pronunciation-challenged breed names. Named after the Aztec god of lightning, Xolotl, and thought by pre-Columbian societies to have curative powers, in ancient times this diminutive companion also substituted for lunch in a pinch.

Just to make it interesting, some breeders spell the name with an "i" at the end. Like you'd notice. Pronounce the opening "x" as "sh," and then hang in for the rest: "show-low-its-queen-tee."

Or "show lows" for short.