

WHAT DOGS NEED

To understand your dog you need to understand their basic needs. We can group these into inelastic behaviours which are needed to survive and elastic behaviours that are needed to thrive. You obviously want your dog to thrive!

To survive, your dog first needs safety. They need to have a safe space to be, safe companions to be with and freedom from pain and illness.

Second, they need appropriate nutrition and water and they need to eat it in a species appropriate way, which for your dog is scavenging and chewing.

Third they need body care - to be able to go to the toilet, groom themselves and look after themselves.

Fourthly they need sleep - and quality of sleep matters as we will see in another video. Sleep for dogs is a social activity so they do not do so well sleeping alone.

To thrive your dog also needs age and breed appropriate exercise, enrichment and play. We will look at these in later videos.

Sometimes you will see a big change in your dog's behaviour when you change how you are meeting these basic needs



MUZZLE TRAINING

Teaching your dog to be comfortable wearing a muzzle is really important if you want to use it as management. A muzzle prevents your dog from actually biting, while still allowing them to eat, drink and pant.

Muzzles are great for vet visits or close-up encounters that require extra safety precautions. In other situations they can be used to prevent accidents and give you peace of mind but it's important to still give your dog appropriate space and choices where available.

Choose a basket muzzle that fits your dog securely and comfortably.

To introduce the muzzle to your dog, first place it on the floor and sprinkle treats around it. Let your dog investigate and enjoy the food. Watch their body language and note if they are readily moving around and over the muzzle, or leaning in to get the treats without getting too close. You are looking for your dog to show no concern or hesitation in taking the treats.

Next hold the muzzle in the palm of your hand with the opening facing your dog. Mark and reward any movement towards the muzzle.



If your dog doesn't approach the muzzle, you can feed them a treat on the palm of your hand at the opening. Continue to deliver rewards in this way to help build up your dog's confidence. Periodically reset by throwing a treat away and see if your dog chooses to return and continue training.

Next wait for your dog to push their nose part way into the muzzle before marking and rewarding. It's important that your dog actively chooses to do this. Refrain from moving the muzzle towards your dog - just wait and let them do it themselves.

After several repetitions see if your dog pushes their nose all the way into the muzzle. Mark and reward every time. You can begin to build duration by feeding multiple treats through the muzzle or smearing a soft treat at the base.

The next stage is to pause for a moment when your dog puts their nose into the muzzle, before marking and rewarding. Gradually build up the time your dog waits before being rewarded.

Next bring the clasps around your dogs neck, while they hold their nose in place. Mark and feed through the muzzle before releasing.

Softly clip the muzzle on and reward your dog several treats, before undoing and removing again. Make sure your dog is having fun whenever the muzzle is on.

Initially, keep the duration short before building it up gradually from a couple of seconds to minutes and eventually long enough to go on a walk.

Practise muzzle training in multiple locations and make sure there is nothing in the environment that concerns your dog. You want to prevent the muzzle becoming a signal to your dog that something difficult is going to happen.

When introduced carefully, wearing a muzzle can be just like any other piece of equipment. It will keep your dog safe and give you peace of mind.



WHAT IS LOOK AT THAT?

Look at That is a powerful game that allows you and your dog to have a “conversation” about what is going on in the environment and helps them to process it. They do not interact with it, they just tell you it is there and get paid to do so.

The conversation can be started by you or your dog.

If your dog sees, hears or smells something in the environment, they can tell you about it by looking at it and then back at you. Watch out for this when it happens unprompted. If they are comfortable they will often glance at the trigger then quickly look to you for their reward. If they can't turn away quickly, they may be feeling uncomfortable and need your support. Notice if they are becoming fixated and move them away to create space.

You can also start the game if you notice a trigger that your dog hasn't seen yet. Ask the question 'where is it?' This tells your dog that something is there and lets them play the game rather than risking them reacting if they are startled. You can then watch how they play and respond appropriately! As your dog gets more comfortable you may see only a glance or a flick of an ear towards the trigger.

Playing this game helps you and your dog communicate effectively and lets them feel better about the world around them!



TEACHING LOOK AT THAT

One way to teach 'Look at That' is with a neutral object. Choose a toy they are not excited by or any small object that you can hold in one hand.

Face your dog and hide the object behind your back so it's out of sight.

Next bring the object out to one side and hold it still. Wait for your dog to look at it or turn their head towards it. Mark this action and hide the object behind your back again before rewarding your dog.

Note that your dog should not move towards the object or interact with it. If they do, choose a less interesting object and try again.

Continue until your dog is looking at the object reliably.

Then repeat the process but when your dog looks at the object, mark and continue to hold it out as you reward them. You want your dog to be able to look back at you even when the item is still out there.

Keep going until they are looking at the object and then looking quickly back to you, predicting their reward arriving.

Once you are confident they will look at it and look back, you can add a cue as you hold out the object. "Where's the dog?" or "Where is it?" are good cues to use as they remind you that you are looking for your dog's answer rather than giving them an instruction.

Now practice with things out in the environment. Start with things that are not too interesting to your dog: a bush moving, a feather on the ground, a neutral person (if they are not reactive to people). Build up to practising with things your dog is concerned about at a distance where they can look calmly.

Once you and your dog understand the game it will really help your dog to note and calmly process potentially scary things that you encounter.



HOLDING YOUR LEAD

How you hold the lead can make a big impact on how your dog feels, whether your dog reacts , and how safe you both are while on a walk.

Choose a lead that is at least 6 feet long as this can help your dog feel less restricted.

To start, place one hand through the loop using the thumb and index finger to keep the lead in place and use the other hand to gently hold the rest of the lead.

Be sure to have your palms facing upward.

If you hold the lead with your palms facing down, you'll notice you have to keep a firm grip otherwise you will drop the lead! So holding the lead with your palms up lets you remove tension in the line and allows movement to be smooth.

Take a deep breath, relax your arms and you are ready to begin your walk.



LONG LINE TECHNIQUE

Keeping your lead hand still, scoop under the lead with your handle hand bringing your hands pinky to pinky. Grip the lead before sliding your handle hand away and back to the basic position. This will give you your first bunny ear, on the outside of your handle hand.

Next, keeping your lead hand still, bring your handle hand over to meet your lead hand in a clap. Grip the lead in your handle hand before moving it away and back to the basic position. This will give you your second bunny ear on the inside of your handle hand.

Repeat this to gather as much lead as you need, remembering to keep your lead hand steady throughout as the handle hand does the work. This minimizes the amount of movement your dog feels through the lead.

If your dog moves away from you, you can lengthen the lead by allowing it to slide through the palm of your lead hand while releasing a bunny ear from your handle hand. You can bring yourself closer to your dog by sliding up the lead and gathering the lead as before.

Periodically check to see that you haven't got any loops of lead around your hand as this can lead to painful injury. If you notice a loop instead of a bunny ear, next time your dog comes to a stop, simply regather to bunny ears before moving on. You may see a massive improvement in your dog's behavior when you support safe, natural movement on lead.



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BRINGING YOUR DOG TO A STOP

Slowing your dog's movement or bringing them to a stop if they're moving towards a trigger helps your dog maintain the distance they need so they're less likely to react.

By using a hand over hand movement or stroking the lead, you can help your dog to slow down.

When you need your dog to stop completely, slowly squeeze the lead between your thumb and fingers until they gently come to a full stop.

If your dog is moving quickly, you may need to do a repetitive squeeze and release action like pumping the brakes on a car in order to help your dog slow down without putting sudden tension on the lead.

Once you are stopped, place your feet shoulder width apart with one leg slightly behind the other. Move into balance by keeping your knees slightly bent, relaxing your shoulders, taking a breath, and lowering your hands.

When you do this you will see a nice "smile" in the lead.

Try not to step forward as this can cause your dog to step forward, too. Instead, shift your weight from back to center to see if it helps the lead relax.

If your dog continues to try to go forward towards the trigger, you are most likely too close and will want to prompt your dog to move away with you to create space.

By learning how to gently stop your dog and put a smile in the lead, you can keep them feeling safe, making the walk more comfortable and enjoyable for both ends of the lead.



TEACHING A POSITIVE INTERRUPTER

Sometimes you need to interrupt what your dog is doing because it's something you don't want them to practice, it's escalating a situation or may even be dangerous.

Your natural response might be to say "No!" but your dog doesn't know what that means. You may find yourself repeating it over and over without your dog responding. It's also hard to say in a way that doesn't sound cross and you don't want to startle your dog into stopping the behaviour as this can damage your relationship and lead to a breakdown in trust. Fortunately there is a better way - the "Treats" game or Positive Interrupter.

This is the simplest game in the world! You're going to teach your dog that when they hear the word "Treats!", amazing things come from you. In time they will come running over no matter what they're doing or what is happening in the environment. Of course you can choose another word if you prefer, but make sure it's something short that you can say in an upbeat tone.



With your dog beside you, cheerily say "Treats!" before immediately feeding them one.

Repeat this several times until your dog starts to turn to you as soon as they hear the word. This means that they are getting the link between the interrupter word and rewards arriving.

Next you can practice when they are distracted by something. Make sure it's nothing too exciting yet!

Say 'treats!' and see how quickly your dog responds. Always reward your dog, no matter how long they take. If they struggle it's just information that they haven't practiced enough to be able to respond in that situation yet. Keep practicing around lesser distractions to help build up their skills.

Be sure to train in the home and garden before working outside in a quiet street, at the park, and in other locations where there are small distractions. You want your dog to be able to look at you instantly when you say "treats". When they can, you're ready to practice around bigger distractions.

In time you will even be able to positively interrupt your dog if they are in the middle of reacting to something, so that you can move away to a safe space together.

Take your time and don't be tempted to rush the training steps - the more time you spend on this, the better your end result will be!



RELIABLE RECALL

To build a reliable recall it's essential that coming back is ALWAYS fun and never leads to a negative consequence for your dog.

A brilliant game to begin with is scatter recall. Start out by showing your dog a tasty treat before placing it on the ground for them to eat. This will keep them distracted for a moment, while you move away a few paces and wait for them to catch up. When they start to move closer, mark and reward by your feet, before moving away again.

After a few repetitions you will find that your dog starts to run to you more quickly. Now you're going to wait until your dog reaches you before marking and placing their reward on the floor.

Soon your dog will be rushing to you so quickly, you'll barely have time to move away before they're beside you again!



At this point your dog is not only coming to you through choice, but rushing as fast as they can to get back. This is EXACTLY what you want recall to look like.

Now you can add a cue word to call them to you. Simply say your chosen cue just before your dog starts to run to you. Mark and reward every time they get it right and your dog will start to understand that this word means to come running over to you.

After several repetitions you can test your dog's understanding by saying the cue when they're not looking at you. Wait and see how long it takes them to respond. With practice you should see this time decrease.

When your dog is quick to respond in the home, you are ready to take their training to different environments. Practice in places with few distractions before building up to busier locations.

Taking the time to build a brilliant recall will allow your dog to enjoy more freedom when you go out together and give you peace of mind that they will be happy and safe.



SLOWING DOWN THE EXIT

Does your dog have the habit of bolting to the end of the lead and pulling you down the street as soon as you step outside?

Rushing through the door can be a result of excitement, anticipation of triggers or simply pent up energy. Whatever the reason, it can lead to injuries for both you and your dog, or cause you to miss a nearby trigger that your dog then reacts to. It's so important to slow things down before you set off on your walk.

Here are 3 things to try:

1. Scatter treats on the ground for your dog to find as you exit. Continue until you see your dog's movement slowing down. This gives you both a chance to acclimatise the shift in environment without rushing.
1. Give your dog simple predictable behaviours to do when you get outside to help them focus. The 1-2-3 pattern game is a perfect example. Pattern games are easy, fun, and involve movement, which is often easier for your dog in this situation than being still.
1. Cue your dog to do a trick when you walk outside. Like pattern games, tricks give your dog something to focus on. Tricks like paws up, middle or touch not only give your dog something else to do, but can set the tone of your walk to be fun and enjoyable.

If your dog is unable to settle enough to go on a walk after this, then it may be best to head back indoors, take a break and try again later. You may need to adjust the time of day, the direction you walk in or consider driving to a quieter location with your dog when you go out together.

Practicing these tips when you exit, can help set you up for more enjoyable walks.



LET'S GO

Teaching your dog a “Let’s go” cue is helpful for times when you want to get out of trouble quickly by turning around.

To start with place a treat on the ground for them to eat before running behind them.

Say their name enthusiastically or make an interesting sound to get their attention. Look for the first movement of their neck as they turn towards you. Mark this and then reward. Keep it fun and practice until your dog turns every time.

Once this basic movement is reliable, you can add a cue. Simply say ‘let’s go!’ or your chosen word just before making your original sound. When your dog responds, mark and reward. You can continue to reward as you walk away together.

Practice calling them away from distractions such as food, toys, people and other dogs. Train lots with things that are not triggers for your dog before cueing this around things that worry them. You want to make sure that your dog loves playing this game and the more you practice, the more automatic it will be in an emergency.

Ultimately, you want your dog to turn around instantly and come back to you so you can quickly move away together.

Training a reliable let’s go, will help get you out of tricky situations and create the space your dog needs.



BACK UP AND TREAT

Back Up and Treat is a simple game that you can use when you need to get away from something quickly, for example where another dog is walking towards you and you want to back up to a driveway or to the nearest wider space. You continue to face the scary thing as you back away but your dog turns away from it to face you. It is perfect for situations where you want to avoid your dog even seeing the scary thing.

You will need some of your dog's favourite, easy to eat treats. Start in your home or garden without distractions.

With a treat in your hand and your dog beside you, walk forwards a few steps. Then hold the treat in front of their nose and quickly move backwards away from them. As your dog follows the food and turns to face you, mark and reward them. Repeat until they are turning and running with you as soon as you move backwards. As you get good at this, you can remove the food from your hand so that your dog responds to your movement and not just the food.

Practice first in a straight line and then introduce changes of direction such as moving in a right angle so that you can guide your dog out of the path of oncoming danger. Practice in different environments and vary the rewards so that you can use this pattern game even if you forget your treat bag!



LOOSE LEAD WALKING

Loose lead walking is a key skill when it comes to working with on-lead reactivity. It will help your dog to be calmer on their walks, more responsive to you and create a more comfortable experience for you both.

A simple way to teach this is using 300 Peck.

Start with your dog beside you on a loose lead. Take one step forward and if the lead remains loose, reward. Then take two steps. If the lead remains loose throughout, reward again. Build up a step at a time.

If the lead tightens at any point, stop moving and reset the game. Restart your count from one, before building up again a step at a time.

The only thing that matters is whether the lead is loose. Your dog can be slightly in front of you, slightly behind, on your left or right, looking at you or sniffing - if they are on a slack lead always reward after your target number of steps.



Be patient. You will probably find that it takes a while to build up to ten consecutive steps with your dog on a loose lead. Don't feel frustrated as each time you start over your dog has the chance to get reinforced more often and this helps to strengthen the behaviour you want.

Over time you will be able to take more and more steps between rewards and your dog will walk beautifully on a loose lead throughout. As the numbers build, progress will get quicker, but no matter what number you're on, if the lead tightens, you must start again from one.

Be consistent with this approach and you will quickly make progress. When you and your dog reach 300 steps without the lead tightening, you have mastered loose lead walking!



WAITING AT THE DOOR

For many dogs the anticipation for going out on a walk begins as soon as you put on your shoes and pick up the lead.

Whether your dog is overly excited, anxious or a combination of both, arousal inside the home can easily become over reactivity outside.

As you prepare for the walk, cue your dog to wait patiently while you get ready and put-on their equipment. Reinforce generously as they wait.

Your dog may prefer to sit or stand, either is fine as long as they remain stationary. Reward frequently while in place to build duration.

Next, practice taking small steps towards the door while your dog stays where they are. Return to them and reward each time they are successful.



Once your dog understands to stay as you move towards the door, you can add your hand touching the door handle before rewarding them for remaining where they are. If you are holding the lead, make sure it doesn't become tight as you move as this could accidentally prompt your dog to move too.

Gradually add the remaining actions needed before you can leave the house, such as turning the handle or opening the door. At every stage, reward your dog for remaining stationary.

Before releasing your dog from their position to leave the house with you, you'll want to make sure the coast is clear. Quickly scan the environment making sure there aren't any nearby triggers that might cause your dog to over react. If it's safe, call your dog to you and begin your walk.

Spending time working on foundation skills inside, and helping your dog relax before a walk will set you on the right path when you're outside too.



FIGURE OF 8 FOR CALM

Movement can be helpful when your dog is a little stressed or over-aroused. The Figure of Eight is a useful movement pattern to use when you want to calm your dog down.

It encourages slow, mindful movement, as their body turns in both directions, helping to release muscle tension. You walk repeatedly over the same space, which is also helpful for dogs who find novelty over-stimulating.

Simply imagine a large figure eight marked out on the ground and slowly walk with your dog around it. The continuous slow methodical movement and turns will help your dog to relax and encourage them to focus on you as the environment stays the same. Try not to use treats for this as they might make your dog more excited. Instead, stroke the lead as needed to encourage your dog around the turns. Be sure to allow lots of space for this so your dog can turn comfortably in wide arcs throughout.

Helping your dog to relax before continuing your walk can make a huge difference to their success.

