



## Leash Reactivity

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Dogs exhibit leash reactivity for many reasons. Insecurity, stress, or excitement are high on the list. Leash reactivity can be mild and easy to redirect, or can be moderate or even severe which can be much more difficult to redirect.

**If at any time your dog exhibits severe leash reactivity it is time to call a professional for help.** This would include redirecting their reactivity to you (growling, snapping or biting you) or the inability to control your dog and move away from the stimulus.

**The first step in your journey is to set yourself up for success.**

Find the walking equipment that offers you the best control of your dog. This may be a harness, head halter or collar and clip leash. **We DO NOT endorse pinch collars, shock collars, or retractable leashes.**

- Ensure your dog does not have negative experiences during your training phase by controlling the environment. Avoid walks during busy times where multiple stimuli are present.
- Reward your dog for ANY behavior that is appropriate.

**Let's get started!**

**To begin working on leash reactivity your dog should already have a solid SIT, basic leash skills, and ideally also know the LOOK command.** (make eye contact when you ask them to "look")

- Choose a treat your dog cannot resist. Reserve this treat for training times ONLY.
- Determine the distance your dog FIRST NOTICES the stimulus. Ask them to SIT and LOOK. Reward them for staying calm. Watch your dog's body language and keep them at a distance that you are able to keep their attention. Continue rewarding them at a high rate in the beginning stages. Keep your training sessions SHORT and end on a positive note. It is important during this phase to NOT set them up to fail. If you know there are areas that stimulus will be present, avoid these areas.
- Continue multiple short training sessions, and if your dog remains calm, try to decrease the distance between them and the stimulus.
- If at any time your dog shows negative signs, extreme pulling, not redirecting to your voice, hackles up, or barking it is time to say "let's go" and change directions. Keep it positive and as SOON as your dog is calmed back down reward him. The goal is to make sure your dog NEVER gets so aroused that he is lunging or growling. You MUST watch your dog's body language and be one step ahead of them.
- Over time your dog will be conditioned to receiving yummy things when a stimulus appears, and looking to you for direction.

## Tips for success:

- **Make sure your dog is properly exercised BEFORE training.** If they are too amped up and excited, training will be difficult.
- AVOID surprises in the early stages by controlling the environment as much as possible.
- It is important to decrease distance in small increments. **Be patient and reward often!**
- Balance training times with other fun outdoor activities.
- **Work to build your relationship with your dog in other ways.** Agility training, working on advanced commands or fun tricks, and enrichment games can all be fun ways to ensure your dog LOVES working with you.

If, after trying these suggestions, you are still experiencing undesirable behaviors in your dog, SUBMIT QUESTIONS by clicking the link under Ask A Trainer on the Behavior and Training page of the Wayside Waifs website: [www.waysidewaifs.org](http://www.waysidewaifs.org).

Written by the Wayside Waifs Canine Behavior Team  
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