

ON-LEASH REACTIVITY TOWARD OTHER DOGS

Congratulations on adopting your new family member!

As your adoption counselor explained, your new dog has shown reactivity toward other dogs either in the shelter or in the previous home. Dog-reactive dogs may lunge, pull, whine, bark or growl at other dogs while on leash. Some of these dogs may even snap or bite the other dog if they get close enough. When off-leash, however, many of these dogs are friendly toward other dogs. Walking these reactive dogs is difficult though! If you follow the guidelines below, you will be able to safely walk your new dog and have a happy and long-lasting relationship.

- Fill your pockets or treat bag with delicious treats before every walk.
- Use the walking tool that your adoption counselor recommended: Gentle Leader or one of the front-leading harnesses (Easy-walk or Sensation). Make sure you know how to apply the device properly. If not, call your adoption counselor right away.
- To help your dog focus on something else, teach your dog to “look” or “the name game”. To teach “look”, train your new dog to look at your face by holding a treat next to your eye or on your nose, whichever you prefer. Ask your dog to “look” or “this way.” When he or she does, say YES! and give the treat. To teach “the name game”, practice having your dog turn his or her head when you say their name. See [this handout](#) for more information. Practice these first inside and then on walks when there are no other dogs.
- Try to avoid dogs for the first week after you take the dog home. Practice the “look” or “name game” exercises many times on your walks. Also ask your dog to move with you as you put the treats in front of your dog’s mouth. After your dog moves with you, then ask your dog to sit.
- When you see your first dog, use your treats to lure your dog away from the other dog and keep walking. Do this even if your dog is not reactive. When you see that your dog is not being reactive, ask your dog to look at you and sit; then, praise and treat.
- If your dog is reactive to every dog you see, most likely you are getting closer to the other dogs than your dog can tolerate. Try to increase the distance from the other dogs so that your dog is not reactive.
- Until you get to know your dog’s off-leash behavior, do not attempt to go to dog parks. If you have a safe fenced-in yard, you can try to plan play time with one of your friend’s dog-friendly dogs.
- Sign up for an obedience class with a trainer who can handle reactive dogs. Make sure you let the trainer know about your dog’s reactivity.

If you are not successful curbing your dog’s dog-reactive behavior, please call your adoption counselor! He or she will be able to direct you to a person who can help you.