

REACTIVITY TOWARDS PEOPLE

NEED MORE HELP?

Find additional resources at pasadenahumane.org/behavior.

Reactive dogs may lunge, whine, bark, growl, snap, or even bite people. Managing reactive dogs can be a challenge! These tips will help keep your dog safe and encourage a happy, long-lasting relationship.

Management in the Home

Different dogs are reactive to different kinds of people. A dog may be reactive toward someone they don't know, or they may display reactivity to a specific type of person, typically children, men, or women.

- Never let the dog off leash in public spaces.
- If people are coming over to the house, such as a dinner date or a maintenance provider, have a secure space to keep the dog in, such as a crate. This will make the dog feel more secure and will prevent any people from being injured.
- If introducing someone new, take it slow and keep the dog on a leash during the interaction.
- Have the person sit quietly and ask them not to make eye contact with the dog. Have the new person toss treats toward the dog. Only allow the dog to approach if they seem calm and curious. Body language should be loose, wagging tail and a relaxed facial expression.
- Never allow people to approach the dog. Only let someone pet the dog once the dog has approached and asked for attention from the person.
- Reward the dog if they show friendly behavior to people!
- If the dog is reactive toward children specifically, the dog should not be in contact with children.

Leash Training Tips

Reactivity is most likely to occur while the dog is on a leash. It is important to properly leash-train a reactive dog so you can safely control them during walks and avoid getting a bad reputation with your neighbors! Use these leash training guidelines to work with your reactive dog.

- Use a recommended walking tool such as Easy-walk or Freedom harness. Make sure you fit the harness properly.
- For the first week, avoid walking the dog in areas with a lot of foot traffic. Choose a quiet area with few distractions.

(over)



PASADENA HUMANE

361 S. Raymond Ave.
Pasadena, CA 91105
pasadenahumane.org

- While working in quiet areas, practice redirecting cues such as “Look at Me” and “Touch.” You can use these cues to distract the dog from other dogs you may encounter.
 - When teaching “Look at Me,” use treats to lure the dog’s eyes up to make eye contact with you and reward.
 - When teaching “Touch,” hold a treat between your thumb and your palm and hold your palm out facing your dog. Ask the dog to touch. Reward them as soon as the dog’s nose touches your palm.
- Teach “The Name Game.” It is important that the dog knows their name on a walk, so if they see a stranger, you can get them to focus on you by calling their name.
 - When you encounter a person on your walk, put a treat in front of your dog’s nose and lure them away in the opposite direction – don’t stop moving! Do this even if your dog has not reacted to the person. It is better to prevent the dog from reacting rather than trying to correct them afterward. If the dog has not reacted, give them lots of positive reinforcement and treats so they know they did well!

If your dog continues to be reactive to people, you may be getting closer to the person than your dog can tolerate. Move in the opposite direction and create distance until your dog is no longer reactive. Remember how far away you had to be to get your dog to focus on you. This is likely how far you will need to stay while you are still training your dog.

Find a positive-reinforcement-based trainer who is experienced with reactive dogs to help continue training and socialization

We are always here to help! You can find additional behavior and training resources at pasadenahumane.org/behavior.

Adapted from Northeast Animal Shelter