

Whatcom Humane Society
Pack Leader Training
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Dogs at the shelter are here temporarily. It is our job to help keep them exercised, stimulated and loved. Mental stimulation uses 25% more oxygen than physical activity, so for those dogs with high energy levels, training is very important to keep them mentally fit and tired. Dogs who know basic skills are more likely to be adopted and to stay in new homes than dogs with no skills.

- **Red dogs:** These are dogs who may be mouthy and jumpy, very strong, pushy and stressed, or very fearful and stressed. Dogs who get highly aroused or who are very fearful can become aggressive so it is always important to watch behavior carefully and to be confident and calm. Before you go in to see a new dog, **always** read kennel notes and the previous walkers' notes. **Always** record your experience honestly on the volunteer sheet so that the next dog walker will know what to expect. **Report any concerning behavior to Animal Care Staff.** Dog behavior can worsen during shelter life with increasing frustration levels and stress or it can improve as they begin to feel safe and learn the routine.
 - **Just because you are approved to walk Red Dogs, doesn't mean you are obligated to. Only walk dogs that you feel you can handle and feel confident with.**
- **All red dogs should have basic behavior and assessment information in the front of their section in the Red Dog book from their initial assessment by a staff member and updated periodically by assigned volunteers: READ IT BEFORE YOU TAKE OUT THE DOG.**
- **Body language (from Sara Kalnajs "The language of dogs" DVD):** watch for stress signals, especially clusters of stress signals such as paw raise, licking and yawning, arched back, tucked tail exhibited together. Clusters of stress signals indicate increasing stress levels in the dog. When you see stress signals, think about what **you** are doing (are you making direct eye contact? Moving quickly? Leaning over the dog? Petting the dog on top of the head? Moving toward the dog?). Slow down, back off, take a deep breath, turn sideways to the dog, and give the dog some space. Toy breeds may just blink over and over rather than showing several different signals clustered together.

Mild stress or displacement signals (dog displays familiar behaviors out of context that they connect with pleasure and therefore increase their sense of security):

- Marking territory
- Fool around (acting very silly, over the top playful, "zoomies")
- Stretching

- Yawning
- Shaking off
- Licking lips
- Sniffing the ground
- Licking genitals
- Drinking water

Distance **decreasing** signals (Please come closer, I love you, scratch my ears, play with me, etc):

- Play bow
- Easy, wagging tail in a circle or whole butt wagging
- Submissive grin, long commissure (length of mouth)
- Blinking eyes
- Squinty eyes
- Floppy, relaxed roll over
- Other signs of relaxation:
 - Relaxed face (frown between ears has relaxed, wrinkles around mouth are relaxing, decreased panting, neutral wagging tail (desire to interact), soft eyes, relaxed body, ears neutral or back but not plastered back on head, paw lift.

Signs of arousal: (I'm excited, may progress instantly to aggression or over aroused play)

- Ears forward
- Weight forward
- Direct stare
- Penile crowning
- Hackles up
- Increase in activity
- Mouth closes
- Mounting or humping

Danger signals: BACK OFF—DON'T GET CLOSER!!!—may erupt instantly into aggression

- High fast tail wag
- Tail flagged over back, with tip pointing forward (depends on breed of dogs. Some breeds carry their tails this way.
- Ground scratching
- Freezing
- Very brief look away
- Whale eye
- Head and neck low: resource guarding is usually the cause
- 'Tap out': don't confuse this with the submissive distance decreasing signal of roll over. Dog curls down onto floor slowly, shoulder down, then each vertebrae of back, tail may be between legs. This is a fearful signal that can suddenly explode into aggression if you approach.
- Other signs of stress / fear: frowny face with wrinkles between ears and around mouth—face looks tight and stressed, ears plastered back on head, arched back, tail tucked, turning back, turning head away, body tight, panting).

To reduce stress in dogs: Avoid bending over dogs, hugging them, patting them on top of their heads. Rather, stand parallel to them if you need to bend down, stroke their chests, backs, or shoulders. Be calm and reassuring with them. Go slowly when putting on their equipment. Always ask: "How is this for you?" when interacting with them.

- **Keeping dogs calm in their kennels:** when looking at dogs from outside their kennels, only reinforce behaviors that are calm. E.g. don't pay attention to dogs who are barking, jumping up etc. Turn away until they are quiet and have 4 paws on the floor. Then praise them, smile, and give them a treat under the door etc.
- Every interaction is a training interaction for both you and the dog. Pay attention to what you are telling them both by initiating behavior and by responding to them—be calm, firm, gentle. Keep your voice low and friendly. Smile. The more excited or aroused a dog is, the calmer and firmer you need to be. "Firm" means keeping verbal cues simple, not engaging in their behaviors, being aloof and keeping expectations clear, rewarding only when they do what you are asking of them. It doesn't mean raising your voice or forcing them to do what you want them to.

- **Entering the kennels:**
 - Only enter the kennel when the dog is sitting or has all 4 feet are on the floor. Brace the kennel door with your foot when you unlatch the karabiner. Once in the kennel, use treats to lure the dog into standing or sitting position on the floor if he is jumping up. Only put on the harness or pet the dog when all 4 feet are on the floor or when the dog is sitting —i.e. don't attempt to harness the dog if his feet are off the floor. You may need to lure him into a sit with a cookie immediately upon entering the kennel if he is very excited.
 - With dogs you don't know, talk to them from outside the kennel reassuringly first and give them treats when they are calm. IF they are worried—ears back, tail tucked, back arched, or excited, barking at you, and jumping up, work with them first from outside the kennel until their stress signals decrease. Kennels are small spaces for dogs to meet and greet you.

- **Putting on the harness:**
 - **Excited dogs:** Have the harness ready to place on the dog and a cookie in your hand before you enter the kennel. Attaching the leash to the harness prior to entering can be helpful. Lure the dog's head through the harness with a cookie as soon as you enter the kennel. You may need to switch sides so that you can reach under the dog to grasp the band that goes under the chest to complete your task. Toss cookies on the floor to keep him calm while you do up the quick release snap. This may take more than one try. Just maneuver him back into position and try again if you can't get the snap done up the first time. Avoid wrapping your arms around the dog to do up the harness but rather reach under the chest/belly as you would to saddle horse.
 - **Fearful dogs:** If the dog is fearful, move slowly and stand sideways to him until the dog approaches you in a relaxed manner. Toss him treats rather than trying to get him to approach you. Crouching down may help, but this may make some dogs more anxious. It also places your face closer to the dog's mouth. Once he is approaching you with interest, you may feed him treats from your hand, then feed him treats off the harness, then have him take treats through the opening of his harness, gradually increasing the distance that his nose pushes through each time. Remove the harness completely between attempts to put the harness on him and if he is getting increasingly stressed, take a break or leave the kennel. Removing the harness from his head between attempts to put it on him will decrease his stress, and in addition will give him practice at having his harness moved over his face. You may not be able to get the harness on him the first day that you go to see him. Even though you are not walking the dog, you are building their trust and confidence in humans.
 - **Throughout the process, watch closely for FREEZING and WHALE EYE. These are signs that you need to back off NOW.**

- That said, it is often much easier **on the dog** to find someone who knows the dog to harness him and take him to the GA room for introductions. There is more space in the GA rooms, and being with someone he already trusts will give him confidence. You can then toss cookies or toys, work on your relationship, and then take him for a walk. The next time you come in, he'll probably be fine with you. If not, do the same thing again. DON'T push these dogs!
- **Walking dogs: ALWAYS TAKE LOTS OF TREATS WITH YOU (as well as plastic bags)**
 - Leaving the kennel:** Always check for other dogs/ people/kids before exiting the kennel. Keep your body between the kennels and the dog you are walking. Keep your dog on a SHORT leash. Feeding treats, holding a Kong for them to lick, or tossing treats on the floor ahead of them may help to get them past the kennels without lunging and barking. Do the same when returning your dog to his kennel. Take the dog out and back through stray when appropriate. Always announce yourself when approaching corners.
 - Redirecting:** Dogs may “redirect” their frustration onto the closest thing to them and if that happens to be you, you may get bitten. If the dog you are walking breaks away from your left side and lunges and barks at the kennels, just get the dog down the hall as fast as you can rather than pulling him back to the left side closer to you.
 - Always check for dogs on the other side of the doors before going through a doorway. Be sure all 4 paws are on the floor before going through a door. Lure the dog back to you with treats as soon as you are through the door so that he is facing you and you can check out the environment before proceeding.
 - Keep your dog on the right side when exiting past the stray kennels and exercise yard. Move them quickly past the exercise yard, tossing treats on the ground to distract them as you pass, especially if a reactive dog is in the yard. You may need to wait until a dog is put away before going through the gate if both dogs are reactive. It is not good for either dog to be placed in that situation.
- **Exercise yard:** I would recommend getting to know dogs first before taking them in the exercise yard. Some over-stimulated dogs can be overwhelming with jumping up and excitement when off leash.
 - Don't take dogs out to the exercise yard within an hour of eating or offer large amounts of water as strenuous exercise with full stomachs can cause bloat in dogs—40% fatality even if treated immediately.
 - Also, be very careful about exercising dogs in the heat. They are very inefficient at cooling themselves and regulating temperature and can get hyperthermia much more easily than humans. This can also be fatal.

- **Returning to the kennel:**

- Most dogs go back in their kennels easily and tossing treats on the floor will entertain them until you can get out. Show him the cookies and be sure you have high enough value treats that he will actually be interested in them. Be ready with your hand on the lever to exit the kennel before you toss the treats so that you can slip out while he is distracted.
- Some dogs may do better with a stuffed Kong to keep them busy while you exit. Stuff with a combo of kibble (soaked or not) and peanut butter. Don't use too much peanut butter as it is bad for them, but dollops to help the kibble adhere between layers of kibble is high value for most dogs. Get the dog interested in the Kong, and then place it on the floor and leave. If you lose ownership of the Kong, do NOT try to take it away from the dog.
- Some dogs may be escape artists. You can try taking them into the Get Acquainted room and attach their leash to their collar only. Toss treats into their kennel and **without entering** the kennel, unclip the leash and close the door when the dog goes in to investigate. You may need to get help with some dogs to get them back into the kennel either from other volunteers or from animal care staff.
- Have another volunteer go to the back of the kennel and ask them to distract the dog with treats while you leave.
- You can block the dog definitively with your body and move into them slightly to back them away from the door but with a fearful or potentially aggressive dog, this can be seen as threatening and trigger aggression, so I don't recommend it. Fast dogs can also squirt between your feet if you aren't good at this.

Fearful dogs: Every interaction is a training interaction for both you and the dog.

If fearful dogs are red dogs, they will be more fearful than those dogs you have worked with previously. You will need to be more aware of stress signals, and clusters of stress signals. It is extremely important that you move slowly with these dogs paying close attention to your body language and their response to you with their body language. Remember, just because you CAN do things to these dogs, doesn't mean it's best for the dog. Again, always be asking the dog "how is this for you?" Fearful dogs can bite in defense just as easily as over-aroused dogs.

- Move slowly, have your body posture erect or leaning slightly backward, smile with squinty eyes, turn sideways, breath deeply, and toss treats rather than trying to get him to approach you. They'll do so when they are ready.
- Get to know them well from outside the kennel first, and only enter when they are showing signs of relaxation—decreased stress signals, approaching the front of the kennel with a well balanced body, taking treats from you.

- Get someone the dog knows to introduce you in the GA room.
- **Going through doorways:** Never force fearful dogs to do anything. If they are afraid of doorways, walk them forward toward the door but not to the point where they put on the breaks. Then walk them away from it, then back toward the door again a step closer, then away again etc. If they are treat motivated, use treats to encourage them closer, but then allow them to move away again before they approach once more.
- **Protect the dog:** Be sure to protect the dog when you are passing dogs in the stray area, and other walkers in the field. Stand way off to the side or do a u-turn and hide behind something if another dog is coming.

Pushy, mouthy, stressed dogs:

- **Every interaction is a training interaction for both you and the dog.** Pay attention to what you are telling them both by initiating behavior and by responding to them—be calm, firm, gentle. Keep your voice low and friendly. Smile. The more excited or aroused a dog is, the calmer and firmer you need to be. “Firm” means keeping verbal cues simple, (**not** engaging in their behaviors like pushing them off and protesting when they jump up), being aloof and keeping expectations clear, rewarding only when they do what you are asking of them. It doesn’t mean raising your voice or forcing them to do what you want them to.
- **Increased arousal levels:** Anything can cause increased arousal levels. The higher the arousal level, the more difficult to control the dog is and the closer to aggressive behavior the dog is. Shelter dogs are stressed, so it is important, especially until you know a dog well, to keep their arousal levels low.
 - Things that can increase arousal levels:
 - High energy on the handler’s part—**running**, excited voices, high squeaky voice, intentionally getting the dog excited by rough housing, clapping hands, petting the dog too roughly or in an excited way as we may do with our own dogs etc.
 - Bending over the dog, touching a dog who doesn’t like to be touched, too much training, boredom.
 - Walking close to another dog –this can be excitement because the dog either likes other dogs, or has fear based reactivity. If you get too close to another dog accidentally, rather than pulling the dog back to you, **WALK AWAY** to avoid a redirected bite.

- Seeing another dog running in the exercise yard (if you have a dog in the exercise yard and a volunteer is having a difficult time walking a dog past, STOP playing with your dog, have them sit and feed them cookies.
- Loud noises in the distance
- Food rewards
- Frustration
- Excited play in the yard.
- To decrease arousal levels:
 - Breath deeply
 - Slow down
 - Stand up straight
 - Speak slowly and calmly in a low voice
 - Don't get excited
 - Turn sideways
 - Avoid direct eye contact
 - Be aware of keeping arousal levels low with dogs you haven't walked before until you get to know them.
 - Avoid other walkers with dogs.
 - Don't take a dog you haven't walked before into the exercise area.

Walks:

- Don't take them in the exercise yard unless you know the dog well and feel safe doing so. Intersperse walks with training—loose leash walking, sit, down, recall, eye contact to given them skills. Sit is VERY important as it can help to ground them.
- If they have a history of jumping/mouthing and biting, walk with a second person so that if the dog gets into a frenzy, the second person can attach a second leash to the harness so that the dog can't access either person. PLEASE don't talk if you are walking with another person (unless you are talking to the dog—and even then watch to see how your

voice is affecting them), as this is often over-stimulating and stressful for these dogs.

- If walking alone, walk the dog in areas where you can attach him to a fence close to the shelter. There are carabiners available to attach to the leash handle so that you can clip the dog to the fence, step back, let him calm down. Once settled, you can approach him again, reinforce his calm behavior and walk him calmly back to the shelter. Call for help if you need it.
- If you have this problem with a dog, let Carly know and she will notify one of the trainers. One of the trainers will work with the dog and devise a training plan. If you want to work with a Pack Leader coach before working with the dog alone, let Carly know and she'll help to arrange it.
- If you have a dog that stresses when heading back to the shelter, work on walking toward the shelter while giving treats and praise, then walk away from the shelter (no treats) again, then back toward the shelter. Repeat multiple times on your walk. By doing this, you will be rewarding the shelter approach by walking away from it. When you get back to the shelter, take the dog into a Get Acquainted room and play, do box puzzles, snuggle or whatever the dog enjoys before having him go back to his kennel.
- If the dog prefers NOT to go around the field a second or third time, pay attention and go to the play yard or to the GA room for games or a Kong. Dogs have few choices at the shelter and this is one we can honor. Often, forcing them to circle the field one more time against their will will cause them to act out.
- If you see another dog coming, move a good distance off to the side and feed the dog treats with his back to the passing dog. If he's struggling to turn around and make eye contact with the dog, he's too close to that dog. You can also make a U turn or hide behind something (car, dumpster etc.).

Jumping up:

- When anticipating that your dog will jump, give another cue such as "sit" that is incompatible with jumping up. Praise. Walk on calmly.
- Turn away from him and completely withdraw from him emotionally and physically. Walk on when all 4 paws are on the ground.

- Step on the leash, take a few deep breaths, and walk on calmly back to the shelter when the dog has settled, keeping arousal levels very low.
- If you are out walking and you can't stop the dog jumping and mouthing (rarely, some dogs will get into a frenzy of jumping with hard direct eye contact or dilated pupils and mouthing/biting. This is often due to a combination of stress and pushiness. Either **step on the leash** or move them to one of the posts and attach them to the carabiner. Ignore them until they are calm and call the shelter on your cell (**360-733-2080 and then "0"**) for help. Please place this number on rapid dial in your phone. **If the shelter is closed, you can call 911 and the dispatcher can contact Animal Control and an officer will come to help you.** Shouting at them and pushing them off will increase their arousal levels and worsen the problem.
- Don't shout at the dog or push them off, but don't hesitate to speak to them confidently and sternly with a "SIT" in a **deep** voice if they are over aroused and difficult to control. However, if this is not helping, stop talking. Stand tall and exude strength, confidence and control and step on the leash.
- When a dog has a habit of jumping, snapping, mouthing or biting, praise and walk on when their feet are back on the ground. I wouldn't reward with treats immediately as we don't want to inadvertently reward the sequence of "jump/mouth/bite- sit- treat". Have the dog walk calmly for a few seconds, and then toss treats on the ground and ask them to "find it". This will focus their attention away from you, lure them into a calming posture and engage the seeking part of their brain, which is strongly reinforcing.

Mouthing the leash:

- Shorten the leash.
- offer a tug toy to play with and redirect the dog to it.
- Work on Take it/leave it.
- Decrease arousal levels by withdrawing from the dog physically and emotionally.
- in serious leash biters, a chain leash.

- **Exercise yard:** I would recommend getting to know dogs first before taking them in the exercise yard to play ball. Some over-stimulated dogs can be overwhelming with jumping up and excitement when off leash.
- **Training skills:**
 - **Take_it/Leave it:** Offer your dog a treat and tell her 'take it'. Repeat 2 or three times. Then, holding your hand steady, ask her in a light voice to 'leave it'. Do not release the treat. Wait until she backs off in frustration. Immediately mark and tell her 'take it' as you give her the treat. Do a few more 'take its' and then 'leave it'. Repeat.
 - **Agility equipment:** Agility equipment is used a lot in the training plans. This gives the dogs challenging ways to exercise without the arousal of fetch. If you haven't been instructed in use of the equipment, let Carly know and Kerry will either work with you or schedule another class.
 - **Karabiner use:** The karabiner is used on the handle of the leash to attach the dog to the fence in the play yard if the dog is lunging and biting at the handler. This gives the handler a way to get away from the dog immediately, removes the stimulus from the dog and gives the dog a chance to calm down. Often lunging and biting is a puppy behavior that can become a stress related behavior. The dog can also learn that they get control of the situation when they do this. It needs to be stopped permanently before it leads to an aggressive behavior.
 - **Sit:** Training sit and asking the dog to sit several times during each session will help the dog to learn sit as a default behavior.
 - **Stay:** Place your dog in a sit or a down. Tell your dog 'stay'.
 - a) **Sit:** Have him nibble on a cookie right at his nose and move from one side to another, repeating 'stay'. If he starts to get up from the sit, say 'SIT' and praise and treat as soon as he's back in position. Watch him like a hawk. Initially, go barely from one side of his head to the other for a total of the count of 5. Once he's doing well with this, move further from one side to the other and eventually walk all the way around your dog, holding the treat at his nose, and repeating 'stay'.
 - b) **Down:** same as above only **place the treats on the floor between his paws.**
 - c) Stand upright and look confident while doing the stay exercise. Hold your arm out in front of you with your hand facing the dog, putting pressure on the dog to stay in the sit or down position. Say "STAY" slowly and authoritatively leaning slightly forward. Take one step backward, then return to the dog and treat. Then take 2 steps back, then 3 steps, then 4, each time returning to the dog to reward him with praise and a treat for staying. GRADUALLY increase the distance ALWAYS making sure that the dog is successful. When you are ready to release the dog, return to him, give him praise and treats, and release him with his release word. Reward BEFORE you release him.

Find it: Toss treats on the ground and point to them asking the dog to “find it”. This can be used to calm the dog from biting on the leash, or by tossing treats BEHIND the dog, can direct the dog away from the handler.

Scent games: Spread out the bowls (found in the PY toy box) and put cookies in one when the dog is distracted. Ask him to “find it”. When he finds the cookies feed 5 more with his head IN THE BOWL. Move the bowls and toss treats in another when he’s not looking. Repeat. Once he understands the game, you can start hiding treats in a small area in the play yard under sticks. Don’t make it too hard at first. Always reward with multiple treats when he finds the treat you hid.

Choose to heel:

Video clip: choose to heel...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5FrKtKjKhEw&feature=youtu.be>

With the "choose to heel exercise", once the dog is staying with you consistently while on leash in the play yard (not pulling AT ALL), you can take the dog out of the play yard WITH another volunteer and continue the exercise. You would continue to mark/treat heel position (the dog being beside you) with "yes" or the clicker every couple of seconds. It may be helpful to have the second volunteer mark/treat the dog's position, or, if the dog pulls and you can't get him back under control, to attach a second leash. If this is the case, you'd want to return to the play yard and continue the exercise in the video.

- Collar grab: reach toward the dog, mark with “yes” and treat. At first your hand will move slowly toward the dog and may be a distance from the dog’s neck/head when you mark and treat, but as he learns the game, you may move your hand closer to the dog, then, when he is very comfortable, start moving your hand more quickly. This will, over time desensitize him to being reached for. GO SLOWLY with this exercise, and if you have doubts about a particular dog, don’t do it.
- Teaching calm: Take the dog out first, so he’s comfortable, then return to the GA room. Sit quietly with about 3 feet of loose leash attached to the dog, the rest gathered in your hand. Ignore the dog (no talking, no looking at the dog—look above the dog and channel calm confidence). As soon as the dog settles reach down and stroke him with calm, firm strokes, praise in a calm voice. As soon as he gets up, ignore. Repeat. If he jumps up, stand, turn away and ignore.

Updated 12/18/20