



Making life less stressful for you and your dog

# THE DOG DORK DIGEST

NEWS FROM POSITIVE INTERACTIONS DOG BEHAVIOR AND TRAINING

## Coming Next Issue!

I am a newly licensed Family Paws Parent Educator and am excited to begin offering services to educate and support families who are expecting, families with infants, toddlers, and young children, and the dogs they love.

Learn more about Family Paws and their goal to increase safety and decrease stress for all family members.

<https://www.familypaws.com/>

## ✧ Highlights ✧

### Leash Reactivity

Do you struggle with your dog's barking and lunging on walks? You're not alone! This is one of the most common problem behaviors I get requested to help clients with. Your dog's behavior may have become so frustrating for you that walks are unpleasant, resulting in minimal or no walks at all. So, how do you know if your dog is leash reactive? First, it's important to understand that reactivity doesn't necessarily translate to aggression. By definition, reactivity means a "responsiveness to stimulus." For your dog, that stimulus might be another dog, a person, passing bicycle, or loud truck. Your dog can be reactive to one stimulus or many. Your dog's "responsiveness" to stimuli may include whining, barking, growling; pulling and lunging on the leash; redirecting and biting and nipping the leash or you.

You might be wondering what is causing your dog to act this way. Typically, most dogs who react when on leash are doing so because they are too close to the stimulus and react out of fear. Their barking and lunging are often attempts to put more distance between themselves and the worrisome stimulus. Being on a leash takes away your dog's ability to choose "flight" and move away from the stimulus. In addition, leashes, and especially shortened ones, drastically hinder a dog from using their extensive body language signals to express to other dogs and people that they are uncomfortable and need more space. When a dog is prevented from doing this, their fear and anxiety can escalate, resulting in more reactive behavior.

Some dogs react out of frustration. These are dogs who may have a history of greeting other dogs and people, especially when they were young puppies. As they mature and are no longer allowed to go say hi to everyone, frustration can result. Their behavior of pulling and lunging results because they are trying to decrease the distance (get closer) between themselves and an approaching dog or person. When that doesn't happen, their combined frustration and overarousal can result in jumping up, and biting/shaking the leash.

If the quality and frequency of walks with your dog has diminished, seek the help of a certified professional dog trainer/behavior consultant. In the meantime, there are some relatively simple steps you can take to help your dog. Walk in quiet locations where encountering your dog's triggers are minimal. Business parks during off hours and school practice fields are locations I often recommend. Allow your dog to follow his nose and sniff which can help reduce stress. For walks in your neighborhood, try to choose times that are not so busy. Early morning, later at night, and over the dinner hour are typically less busy.

Leash reactivity can be modified so that you will eventually be able to enjoy walks with your dog again!

<https://positiveinteractionsdogbehaviorandtraining.com>

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A WORLD OF DOGS





## Understanding the Canine Lexicon

Have you ever marveled at the way your dog seems to understand exactly what you're saying? Or how even if you spell out the word 'w.a.l.k', they know exactly what's up? It turns out the language comprehension of our canine companions goes well beyond basic training cues.

Dogs don't comprehend language in the same way as humans. They may not grasp the nuances of syntax or grammar, but they have an impressive ability to understand words based on associations, intonations, and context. The key to a dog's word comprehension lies in the way we communicate with them. Dogs pick up on visual and auditory cues, associating specific sounds with actions or objects. This is why your dog might get excited when you mention the word "walk" or start tilting their head when you say "treat." The question then arises: How many words can dogs truly understand?

Research suggests that the average dog can comprehend around 165 words, ranging from basic commands to familiar objects and even some abstract terms. Of course, there are outliers on both ends of the spectrum – some dogs may grasp a few dozen words, while exceptionally trained dogs can understand a more extensive vocabulary. Chaser, the famous border collie, has the largest vocabulary of any known dog - a staggering 1,022 nouns.

While the exact number of words a dog comprehends can vary, their sensitivity to our communication goes beyond mere vocabulary. In addition to verbal cues, dogs excel at

understanding our emotions and tones, using their masterful interpretation of our body language and facial expressions. So, the next time you think your dog understands what you're saying, it's not just in your imagination – they're likely picking up on a combination of verbal and non-verbal cues.

Understanding the depth of your dog's language abilities opens up exciting opportunities for your relationship with them. Whether you're teaching new tricks, expanding their vocabulary, or simply enjoying your life together, your dog's ability to understand you makes them a unique and special companion. Want to return the favor? Learn all you can about their language too! Understanding canine communication, and particularly body language, will let you truly 'speak dog'.



### **Keeping Your Dog's Coat Seed-Free**

Grass seeds can be a hazard for your dog - lodging themselves in the skin and even entering your dog's body through their nose, mouth, and ears. Here's how to manage these pesky intruders.

**Regular Grooming:** Brush your dog's coat regularly, especially after walks. Pay close attention to the paws, ears, and armpits, where grass seeds tend to cling.

**Check and Monitor:** After walks in grassy areas, inspect your dog's coat. Look for seeds, burrs, or plant awns that may have attached themselves.

**Trimming Between Toes:** Long hair between your dog's toes is a magnet for grass seeds. Regularly trim this area to minimize the chance of seeds getting lodged.

**Use Protective Gear:** Consider protective gear like doggy boots or coats in areas with tall grasses or seeds.

Plato

**"A dog has the soul of a philosopher."**



## OUR SERVICES

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### **New Puppy?**

You've welcomed a puppy to your home – congratulations!

We're so happy you're seeking training now, while your puppy is a little learning sponge. This is also an important time in your puppy's development for being introduced to novel experiences.

By helping him become comfortable and confident through positive interactions with the sights, sounds, and experiences in the environment, your puppy will have a greater chance of maturing into an emotionally stable adult dog.

We'll also lay the foundation for a puppy you can enjoy now and throughout his entire lifetime by helping you tackle undesirable, common puppy behaviors like nipping, chewing, house training issues, jumping up, and more and replacing those unwanted behaviors with more desirable ones.

We'll start teaching you and your puppy foundational behaviors that will lay the foundation for a lifetime of good manners.

Our goal is to show you how to address these issues and get on with having fun with your four-legged addition to the family.


#### How it works


- All puppy training begins with a 90-minute initial consult.
  - We begin by meeting you and your puppy at your home, then assess and discuss your training goals that fit you and your family's lifestyle.
  - Management strategies along with basic training techniques will be introduced to help you get started with changing your puppy's unwanted behaviors.
  - Follow up with a recommended puppy training package consisting of four, one hour training sessions.
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