

# Training for a safe, well-adjusted dog

Step-by-step gradual introductions to new things are essential in managing and training a safe, calm and relaxed dog.

Like us, dogs are learning every second of every day. What they learn will either be positive or negative. Many people believe that puppies need to be introduced to everything before a certain age—this is incorrect, as it is more important HOW new things are introduced. Dogs do not instinctively understand our human world – they need to be introduced to it gradually and positively.



Scientifically speaking, if we do not take a slow gradual approach at your dog's pace, we can end up with a stressed, difficult to train, highly 'sensitised' and possibly aggressive dog. This is avoided by slowly introducing new experiences and pairing these with treats, games, and praise.

## When should I start?

It is advised to let the puppy settle into their new home. Just getting used to a new family and environment is enough for the first couple of weeks. In this time you will be getting to know your dog, seeing how they react in new situations, establishing their safe space and daily routine (see settling your dog in to the therapeutic role factsheet for more info). Familiarise yourself with their behaviour—this is covered in detail in workshop 2 but see our handout on stress signs, detailing fear responses.

If you have taken on an adult dog, you may find that they have not been adequately introduced to some environments. In this case you will need to work through this from the start. It may be useful to source the help of a qualified positive reinforcement dog trainer or behaviourist for help - visit [www.apdt.co.uk](http://www.apdt.co.uk) or [www.apbc.org.uk](http://www.apbc.org.uk) for a list of suitable people to help.

## What do I need to introduce my puppy or dog to?

This will depend on you and your family's needs. Think about what you come across everyday; when will the dog need to come with you? For example, will you want your dog to accompany your child to school? If so your dog will need to be confident around smells, sounds and sights of traffic, other dogs, children, strangers, pushchairs, and even the lollipop lady!

The checklist over the page is designed to equip your dog with the skills to deal with everyday life in a confident way, with spare boxes to add in anything that is relevant to your family.

There is no rush to complete this list, we suggest a year is a good amount of time to ensure your dog is comfortable with everything they meet in everyday life. Your dog needs to have been adequately introduced to environments and everything in them before progressing onto **Family Dog** intervention work.

In the example above, the dog needs to be calm and confident around everything on the school run before you can teach them advanced lead work, and before you will be able to use the harness and lead set up for children. If you would like your dog to intervene in a meltdown, again they must be calm and confident around meltdowns before any training can take place.

## The essentials of working through your checklist

- You are not asking anything more of the dog other than to 'look and learn'. Keep exposure time short, building it up slowly—there is no rush.
- Check your dog has access to an escape route, this may be their 'safe space' or if they are on the lead they have plenty of slack and you allow them to remove themselves if they feel they need to.
- If your dog is using their escape route or safe space repeatedly and is reluctant to come back and engage with what you are doing, the challenge is too difficult. You will need to start at a lower level e.g. Further away from what you are trying to introduce or if it is noise etc., start at a lower level. If your dog is showing extreme avoidance please contact us for more detailed advice.
- If your dog is voluntarily coming back, is curious, and is willing to interact, the challenge is at the right level for your dog.
- Try not to lure them closer to things that they are unsure of with food but reward them with a treat and calm praise for approaching it in their own time.
- Add to your list throughout your dog's life with things they may not have seen, and revisit things they haven't seen in a while. Perhaps stick it on your fridge?

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|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Veterinary surgery     | <input type="checkbox"/> Children/babies                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Loud people                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Boarding kennel        | <input type="checkbox"/> Elderly people                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Shy/quiet people                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Grooming parlour       | <input type="checkbox"/> Walking sticks                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Post/delivery people            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other people's houses  | <input type="checkbox"/> People in wheelchairs                 | <input type="checkbox"/> People wearing hats/<br>helmets |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Party                  | <input type="checkbox"/> People of different<br>ethnic origins | <input type="checkbox"/> People wearing glasses          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> School                 | <input type="checkbox"/> People with beards/<br>moustaches     | <input type="checkbox"/> Unpredictable<br>movements      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fête/car boot sale     | <input type="checkbox"/> Veterinary staff                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Banging                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Roadside               | <input type="checkbox"/> People in uniform                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Clapping                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Public transport       | <input type="checkbox"/> Other dogs                            | <input type="checkbox"/>                                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Park/rural environment | <input type="checkbox"/> Cats                                  | <input type="checkbox"/>                                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Town/city              | <input type="checkbox"/> Livestock                             | <input type="checkbox"/>                                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stairs/lift            | <input type="checkbox"/> Horses                                | <input type="checkbox"/>                                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Vacuum cleaner         | <input type="checkbox"/> Other domestic pets                   | <input type="checkbox"/>                                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Washing machine        | <input type="checkbox"/> Grooming/bathing                      | <input type="checkbox"/>                                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tumble dryer           | <input type="checkbox"/> Medical examination                   | <input type="checkbox"/>                                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hair dryer             | <input type="checkbox"/> Tooth brushing                        | <input type="checkbox"/>                                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Vehicles               | <input type="checkbox"/> Puppy/dog training<br>classes         | <input type="checkbox"/>                                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pushchair              | <input type="checkbox"/> Meltdown noises                       | <input type="checkbox"/>                                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Being alone            |  | <input type="checkbox"/>                                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> DIY tools              |  | <input type="checkbox"/>                                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Men                    |  | <input type="checkbox"/>                                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Women                  |  | <input type="checkbox"/>                                 |