



# HOMWORK GUIDE



# NO EXCUSES

Homework you should be doing between private sessions/group classes



I try to run groups as often as I can possibly fit in in a range of different locations at different times to try to accommodate everyone, but realistically you're not going to be able to make them all, and even if you do, there will be a lot of homework that you must complete between these groups/sessions in order to progress.

For many behaviour issues what I would recommend is very similar, and to be honest, practicing ALL of these things will not be harmful, it will only give you better results, but I will break the most common behaviour issues down below.

## Types of Homework I will discuss:

- Lack of manners/Lack of focus on handler & Reactivity
- Using Distracting Environments to your advantage
- Lack of confidence/nervousness/fear issues
- Aggression towards humans
- Aggression towards other dogs

## Techniques and Exercises I will discuss:

- Leash Pressure
- Redirecting the dog's focus away from distractions
- Recalls
- Place command/down-stay
- Layering e-collar over all of the above

***The information in this document is a guideline only, if you ever have any questions or concerns, please message me, and understand that we may privately discuss more specific exercises or techniques for you to be practicing on your own in addition to this information.***



# LACK OF MANNERS/LACK OF FOCUS ON HANDLER & REACTIVITY



In between sessions what you should be focusing on is creating motivation to work for you as the handler in as many high distraction environments as possible.

Of course, if you're new into the program, you should start off slow and **take baby steps** – i.e. if your dog is highly reactive or distracted, then heading to a dog beach at peak time on a Saturday is probably going to be too much. Perhaps start first at a dog park at off-peak time to work with a couple of dogs.

I love **high traffic areas** for this – such as enclosed dog parks (and you work on the outside) and leashed walks (eg. Around local lakes etc). I do not like using open dog exercise areas because it allows other dogs to approach you and your dog and will result in failed training (via pushing your dog too far too fast) or potentially putting your dog at risk of meeting an unbalanced dog who may put you back a step in training if a bad experience was to occur.

If your dog is distracted by things like humans, kids, bikes, cars etc, then busy locations that don't necessarily have dogs will work too. Mt Lawley (and other similar places) is great for high road traffic and foot traffic with lots of people. Picnic areas with playgrounds and paths etc where people may take their kids/have BBQ's/ride bikes are also great spots to work if your dog is distracted by these things.

**You should be using your dogs daily food portion** and only offering the food in these highly distracting environments (as much as possible) to ensure your dog understands that the food bar only opens when competing motivators are nearby (i.e. things that distract your dog, that are in direct competition with your dogs motivation to work for you). This means your dog **MUST** listen to you while distractions are present, or else they won't eat.

After all – you offered it, and he didn't take it. That's not your fault. In that moment, your dog decided the dog across the park was more interesting than his dinner, so he chose not to take it. You are trying to build more motivation to work for YOU rather than looking at distractions, so harnessing food drive and celebrating your dog when they make good choices (or even a play session if safe to do so) will be helpful in these locations. Read up on building Food Drive for more info on this.

## **Leash Pressure & Redirecting your dog back to you (this is something to do pretty much everywhere):**

You should be walking your dog AT AND AWAY FROM distractions. As soon as your dog starts to become distracted, turn (TURN, do not STOP) and add gentle, continuous leash pressure & continuous e-collar pressure at a relevant level. Walk in the opposite direction, when your dog comes with you and redirects their focus away from the distraction, release leash & e-collar pressure immediately, mark "yes!" and reward. You can talk to your dog to help them if they're struggling. Rinse and repeat and get closer and closer as you do. Essentially what you are teaching is "don't look at them, look at me instead!" it sounds simple but it's very important and invaluable when you're out in the real world.

If you aren't sure when to turn... TURN ANYWAY! This will give you your answer. If the dog turns with you – perhaps you didn't need to just yet and you can set it up again, but if your dog doesn't turn, the turn and redirection was necessary 😊



# “SHOULD I PAY THAT?”

– IF IT IS A DESIRABLE BEHAVIOUR, SOMETHING YOU WANT TO SEE MORE OF IN THE FUTURE, OR A BETTER RESPONSE THAN WHAT THE DOG HAS BEEN SHOWING PREVIOUSLY, THEN YES!



# “SHOULD I CORRECT OR INTERRUPT THAT?”

– IF IT IS UNDESIRABLE AND A BEHAVIOUR YOU ARE WORKING TO REDUCE, THEN YES, YOU SHOULD.

**REMEMBER THOUGH, A CORRECTION SHOULD "CORRECT" A DOG INTO THE RIGHT BEHAVIOUR (SOMETHING THEY ALREADY KNOW). INTERRUPTING A DOG CAN BE SEEN AS BLOCKING A DOGS BEHAVIOUR AND REDIRECTING THEM, AND LASTLY, ADDING A HIGH LEVEL STIM INDICATES NO WAY SHOULD THE DOG DO THAT EVER AGAIN (WE ARE MAKING THE BEHAVIOUR UNCOMFORTABLE). SOMETIMES, WE ALLOW THE DOG TO GET AWAY WITH LITTLE THINGS AS LONG AS THE DOG IS GETTING BETTER AND HEADING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION.**





# USING DISTRACTING ENVIRONMENTS



**DISTANCE:** You first need to start AT A DISTANCE. ONLY move closer if your dog is winning at a distance first. Walking straight up to a dog park fence with your highly reactive dog will only end in frustration for both you and your dog.

If your dog is winning at a distance, move closer to the point where your dog starts to become challenged again. Work there until your dog has aced it, then move closer again. Rinse and repeat.

**LOCATION/TRAFFIC:** As mentioned above, also ensure you build up to highly distracting environments for the sake of your dog and also to build your confidence. There's no shame in starting slow at an off-peak time at these places, and working up to the more distracting times of day.

**OTHER OFF-LEASH DOGS:** Stay away from off leash dogs, especially those you can see are unruly and have no recall. DO NOT BE DISHEARTENED IF YOUR DOG FAILS BECAUSE ANOTHER DOG RUNS AT YOU. You are building your dog up in baby steps and taking steps closer as your dog starts to get better and better. If another dog comes blowing through that threshold at top speed all the way up to your dog (or just a little closer than your dog is ready for) your dog WILL fail and this is TOTALLY NORMAL. This is why I recommend working outside dog parks on the safe side of the fence, or in leash-only areas.



# LOCATIONS TO PRACTICE AT...



## **John Dunn Memorial Park - Kelmscott**

3 Enclosed Dog Parks and areas outside for practice. Good for fence socialisation but the bars are quite big so dogs can reach each other through them in most areas.

## **Robinson Park - Gosnells**

New park, off leash dog area (but the area also is busy with a playground and lots of kids). There are some fenced areas, quite close to Corfield St (busy road).

## **Market City Park; Lorri's Secret Park... DON'T TELL ANYONE! :P - Canning Vale**

Almost always quiet. You may run into another person or 2 at most there at a peak time, if you're unlucky! This is where most socials and group classes are held.

## **Kingsway Dog Park - Madeley**

2 enclosed dog parks and some space around the outer to work... the safest spot is around the back of the parks in the corner, away from the entrances and road.

## **CY OConnor Dog Beach - North Coogee**

Carpark at the end of McTaggart Cove, but there is technically another carpark further up Robb Rd too. This area of the beach is the quietest area. All off leash from the carpark down to the beach.

## **Champion Lakes**

Great ON LEASH walk for leash work with distractions. Whiteman Park Dog Park 2 enclosed dog parks with room to work on the outside. I would work away from the entrances and carpark.

## **Tomato Lake - Kewdale**

Great ON LEASH area for leash work, distraction work and recall (leashed) practice.

## **Lake Monger**

Great ON LEASH area for leash work, distraction work and recall (leashed) practice.

## **Jan Hammond Dog Park - Success**

Huge oval with 2 enclosed dog exercise areas nearby. Good location for fence work, recall work etc. Just watch for other off leash dogs nearby.

## **Rockingham Foreshore**

On leash and always super busy with people, bikes, dogs etc.

**These are a few that I frequent, but honestly any enclosed dog park or on-leash area will do!**

# WHEN YOU SEE DISTRACTIONS ON THE STREET



Reactivity on the suburban walk is common, but getting past it is similar to our leash pressure activity with distractions during private sessions and group classes.

## **PREREQUISITES:**

1. Your dog should leave the front door calmly with impulse control - if you don't ask your dog to sit and wait or let them rush out pulling at the leash ahead of you, you're failing from step 1.

Ask your dog to sit, wait, and then move out the door together.

I would even recommend starting the walk (early stages) with leash pressure to ensure the dog knows what the boundaries and rules are to follow, and to ensure their focus is on you. Remember Session 1? Leash pressure up and down the driveway/street and build that up over time? That's what I'm talking about. Just start the first 5 mins like that if your dog is too over-aroused.

2. Your dog should be walking in a structured walk - if your dog is pulling you around the streets, pulling on the leash in general or not paying attention, you've failed already.

Consider a dog's energy level to be on a rating of 1-10, 1 being chilling on the floor and 10 being full blown explosion of reactivity. Yes, there will be some excitement for the walk so let's be realistic and attempt to leave the house at a 3-4 area. You do not want your dog leaving the house and walking the streets at a 7-8 over the top anxious, over-aroused state of mind, as that only leave you 2-3 levels before they lose it at something. Keep that arousal low and state of mind calm, as much as is possible.



# WHEN YOU SEE DISTRACTIONS ON THE STREET

CONTINUED...



## WHEN YOU SEE THE OTHER DOG:

1. **Create distance, as much as possible**, cross the street at the very least
2. **You MUST start to change direction and redirect your dogs focus as SOON as the fixation begins**, even if that means doing this 50m away. Watch your dog, and turn when the intensity is too much. This is sooner than you think for most people. Missing the first signs of arousal often gets people into trouble and you will struggle over and over again to interrupt reactivity at the early stages.
3. **Walk AT and AWAY from your distraction** - you may need to use someone's driveway, front yard or another road for this.

Why? Your dog will start to fixate quickly. You need to be able to completely break that fixation, just as quick, and turn the focus away from the distraction. If you need to interrupt an explosion do so, but then keep the dog moving at and away from the distraction over and over again.

Your e-collar level will likely need to be higher here, so make sure you're using the right level for the job. If you're using a low working level of 8 when you need a 35, you are bound to fail. Let your dog tell you what level they need, then follow up with showing them what they SHOULD be doing instead - looking away, walking with you, yielding to you, showing you attention, and then pay them.

E-Collar & Leash pressure should be on as long as the dog is fixating - not a tap, continuous pressure held down at a working level until the dog turns to you to turn the pressure off (leash pressure), and then this pressure is released.

If your dog looks back, you make that uncomfortable with leash/e-collar pressure. If they look to you instead, you reward. You can ask for sits/down's or ask verbally for focus here, anything more desirable than fixating on the other dog should be rewarded.

Walking along the road parallel to your distraction will often fail. Even if your dog is walking in a loose leash, your dog is probably staring down the other dog. They may get a good 10-20 seconds to fixate on this dog before lunging at the closest point, and you may not have noticed the fixation because the dog was in a loose leash walk.

OR, your dog will pull you to the side to get to the other dog. Without changing your direction in response, you will end up with constant leash pressure as you pass the dog - really not ideal.

4. **Continue until the other dog walks past**, then continue your walk as normal.

This is not forever, but it is the easiest way to deal with this issue at early stages, and the more consistent you are to begin with the quicker you will get through it.



# LACK OF CONFIDENCE/NERVOUSNESS/FEAR ISSUES



**In addition to what I have talked about already, there are a few other common behaviour issues that I will add a few more points to.**

*You should be doing everything mentioned above, but also I would throw in a lot of environmental exposure.*

With nervy dogs who need confidence building – working on playgrounds is so helpful. You would ask them to jump up on or move around uneven surfaces/the weird shapes in the playground environment that might concern them. You work them for their food here and show them that they CAN conquer these little things!

Using playgrounds and walls, benches, environmental objects etc. is great for this.

As well though, you should be exposing your dog to AS MANY NEW THINGS as possible to ensure they are brave and strong with anything the world throws at them (or at least know how to deal with something they are concerned over!). Check out the Puppy Exposure Checklist if you need ideas, or ask me, but in short:

- Busy areas
- Machinery
- Streets with cars/trucks etc
- Kids, lots of people, other dogs, other animals
- Pet Shops/Bunnings etc

Similarly, teach your dog to jump over things, on top of things, climb through/under things, stand on uneven or wobbly surfaces. Start small and take baby steps.

**Ensure that all of this exposure is POSITIVE and results in the dogs daily food portion!**



# AGGRESSION TOWARDS HUMANS



*Everything I have mentioned above is necessary and helpful for you, but in addition to that:*

Your dog should be eating in the presence of strangers as OFTEN as possible. Use busy locations that strangers or lots of different people are walking around to be able to counter-condition your dogs perception to being near strangers.

At the moment, your dogs emotional response is that strangers = bad. So we need to adjust that. By only feeding around strangers as much as you can, strangers will become good, or at the very least neutral.

Whether the food comes directly from the stranger or the dog is just receiving food for being in the presence of strangers and not reacting, BOTH of these things will move you forward.

Keep in mind, aggressive outbursts should still be made uncomfortable - we need to give the dog a good understanding of what behaviour is ok and what's not, and you won't have any room to counter-condition if the dog is lunging at the end of the leash. Interrupt the aggressive behaviour first, then, in hesitation, start to form a new association.

Unless I've stated otherwise, your dogs aggressive behaviour is likely due to fear, in which case, all the information mentioned above under confidence building will also be helpful for you.

## **Muzzles:**

Please muzzle your dog if they have aggression issues towards humans or are a bite risk in any way. If you are getting people to help you, you need to be so careful. People who don't understand dog behaviour/body language could still get hurt. I mostly use Baskerville muzzles, and technically they are not bite proof, you can still get injured if you are trying to push food through the muzzle and not watching the dog. So, if you're getting strangers/friends/family to help, keep it safe and use the leaky toddler technique below. Muzzles should still be worn when out and about though, particularly when distractions are present and nearby.





# AGGRESSION TOWARDS HUMANS CONTINUED...

## Leaky Toddler:

Hold the dog on a leash, but remove the muzzle. Ensure the dog doesn't have enough leash to reach the helper.

*\*\*Hold the dog in a thumb lock to ensure you don't drop the leash\*\**

Give the food to your helper and have them throw the food on the ground in front of them, your dog will likely grab it, dodge back and keep woofing initially. This is fine. What you are aiming to do is have the dog change their association with the person to that of a positive one, so if they bark or are nervous, there's no reason to correct it when implementing this exercise unless the behaviour is excessive and the dog is completely ignoring the food in order to lunge. Simply have the helper drop food on the ground all around, throwing it towards the dog, and this could be your dogs entire daily food portion. Ensure the helper does not approach the dog and in some cases ask the helper not to look at the dog in the eyes.

## Advocate for your dog:

If you are out and about, there's a chance some well-meaning but uneducated people may want to approach your dog (because they're so damn cute!) but if your dog is fearful of strangers, you MUST protect them.

Whether this means getting the hell out of there as quickly as possible, or where you can't do that, actively stepping in front of your dog and telling the human to back off, you need to do something. Do not be afraid to look unfriendly or rude. They are rude to approach your dog without asking, and one of the biggest things you can do for your dog is show them that you will protect them. This will change the way they see you as handler/leader and will also protect them from any bad experiences putting you back in training.





# AGGRESSION TOWARDS OTHER DOGS



Again, everything I mentioned previously will be of help, and since much of this aggression is due to fear, any confidence building will help too.

**Only once your dog looks good with food drive, leash pressure and some handler focus, should you approach the dog park fence line. If your dog is reacting from a distance, don't go any closer.**

**Your dog should be muzzled** if they are a bite risk as dogs can still do damage through a fence, especially fences with large gaps.

You want to work at the fence line and teach the dog what is ok and what's not when it comes to dog interaction at close proximity.

If a dog on the inside of the park runs at the fence at full speed, your dog may get nervous, so allow them to move away. But if your dog doesn't know to move away yet, they may explode at this. Similarly, if your dog doesn't want to be close to the fence line, **DON'T FORCE THEM!** They are making a better choice by keeping their distance and that's ok. Pay them for it and celebrate the better choice.

Watch your dog and if you see that the dog running in is too much, attempt to pull your dog away to show them that if they feel nervous – just leave! You will need leash pressure and stim for this (unless I've said otherwise). You will need to do the same thing if another dog has a go at your dog through the fence, simply show your dog how to run away instead of reacting by adding leash & e-collar pressure and turning them around. Once they leave with you, celebrate and praise!

If your dog explodes at the fence – you must use a level on e-collar that is going to make that behaviour uncomfortable to ensure your dog knows it's not an option, but where you can, try to show the dog to move away before an explosion happens so that we don't need to be excessive with this. But, equally, you should pay any and all desirable behaviour at the fence line.

Your dog will then need clarity that it was not the dog that caused the consequence, rather the behaviour. You can achieve this by having the dog go back to the fence at the same sort of distance, and simply feeding the dog for being near the other dogs – so that you are indicating that hey, it wasn't the other dog that caused that stim, it was your outburst.

If the stars align and your dog has a nice interaction with a dog through the fence – **CELEBRATE IT!!** Pay it, pay it, pay it, and give your dog a lot of praise for it! **BUT** – keep it short and sweet if your dog is new to this. Don't get greedy. If you allow interactions to go on too long at the early stages your dog will likely build up to an explosion. Just a couple seconds is enough to form a positive association, so after those few seconds, you could add **GENTLE** leash pressure, **NO** e-collar pressure and call your dog back to you to celebrate. The reason we don't use e-collar here is because we don't want to inadvertently cause the dog to think that interacting with the other dog ultimately caused stim. You just want the interaction to be positive.



# AGGRESSION TOWARDS OTHER DOGS CONTINUED...



**Be choosy with the dogs you work with:** Know your dog – some dogs will not do well with over the top, unruly, jumpy, barky, high energy dogs. If that's the case, don't push it, just move away and wait for a more polite dog to work the fence with.

**If your dog is not aggressive but just over-friendly/boisterous/rude:** Focus on short interactions and interrupt them when your dog starts to get too intense.

**If your dog is aggressive based in fear (the most common):** Focus on making it positive to be near other dogs. When other dogs approach the fenceline, pay your dog and make this positive (you may need to move further away from the fence for this). If you can see your dog is becoming uncomfortable, teach them to run away. Even if your dogs issues are rooted in fear, an outburst should still be made uncomfortable via e-collar and leash pressure given to redirect the dog. Once a more desirable behaviour is shown, pay it.

**If your dog is a high-arousal case who spirals into aggressive behaviours when he becomes too over-aroused:** I would work further from the fence line and focus a LOT on place work, impulse control and looking at you instead. Becoming fixated on other dogs should be uncomfortable via stim and leash pressure, and you could also use movement towards and away from the fence to keep the brain moving. ***"Movement is easy, stillness is hard"*** – if you can see your dog is struggling to control themselves in a down and is about to react, just pop them up and walk away, then continue practicing leash pressure at and away from the fence. If your dog explodes from a down – you were probably too slow in interrupting their fixation.





# BASIC EXERCISES TO PRACTICE



At pretty much all distracting locations you can practice the things listed below.

## **In sessions 1 & 2 you would have learned:**

- How to create Food Drive (and maintain it with distractions)
- Leash Pressure
- Redirecting the dogs focus away from distractions
- Recalls
- Place command/down-stay
- Layering e-collar over all of the above
- If we have gone over anything else, such as muzzle training, crate training, structure & routine, counter conditioning, etc, then you should also be including this in your training.

**So, these are the things you should be practicing around distractions!**

***To learn the basics of these exercises, or to learn how to layer e-collar over these exercises, use the Basic Foundations Online Content (Google Drive Folder), and/or read up on the Behaviour Adjustment Blueprint and the HH E-Collar Booklet.***

***Of course you can always contact me to ask questions too!***

