



SAFER™

manual and training guide

ASPCA®

forward

In 2007, the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA®) acquired SAFER™ (Safety Assessment for Evaluating Rehoming).

The ASPCA invites you to learn about the program which will help you to better know the dogs in your care, by identifying which dogs in your shelter or rescue group are ready to go into your placement program, which ones will benefit from behavior modification and which ones will need careful management if they are to be placed. The heart of the SAFER program is an aggression assessment tool designed by Emily Weiss, Ph.D., CAAB, for the Kansas Humane Society in Wichita.

In 1999, Kansas Humane Society approached Dr. Weiss to develop an aggression assessment that could identify safe, adoptable dogs which would be short, accurate and cost little to implement — concerns shared by most shelter organizations. Initially, SAFER was a six-item assessment which could be completed in less than six minutes utilizing an Assessor and an Observer, shelter staff who were knowledgeable about dog behavior and possessed excellent observation and safe animal handling skills. Since its inception, a seventh item has been added — toy behavior — so the assessment now takes a couple of minutes longer per dog.

Beyond the addition of a seventh assessment item, the SAFER program has grown in other ways. During her work with Southern and Midwestern shelters taking part in the Rescue Waggin'® Animal Transport Program sponsored by PetSmart Charities® and the ASPCA, Dr. Weiss came to realize the importance of Assessor Certification, to ensure that SAFER Assessors were all consistent in their execution of the program. (See SAFER Certification chapter for more information.) Through her shelter intern program, behavior modification protocols for common behavior issues such as food bowl aggression and touch-sensitivity have been tested and modified and are now available so that after those problems are identified in the assessment, shelter behavior staffers can take action.

While SAFER is the first tool developed by Dr. Emily Weiss, MYM Canine-ality was subsequently designed by going beyond an aggression assessment to help best match individual dogs with adopters' lifestyles and expectations. Dr. Emily Weiss also researched and developed other match-making programs for puppies and cats, Puppy-ality™ and Feline-ality™, respectively.

To learn more about the ASPCA's SAFER and Meet Your Match programs, visit www.ASPCApro.org.

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introduction

ASPCA® SAFER™ guide

ASPCA® SAFER™ is a seven item aggression assessment that identifies the dog's comfort level with restraint and touch, reaction to new experiences including movement and sound stimuli, bite inhibition, behavior around food and toys, and arousal level toward other dogs. The dog's behavioral response to these assessment items and the organization's Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) determine the next steps to be taken with the dog.

why utilize an aggression assessment

Shelters that employ SAFER™ or other research-based behavior assessments report fewer aggression complaints, more adoptions, and better client interactions. Simply put, they are able to more accurately communicate to the adopter about what they should expect, and how to best manage, a dog in their home.

SAFER™ demands staff time, facility space and a passel of supplies; and at times, it can raise controversy. Why should shelters assess their dogs? Short answer: it's the prudent thing to do. A prudent shelter is one that employs good judgment and common sense. It is prudent to have a validated scientific tool to back up that "gut feeling" that the dog identified as good with kids and first-time pet guardians has the highest probability to be a safe choice for them. It is prudent to determine which dogs will flourish when given some behavior modification for the quirks and foibles identified by the assessment. It is prudent to put in place a consistent assessment procedure when determining which dogs are most likely to be a danger to staff, volunteers, potential adopters and the community at large, so that next-step discussions will center around what to do with the dog, not around what was done to the dog. These are the reasons to find the staff time and spend the money necessary to employ an aggression assessment. In an age where lawsuits are common and insurers are scarce, not to do so would be...imprudent.



Shelters that employ SAFER™ or other research-based behavior assessments report fewer aggression complaints, more adoptions, and better client interactions.

what the scoring means

When a dog scores "1s" and "2s" on his assessment, he is less likely to bite under ordinary living situations when handled in a mildly stressful or moderately awkward manner than dogs who score "3s," "4s" and "5s." Dogs that score "3s" may be safe and inhibit their bite, but they could be made safer by putting them on a behavior modification program. Dogs that score "4s" may have serious fear or intolerance issues and should either receive behavior modification training and then be reassessed or only be adopted out to experienced adopters ready to manage the dog's issues. Dogs whose behavior during one of the first four assessment items score a "5" have the

highest probability to be a serious danger to staff, volunteers and visitors to the facility. (See Research pages 7–10 for more information.) They should only be handled by the shelter’s most experienced staff until their disposition is determined. These dogs may respond well to behavior modification or they may not.

determining next steps

Once a dog is assessed and his behavior responses noted, the assessment team should review his worksheet. If any of the canine behaviors displayed were reason for concern, the team should first review the assessment video to ensure there was nothing improper in the way the assessment was conducted or the way the dog was handled that attributed to the dog’s particular response. If all was done by the book, the dog’s assessment should be brought to the attention of the Animal Behavior or Animal Care Supervisor to determine next steps. As each shelter is unique and has different resources available, next steps will vary from shelter-to-shelter.

If staff and cage space is available, the dog might be given another twenty-four hours to settle into his surroundings and then be re-assessed. If the shelter employs a behavior staff, the dog may be put on a behavior modification program and re-assessed after the program is complete. Some shelters have behavior foster homes in which to house dogs with potential behavior issues for a trial period. Experienced foster volunteers would follow through with the shelter’s behavior modification program and observe the dog’s behavior in a “real life” setting. Shelters without behavior departments may utilize community dog trainers to either devise additional behavior modification protocols, work with the shelter dogs or serve as behavior foster homes — paid or unpaid. A local rescue group may be interested in taking the dog. Sharing the assessment with the group allows them to make an informed decision about whether or not they have the resources to meet the animal’s needs.

Or your facility may be an overcrowded, high volume, open access animal care and control with few resources and no Friends of the Shelter group. Your shelter may not even be able to assess every dog over six months of age. In this case, SAFER™ might only be used to help identify the behaviorally soundest pit bulls and guarding breeds to insure that those placed up for adoption will be great ambassadors for both their breeds and your shelter.

The SAFER assessment may help supervisors make euthanasia decisions, but the assessment alone should never be the only input considered. Relinquishment surveys done at intake, veterinary reports from the health check, and input from animal care technicians, volunteers, and foster parents should also be considered whenever a life or death decision must be made.





research

identifying aggression

One focus of Dr. Emily Weiss' graduate career was on the selection of service dogs from shelters. Her research, which was conducted at the Kansas Humane Society of Wichita (KHS), focused specifically on developing a set of assessment items that would better predict service dog potential in dogs selected from shelters. This work was published in *The Journal of Applied Animal Behaviour* and the *Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science* (1997, 2002). During the data collection period, the KHS expressed an interest in having a research-based assessment to help identify potential aggression. They had a high number of reports of aggression about their adopted dogs. Several of the assessment items researched for the service dog work focused on arousal, fear, and other potential issues, making a good base for a potential aggression assessment.

SAFER™ was developed based on the needs and resources of the Kansas Humane Society of Wichita (KHS). The open admission facility was, like most facilities, short staffed. The time allotted for an assessment was about six minutes per dog. Items from the earlier research were added to a food aggression assessment that was already available for shelter use (Assess-a-Pet®, Sue Sternberg). Staff was trained on the assessment process and then the six item assessment was tested on a sample of dogs.

The sample was derived from dogs entering KHS. All dogs were randomly assigned a number as they entered the facility. If the number was odd, the dog was placed in Group 1, if the number was even, the dog was placed in Group 2. All dogs that entered without a bite report and were considered by the facility to be healthy were included in the study.

group 1:

These dogs were assessed using SAFER™ and received “1s” and “2s” on the assessment.

group 2:

These dogs were not assessed. They were given a thorough health exam; and if they aggressed during the exam, they were not included in the study.

There were a total of 141 dogs in the sample: 66 in Group 1, and 75 in Group 2. The groups are not equal due to issues beyond the study's control (illness, overcrowding etc.).

Results of the study were encouraging.

Note: At the time of the research, KHS was struggling (as many facilities do) with too many animals and not enough resources to support them. They very often needed to euthanize for space. During the study period, seven of the study dogs were euthanized for space — those with the longest stay (by the hour and minute) pulled. Eight dogs were euthanized for health reasons. Twelve dogs were euthanized for behavior reasons — eight from Group 2 and four from Group 1.

22 dogs were adopted and returned (no aggression reported in returns)

91 dogs were adopted

Adopters were called after the dogs were in their homes for more than two weeks and were asked a series of questions regarding observed aggression.

adopter reports on aggression observed in the home

	assessed group	unassessed group
nipping	4	14
food aggression	1	5
aggression around toys	2	5
growling at a human	1	10

Replication of data in different environments is one way to prove the strength of an experiment. To this end, a similar study of SAFER™ was recently conducted at the County of Riverside Department of Animal Services (Riverside, CA) comparing 50 assessed and 50 unassessed dogs. Adopters reported incidents of growling in 14 of the unassessed dogs and only three of the assessed dogs; five of the unassessed and one assessed dog bit but did not break the skin; and two unassessed dogs bit someone and broke the skin.

consistency between assessors and assessment centers



It is important that Assessors are trained to remain objective and to accurately report the behavior they observe during the assessment. Provided no intervention has occurred, ideally dogs should respond the same when an assessment is repeated even if a different trained Assessor conducts the second assessment, and even if the second assessment occurs in a different environment. Testing this consistency with a large population of dogs would have been difficult. However, SAFER™ was used by PetSmart Charities' Rescue Waggin® transport program. This program, which at the time of publication has saved over 15,000 dogs, brings dogs from areas with low live release rates of behaviorally healthy dogs to shelters with very high adoption rates. This has given us the opportunity to more fully explore whether SAFER™ is likely to consistently produce the same results over time, and with different Assessors as assessments are done at both source and receiving shelters.

When the transport program began, Assessors at both source and receiving shelters were trained, but there was no certification program to check the ability of individuals to accurately assess the dogs. Receiving shelters were reporting a high number of transported dogs with significant behavior issues. These dogs require more resources, and often take longer to be adopted. Since the receiving shelters needed to save their resources for the at risk dogs in their own communities, devising a method to decrease the likelihood of transporting dogs with

When the transport program began, assessors at both source and receiving shelters were trained, but there was no certification program to check the ability of individuals to accurately assess the dogs.

significant behavior issues was necessary. The solution was to certify individuals assessing for the Rescue Waggin® program to ensure that all Assessors have the skills to conduct and score correctly. Certification involves sending a tape of the individual assessing three dogs in their facility. Approximately 55% of those who submit are certified on their first attempt. Once certification was put in place, we assessed the program. We followed 3,000 dogs in the Rescue Waggin® program from source shelter to receiving shelter, and only 3% of the dogs scored differently at the receiving facility than they did at the source facility.

SAFER™ as an intake tool

Many facilities can benefit from an assessment tool that can help identify safety at intake. The use of SAFER™ at intake was originally researched at the Wisconsin Humane Society. Forty-one owner-relinquished dogs were assessed at intake. Twenty-one of the dogs scored “1s” and “2s” on the assessment at intake. Of those, eighteen of those scored “1s” and “2s” when assessed after staying in the facility approximately 24-72 hours. In other words, 86% of the dogs that scored “1s” and “2s” at intake scored the same after being housed in the facility for 1-3 days.

Twenty dogs scored at least one 3, 4 or 5. These dogs were also then housed in the shelter for 1-3 days and then reassessed. Two-thirds of these dogs scored the same after being housed in the shelter, while one third had either a decreased level of potential aggression, or a behavior (such as food aggression) that was easily modifiable.

supporting dogs with identified behavior challenges

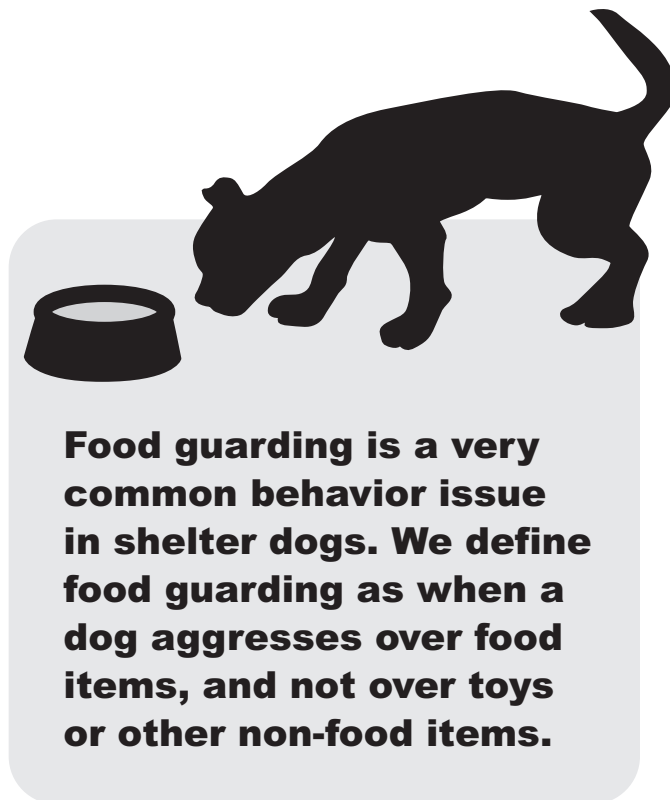
One of the most exciting areas of research with the SAFER™ program has been the investigation of behavior modification and management programs for dogs in which potentially aggressive behavior has been noted. We continue to build support for these dogs, and do so by researching the effectiveness of particular programs.

Food guarding is a very common behavior issue in shelter dogs. We define food guarding as when a dog aggresses over food items, and not over toys or other non-food items. Working with the Wisconsin Humane Society, Dr. Weiss developed a simple in-shelter and in-home behavior modification plan (see Reproducible Forms and Templates section for details) for dogs displaying food aggression during the SAFER™ assessment.

Criteria for subject selection was as follows: All dogs had to be over six months of age; scored “1s” and “2s” on all other parts of SAFER™ other than food behavior; the dogs could not leave the food item to aggress, aggression was only toward food items; no behaviors suggesting possession aggression were present. Bully breeds were not chosen for this study.

All dogs that met the criteria during the study period were placed on the food guarding program to eliminate the behavior before being placed on the adoption floor. The dogs were placed up for adoption and identified as CARE (Canine Achievers Reaching for Excellence) dogs. Adoption was restricted to adopters without toddlers, and those willing to continue to work with the dog in the home. (See food guarding program for adopters in the Reproducible Forms and Templates section for more information.)

Follow-up was conducted by calling the adopters on the third day post adoption, the third week post adoption, and third month post adoption focusing both on general health/behavior of the dog and behavior regarding food. We also asked a set of questions regarding potential stressors in the adopter's life such as divorce, moving, etc. Finally,



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we asked adopters to videotape the behavior of their dog at ‘dinner time’ so that we could view the actual behavior in the home.

Fifty dog/adopter pairs participated in the study. Of that group, forty-eight dogs had no observable food aggression in the home. One dog appeared to have possession aggression issues and was returned to the shelter after aggressing toward the adopter over a dish towel. One dog was observed by the adopter as growling over the food bowl on the third week post adoption, but the behavior was no longer present after three months in the home.

We continue to research behavior modification and management programs so that we can best support the dogs, the adopters, the shelters, and the communities in which they reside.



who should assess

who should assess

SAFER™ is an assessment that requires certain skills. While SAFER™ training and certification can assist in skill development, ideally Assessors already have the following skills before learning the assessment:

ability to objectively observe behavior

Objective observation is vital for accurate assessments. Assessors should be skilled at objective observation as opposed to subjective interpretation. Phrases such as “He liked that” are not useful for assessment, but “loose body, mouth open, huffing” are useful and objective ways to discuss and observe behavior.

canine communication knowledge

The Assessor will be working with a large variety of dogs and, in many cases, will not have any information regarding a particular dog’s past behavior. It is vital that the Assessor is well versed in canine behavior and communication to keep safe, and to be sure the dog is assessed accurately and humanely.

training in safe and humane dog handling

This guide and the SAFER™ workshops focus on handling during the actual assessment. However, there are many interactions with the dog before the assessment begins. The Assessor will be removing the dog from his kennel, walking him, etc. For example, if a dog is handled in a rough or startling manner by an Assessor in the kennel run, his behavior is less likely to be an accurate reflection of his future behavior. Assessors should be trained in how to handle dogs safely and humanely before attempting aggression assessments.

good physical health

SAFER™ requires bending, kneeling, and quick movement and fast reflexes. This is one instance where accommodations cannot be made for physical challenges and disabilities on behalf of the Assessor. If the assessment is not carried out as written, the results are invalid.



Ideally

Assessors should not have any interaction or contact with the dog prior to the assessment.

In addition, Assessors with breed biases (pro or con) should refrain from assessing those breeds.



**using the SAFER™
assessment –
an overview**

using the SAFER™ assessment – an overview

SAFER™ is a short seven item aggression assessment that generally takes no more than ten minutes per dog to complete. This estimate does not include the time necessary to prepare the assessment room, remove the dog from his cage and give him an opportunity to eliminate before the evaluation. The carefully planned sequence of assessment items builds from least invasive and stimulating to most invasive and arousing, in order to determine what, if any, aggression issues the dog may have. The assessment must follow the sequence as written; failure to do so may unnecessarily put the Assessor at risk.

The SAFER™ assessment can be used as an intake tool for limited admission shelters to determine whether or not a dog is a safe adoption candidate they will accept into their facilities or to determine what behavior modification the dog might need. However, it is generally recommended that open admission shelters provide dogs that have just arrived two to three days to settle in before performing the assessment. Our studies show that there is a 15% difference between how the dog scores when assessed at intake versus reassessing after allowing him time to acclimate. While the percentage is small, it is recommended each dog get that opportunity to settle in when at all possible.

The image shows a worksheet titled "SAFER™ worksheet" from ASPCA. It includes a header with the ASPCA logo and the title. Below the header is a form with several input fields: "shelter name", "date" (with a calendar icon), "assessor", "observer", "dog's name", "age", "coat color", "sex" (with checkboxes for male, neutered male, female, spayed female), "breed", "date entered shelter" (with a calendar icon), and "dog ID number".

The main section is titled "item 1 – look:" and contains a list of seven assessment items, each with a description and a score in brackets:

- 1. Dog leans forward or jumps up to lick the Assessor's face with tail wagging, ears back and eyes averted. [Enter "1"]
- 2. Dog's eyes are averted, with tail wagging and ears back. He allows head to be held loosely in Assessor's cupped hands. [Enter "1"]
- 3. Dog holds gaze with soft eyes, soft body. He allows head to be held loosely in Assessor's cupped hands. Dog holds gaze for three full seconds. [Enter "1"]
- 4. Dog's eyes are averted. His ears are back, his tail is down, and he has a relaxed body posture. Dog allows head to be held loosely in Assessor's cupped hands. [Enter "1"]
- 5. Dog's eyes are averted. His body posture is stiff and fearful, his tail is low and not moving. He allows head to be held loosely in Assessor's cupped hands. [Enter "2"]
- 6. Dog pulls out of Assessor's hands each time without settling during three repetitions. [Enter "2"]
- 7. Dog jumps on the Assessor, consistently rubs his shoulder on the Assessor, and will not allow Assessor to conduct the assessment. [Enter "3"]
- 8. Dog holds eye contact while remaining motionless with ears forward. His body is stiff and becomes stiffer as assessment progresses. [Enter "4"]
- 9. Dog freezes and/or growls or tries to bite. [Enter "5"]

Below the items is a section titled "If aggression is noted, use the checklist below to evaluate the dog's response. You can use this information to help best guide the behavior team regarding potential behavior modification and management (see guide for protocols)."

The checklist includes the following items:

- Body still
- Eyes hard
- Vocalizes
- Exposes teeth
- Freeze
- Ears back
- Dog growls
- Snaps no contact
- Tail up
- Ears forward
- Attempts to bite
- Tail down

At the bottom of the form, there is a line for "Behaviors observed before, during or after the item:".



facility requirements and equipment

facility requirements and equipment

SAFER™ assessments demand little in the way of special equipment or space. Most tools can be found in the average shelter.



assessment room

The ideal assessment room is a large, quiet and relatively empty room. However, any quiet room that is at least 10' x 10' can work.



video camera and tripod

The video camera is used to record every assessment. Often, behavior occurs quickly, and a review of the tape can help determine what behavior was demonstrated. Further, taping helps with quality control, as Assessor handling can be reviewed and then improved upon based on taped observations.



Assess-A-Hand®

This tool is used for two assessment items. It is simply a plastic hand on a stick, and is available at www.suesternberg.com.



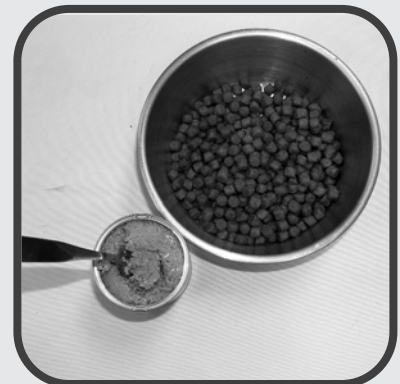
food bowls

The food behavior item is conducted using a food bowl. The bowl should be an appropriate size for the dog being assessed. Metal bowls are preferred for most assessment rooms as they will most easily slide across the floor when manipulated.



two armless chairs

Several of the assessment items are conducted while seated in a chair. The chair should be armless so that the Assessor can easily move on and off, as well as side to side. The Observer should be seated during the same items that the Assessor is seated.



dry and canned dog food (at least two types)

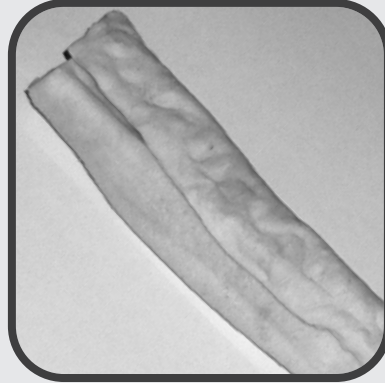
The food behavior assessment item requires that the dog consume the food presented during the assessment. We recommend moderately valuable food—a kibble mixed with canned. Two types of food should be available in case the dog does not find the first choice palatable.

NOTE: It is strongly recommend that the assessment room be stocked with items to help diffuse aggression, should it become necessary to do so. For example keep SprayShield (formerly Direct Stop), an air horn, and/or a bucket of water on hand.



two to three toys

For the toy behavior item, two to three toys should be presented such as a rope toy, squeaky toy or ball (big enough to be removed from the dog's mouth). The toys should be of varied textures and shapes. Minimally, we recommend a rope and a squeaky.



new unbastard rawhide per dog

The rawhide item requires an unbastard rawhide. It should be large enough that it can be touched with the Assess-a-Hand[®] when the dog has his mouth fully around it. Ideally, a new rawhide should be used with each dog.



buckle or martingale collar

During the assessment, the dog must wear a collar with a buckle or plastic clasp that does not tighten when the leash is tugged. If your shelter fits all incoming dogs with semi-martingale collars (also known as Premier collars), there is no need to change them for the assessment. However, the buckle collar is preferred.



six-foot leash

The leash must be six feet long and size-appropriate for the dog. Cotton web, nylon or leather leashes 1/2 inch to 5/8 inch in width are both strong and easy to handle for most Assessors.



clipboard

A clipboard is used by the Observer to hold the SAFER[™] worksheet.



optional sound machine

Many facilities have difficulties controlling external sound around the assessment room. Sound machines that emit white noise (sounds like the static on your radio) can be quite effective in buffering noise outside the assessment room.





**the SAFER™
assessment
item by item**

the SAFER™ assessment item by item

Let's examine each assessment item in sequence. We will focus on how each item is conducted, what behaviors the item is meant to identify and what those might mean in regard to the dog's adoptability profile. We will also focus on scoring options for that item and tips about body position and leash control to keep in mind in order to accurately conduct the assessment.

item 1: look



insights gained from item one:

To determine how the dog responds when lightly restrained and given soft yet direct eye contact from a stranger.

- Place the chair in the room where it is not against a wall or in a corner.
- Sit upright in the chair with knees apart approximately shoulder width and feet flat on the floor.
- If the dog is small, (around 15-20 pounds or less or if you feel you are hovering over the dog) evaluate the dog from the floor instead of sitting in a chair. Kneel on the floor with one knee on the floor and the other leg with foot flat on floor.
- Allow the dog a minute or two to get comfortable with the Assessor and the room. (Soft verbal and physical contact with the dog is acceptable during this time.)
- Quietly coax the dog into a position between the knees, facing the Assessor.
- Gather up the leash and lightly grasp the collar with one hand, then lightly cup dog's lower jaw in both hands and encourage the dog with soft eye contact.
- Allow the dog to pull away and/or avoid the eye contact.
- If the dog moves his head before he has settled in your hands, repeat up to three times.



STOP THE ASSESSMENT if dog freezes, hard stares and/or growls or tries to bite. Proceed to the Food and Toy Behavior Items if additional information is desired.

scoring:

	Dog leans forward or jumps up to lick the Assessor's face with tail wagging, ears back and eyes averted. [Enter "1"]
	Dog's eyes are averted, with tail wagging and ears back. He allows head to be held loosely in Assessor's cupped hands. [Enter "1"]
	Dog holds gaze with soft eyes, soft body. He allows head to be held loosely in Assessor's cupped hands. Dog holds gaze for three full seconds. [Enter "1"]
	Dog's eyes are averted. His ears are back, his tail is down, and he has a relaxed body posture. Dog allows head to be held loosely in Assessor's cupped hands. [Enter "1"]
	Dog's eyes are averted. His body posture is stiff and fearful, his tail is low and not moving. He allows head to be held loosely in Assessor's cupped hands. [Enter "2"]
	Dog pulls out of Assessor's hands each time without settling during three repetitions. [Enter "2"]
	Dog jumps on the Assessor, consistently rubs his shoulder on the Assessor, and will not allow Assessor to conduct the assessment. [Enter "3"]
	Dog holds eye contact while remaining motionless with ears forward. His body is stiff and becomes stiffer as assessment progresses. [Enter "4"]
	Dog freezes and/or growls or tries to bite. [Enter "5"]

Note behaviors observed before, during or after the item.

tips for success:

- Be sure to sit either upright or tilting slightly back in the chair. Do not lean forward and loom over the dog.
- When assessing on the floor with a small dog, do not sit cross-legged because it does not facilitate moving away quickly.
- Do not pull or push dog into position. Use hand movements or voice to coax the dog into position.
- Use the same hand to control the excess leash and to grasp the collar at the side of the neck.
- Do not hold the dog's head in place. Allow him to turn away to avoid eye contact.

item 2: sensitivity



insights gained from item two:

To determine the dog's touch sensitivity. Fearfulness toward new experiences may be noted as well.

- When the Look item is complete, Assessor will move directly to the Sensitivity item. Sit upright in the chair with legs moderately spread and feet flat on floor. (Kneel on the floor if the dog is small.)
- Coax the dog to stand perpendicular to Assessor, centered in front of Assessor's knees. The dog can stand or sit for this item.
- If the dog's body is oriented to the right, gather the leash in your right hand and grasp the collar with your right hand, fingers facing towards the dog's rear. Brace your right elbow against your knee in order to control the dog's head. If the dog's body is oriented to the left, gather the leash in your left hand and grasp the collar with your left hand, fingers facing towards the dog's rear. Brace your left elbow against your knee in order to control the dog's head.
- With your free hand, grasp (with pressure slightly more than normal touch) and lift and twist handfuls of skin and fur in a kneading motion, starting at the neck, following an inch or two outside the spinal column, working down the dog's body past the tail to the flank and back up again.
- Execute the "down and back" pattern twice.



STOP THE ASSESSMENT if dog freezes and his eyes grow hard, if he head flips and mouths with extreme pressure, growls, or he attempts to bite. (Assessment item continues if dog is mouthing with light to moderate pressure.) Proceed to the Food and Toy Behavior Items if additional information is desired.

scoring:

	Dog leans into the Assessor, eyes soft or squinty, soft and loose body, open mouth. [Enter “1”]
	Dog stands still and accepts the touch, his eyes are averted, and his tail is in neutral position with relaxed body posture. Dog’s mouth is likely closed for at least a portion of the assessment item. [Enter “1”]
	Dog displays high energy and movement, but it is directed toward getting closer to the Assessor. His body is soft, likely panting, may jump up between attempts to lick Assessor. [Enter “2”]
	Dog is active and focused on the Assessor and all other stimuli available. His body is soft, likely panting, likely to display high movement between attempts. [Enter “2”]
	Dog stands still and accepts the touch, his eyes are averted, his tail is between his legs, body stiff, mouth closed, lip long, ears likely back, may lip lick. [Enter “2”]
	Dog repeatedly turns toward the Assessor’s hand, with loose body and open mouth, mouths the hand, but does not apply pressure. Or, dog licks hands while lips are long. [Enter “2”]
	Dog is not fearful and is struggling to get away. The dog is not focused and is in constant movement, unconnected to the Assessor. [Enter “3”]
	Dog stands tall and square. His tail perpendicular to spine, mouth closed for the majority of assessment item. [Enter “3”]
	Dog repeatedly turns toward the Assessor’s hand with a very fast head movement. If able, he muzzle punches the hand. His body is stiff and he has a closed mouth with a short lip. [Enter “4”]
	Dog freezes, growls or tries to bite. [Enter “5”]

Note behaviors observed before, during or after the item.

tips for success:

- When necessary, stand up and/or take a few steps to help get the dog into position.
- Lean over the dog as little as possible.
- Kneading movement should be firm but not painful to the dog.
- Make sure the kneading action is on the side opposite to the Assessor’s knees so that if the dog attempts to bite, he will turn his head away from Assessor’s body, not toward it.
- If the dog attempts to bite, stand up quickly and push chair away to avoid falling over it. (This is why a light folding chair is preferred to any other kind of seating.)

item 3: tag



insights gained from item three:

To determine the dog's response to movement and sound stimuli. To identify dogs with potential dominance aggression or fear aggression.

- Stand and quietly move chair to the edge of the room.
- When standing sideways to the dog, in a high-pitched happy voice say, "Do you want to play?"
- Begin moving around the room with the dog, remembering to keep the leash loose and continuously engaging the dog with a playful voice (remain engaged until the item has ended).
- Then with body lowered by slanting sideways away from the dog and bending at the knees, tag dog's rear flank with two fingers and say "POW!"
- Dog does not have to be engaged with the Assessor in order to be tagged.
- After the tag, side step away from dog. Be aware of the leash tension. (Keep the leash loose. Dog must have the choice to move away from the Assessor.)
- Observe the dog's response.
- Repeat two more times if it is safe to do so.
- End the item by crouching down or sitting in the chair at an angle to the dog and then observe the dog's behavior.



STOP **STOP THE ASSESSMENT** if dog growls or tries to bite. Proceed to the Food and Toy Behavior Items if additional information is desired.

scoring:

	Dog assumes play position and joins the game. Or dog indicates play with huffing, soft 'popping' of the body, etc. Dog might jump on Assessor once play begins. [Enter "1"]
	Dog stands with his tail low and wagging, and comes toward the Assessor in a friendly manner when the Assessor ceases moving. [Enter "1"]
	Follows at end of leash, body soft, or low and a bit fearful. [Enter "1"]
	Dog is fearful but unresponsive when touched. Approaches the Assessor when the game ends. Dog is likely crouching, may have long lip or lip lick. [Enter "2"]
	Dog is not fearful but is unresponsive to the Assessor, and approaches the Assessor at the end of the game (may need coaxing to approach). He is focused on stimuli other than the Assessor. [Enter "2"]
	Dog repeatedly turns quickly away when touched, or repeatedly spins toward the touch, and repeatedly tries to exit. Dog may be crouching, tail is tucked, mouth closed, body stiff. [Enter "3"]
	Dog responds with his tail high, ears forward, mouth likely closed for at least half of the assessment item, body stiff and body checks the Assessor. Dog is often focused on other stimuli in the room. [Enter "3"]
	Dog panics with vocalization combined with tail tuck, yelping and repeatedly trying to exit. (If dog settles after 1st or 2nd tag, choose 1st "3" scoring option). [Enter "4"]
	Dog stands his ground while not cornered and barks at the Assessor with ears forward, body stiff, mouth closed and lips pursed when not barking. [Enter "4"]
	Dog growls or tries to bite. [Enter "5"]

Note behaviors observed before, during or after the item.

tips for success:

- Do not drag the chair when moving it out of the way.
- Be sure to keep your body angled away from the dog at all times.
- Keep leash slack at all times so the dog has the choice to move away (flee) instead of feeling trapped and forced to engage.
- Use a playful, high-pitched voice.
- Never loom over the dog.
- Keep body low, angled away from the dog when moving in to tag.
- Tag should be quick and light on dog's rear flank, using just the fingertips.
- If the dog becomes aggressive, immediately become still, angled away from the dog.
- If dog charges, quickly gather up excess leash and using both hands, hold dog out at arm's length until he settles down.
- Be sure to keep leash loose even after the Tag portion has ended.

item 4: squeeze



insights gained from item four:

To determine the dog's sensitivity response, bite inhibition, acceptance of being held or touched in a mildly controlled and unpleasant manner, and what he chooses to do when given warning that something mildly unpleasant will happen a second time.

- Quietly place chair back into position used in “Look” and “Sensitivity” assessment items.
- While standing in front of chair, coax dog so that he stands or sits perpendicular to the Assessor.
- Sit with knees spread apart and feet on floor. (Kneel on the floor if the dog is small.)
- If the dog's body is oriented to your right, with your left hand gather excess leash and hold the collar, fingers facing upwards towards the dog's head. If the dog is oriented to your left, with your right hand gather excess leash and hold the collar, fingers facing upwards towards the dog's head.
- Brace the arm holding the leash and collar on your knee, pushing dog out from Assessor.
- Say the word “squeeze” and with other hand, pick up foreleg nearest you midway down leg and lightly run hand down to paw.
- Using just finger pads, squeeze between the dog's toe pads. Increase pressure on the skin between the 2 toes until the dog responds. Allow dog to withdraw paw.
- If there is no response in 3 seconds, stop the pressure and release the paw.
- Score response for first squeeze.
- Repeat for a second time, using the same verbal cue and same paw. (Score separately.)



STOP **STOP THE ASSESSMENT** if dog tries to bite. Proceed to the Food and Toy Behavior Items if additional information is desired.



note

If the dog struggles or immediately pulls back when you first reach for the paw, squeeze the rear flank instead of the skin between the toes.

Instructions for using the flank (flank is the area about 2–4 inches below the anus on the back of a dog's thigh):

If you determine the dog has paw sensitivity issues or that it is unsafe to squeeze the paw (according to the notes on the paw portion of the SAFER worksheet), you will use the flank.

- Coax dog so that he stands or sits perpendicular to the Assessor.
- Sit with knees spread apart and feet on floor. (Kneel on the floor if the dog is small.)
- The hand nearest the dog's head should hold both the gathered leash and the collar. For example, if the dog's body is oriented to the right, gather the leash in your right hand and grasp the collar with your right hand, fingers facing towards the dog's rear. Brace your right elbow against your knee in order to control the dog's head. And if the dog's body is oriented to the left, gather the leash in your left hand and grasp the collar with your left hand, fingers facing towards the dog's rear. Brace your left elbow against your knee in order to control the dog's head. (Same position as is used in the Sensitivity item)
- With your free hand poised just below the dog's neck on the outside the dog's spinal column, first say "squeeze" (before touching the dog), then stroke the dog's back from neck to flank and, using just finger pads, squeeze a section of skin on the dog's flank. Increase pressure on the flank until the dog responds.
- If there is no response in 3 seconds, stop the pressure and release.
- Repeat for a second time, using the same side/flank and the same verbal cue. (Score the first and second attempt separately.)



note

If the dog's behavior upon the first attempt matches any of the response choices higher than a "2", you should use the rear flank.

scoring:		
if paw is used:		
First Attempt	Second Attempt	
		Dog gently pulls back his paw. Dog may lick hand. [Enter "1"]
		Dog does not respond at all for three seconds. His eyes are averted and his ears are relaxed or back. [Enter "1"]
		Dog gently pulls back and whimpers. [Enter "2"]
		Dog gently places his open mouth over the Assessor's hand without applying pressure. [Enter "2"]
		Dog closes mouth, becomes stiff. [Enter "3"] Note: If this behavior occurs on the first attempt, use the flank instead.
		Dog is soft in body and eye, and moves his legs/body so that the Assessor is unable to hold the paw [Enter "3"] Note: If this behavior occurs on the first attempt, use the flank instead.
		Dog yelps repeatedly or screams. [Enter "3"] Note: If this behavior occurs on the first attempt, use the flank instead.
		Dog head flips while pulling back paw. [Enter "3"] Note: If this behavior occurs on the first attempt, use the flank instead.
		Dog reaches toward the Assessor's hand on the second attempt while moving his paw away when the Assessor attempts to lift it. The dog will not allow the Assessor to assess second time. [Enter "4"] Note: If this behavior occurs on first attempt, use the flank instead.
		Dog growls. [Enter "4"] Note: If this behavior occurs on the first attempt, use the flank instead.
		Dog freezes and/or tries to bite. [Enter "5"] Note: If this behavior occurs on the first attempt, use the flank instead.

Note behaviors observed before, during or after the item.

scoring:

if rear flank is used:

First Attempt	Second Attempt	
		Dog sits, mouth open or lip long. [Enter “1”]
		Dog does not respond at all. [Enter “1”]
		Dog gently places his open mouth over the Assessor’s hand without applying pressure. [Enter “2”]
		Dog closes mouth, begins to purse lips and becomes stiff. [Enter “3”]
		Dog head flips while moving hip away. [Enter “3”]
		Dog growls. [Enter “4”] Note: If this behavior occurs on the first attempt stop the assessment. Proceed to the Food and Toy Behavior items if additional information is desired.
		Dog tries to bite. [Enter “5”] Note: If this behavior occurs on the first attempt stop the assessment. Proceed to the Food and Toy Behavior items if additional information is desired.

Note behaviors observed before, during or after the item.

tips for success:

- Move the dog into position before sitting down or lure him into place using voice and hand movements. Do not physically force dog into position.
- Don’t lean or reach over the back of the dog. Use the front paw closest to the Assessor.
- Do not hold onto the foot if the dog wants to withdraw it.
- Apply pressure with fingertips only, never use fingernails.
- Repeat twice on the same side (paw or flank) unless it is unsafe to do so.

item 5: food behavior



insights gained from item five:

To identify food aggression. (This item was initially designed by Sue Sternberg and used in her Assess-a-Pet™ assessment.)

- Have the Observer hold the dog on leash, with some slack, standing slightly behind and to the side of dog.
- Quietly move chair to the edge of the assessment space.
- Place bowl containing a mixture of kibble and canned food on the floor and slide it within the dog's reach.
- Allow the dog a few moments to begin eating and "own" the bowl.
- Assessor then approaches the dog head-on saying, "Give me that food!" in a normal tone of voice (not high or low pitched). Assessor shifts to stand sideways to the dog, and reaches out and places Assess-a-Hand® in the bowl, moving the bowl approximately one foot toward Assessor.
- Observer allows some slack in the leash making sure dog cannot reach the Assessor, but can follow the food dish should he choose to do so. The dog should not feel any tension on the leash.
- Assessor backs away with Assess-a-Hand® behind her and allows dog to resume eating.
- Assessor repeats, "Give me that bowl!" and waits a moment to see if dog withdraws.
- Assessor places Assess-a-Hand® in bowl and gently pushes head away from bowl, first pushing the right cheek then pushing the left cheek.



scoring:

	Dog lifts head and ceases eating when you reach to pull the bowl away or push him out. [Enter “1”]
	Dog calmly allows the food to be moved, follows the dish, but does not interfere with the dish’s movement. Dog’s body is soft and loose, eyes soft, tail neutral. He lifts his head when hand is pushed against his cheek. [Enter “1”]
	Dog follows the dish with his tail down, body likely a bit stiff. Dog lifts head after a bit of pressure from hand to cheek. [Enter “2”]
	Dog follows the dish, his tail between his legs, ears are forward. His body is stiff. Dog does not lift his head from the bowl when hand is applied to his cheek. [Enter “3”]
	Dog gulps food, begins to eat faster and with bigger bites, body stiff. He does not lift head when hand is applied to cheek. [Enter “3”]
	Dog freezes and/or growls. [Enter “4”]
	Dog tries to bite. (Use chart on the worksheet to identify level of bite attempt/bite.) [Enter “5”]

Note behaviors observed before, during or after the item.

tips for success:

- Dog should not be fed within two hours prior to the SAFER™ assessment.
- Have food bowl prepared before the SAFER™ assessment begins. There should be enough food in the bowl to allow the dog to eat for two minutes.
- Make sure to give the dog enough time to really engage in eating before trying to take the food away.
- If dog is not eating, try a higher value food. The higher meat content in canned cat food can be a good addition for finicky eaters.
- Be sure to give the verbal warning (“Give me that bowl!”) when reaching for the bowl the first time and before reaching for the bowl the second time.
- When moving toward the dog, hold the Assess-a-Hand® as you would your own hand. When backing away, put it behind you.
- If the dog does not eat, repeat the Food Behavior and Toy Behavior items 12 to 24 hours later. Both items must be conducted at the same time.

item 6: toy behavior



insights gained from item six:

To identify possible possession aggression and any behaviors which could benefit from behavior modification now to prevent future problems including freezing, blocking access to toy with body, snapping, growling or giving the Assessor hard eyes.

part 1

- Observer continues holding dog's leash slightly behind and to the side of the dog.
- Assessor shakes or squeaks first toy and tosses onto floor within dog's reach.
- Give dog a few moments to get invested in play with toy.
- If dog does not engage in first toy, give some brief verbal encouragement ("Want to play?"), shake/squeak and toss a second toy of a different type about a foot away from the first toy, still within reach for the dog.
- Assessor approaches from the front and says "Give me that toy!" while reaching for it with Assess-a-Hand®. (Similar to food bowl approach.)
- Observer allows some slack in the leash but makes sure dog cannot reach Assessor. The dog should not feel tension in the leash.
- Note dog's response to the toy he was most invested in if two different toys were used.
- After the item is complete, the Observer should move the dog away from the toy(s). When the dog is out of reach of the toy(s), the Assessor should pick it (them) up.



optional part 2

- Observer continues holding dog's leash slightly behind and to the side of the dog.
- Assessor tosses or gently rolls a rawhide within the dog's reach.
- Give dog time to engage in chewing rawhide.
- Approach from the front and say "Give me that toy!" while reaching for rawhide with the Assess-a-Hand®.
- Note response to rawhide removal.

scoring:

Toys only	Rawhide (if used)	
		No interest. [Enter “1”]
		Dog settles down close to chew, will relinquish toy or rawhide to you. [Enter “1”]
		Dog settles close, keeps a firm grip and is loose and wiggly. He does not place his body between you and the toy/rawhide. [Enter “1”]
		Dog takes toy away, keeps a firm hold. His body is between you and the toy or rawhide, and he is loose and wiggly. No growling or stiffness. [Enter “2”]
		Dog takes toy/rawhide away, keeps a firm hold. His body is stiff. [Enter “3”]
		Dog freezes and/or growls. [Enter “4”]
		Dog attempts bite (use chart on worksheet) [Enter “5”]

Note behaviors observed before, during or after the item.

tips for success:

- Make sure food bowl has been picked up from previous assessment item. Be sure that any kibble that was spilled onto the floor during the Food Behavior item is also picked up.
- Observer must watch to keep leash slack throughout assessment item unless dog threatens Assessor.
- Assessor should encourage play with a slight bend at the waist while shaking or, if possible, squeaking the toy. Be sure not to bend over dog.
- If second toy is necessary, the shape and texture should be very different from the first one offered.
- Verbal encouragement should be brief and end once toy is tossed.
- Make sure not to throw second toy directly atop first toy.
- Use a brusque tone when saying “Give me that toy!” but don’t be overwhelming or intimidating.
- Watch for how/where the dog places his body in relation to the toy/rawhide and Assessor. Especially note hunkering over object (body blocking) and placing paw atop object.
- Ideally, clean toys and new rawhides are used with each dog. Minimally, wash the toys at least once a day and replace rawhides that have been chewed and/or are wet/soft.

item 7: dog-to-dog behavior (optional)



insights gained from item seven:

To identify dog-to-dog aggression or potentially challenging behaviors such as growling, hysterical barking and lunging to make known which dogs would benefit from behavior modification and “meet and greets” or need placement in a home without other dogs. The dog that approaches with body held high and tail up within the first couple of seconds of approach is more likely to have dog aggression issues at some point.

Who should you choose for your helper dog? First and foremost the helper dog should be the same gender as the dog being assessed and at least six months of age. He/she should be stable and social with other dogs. The size of the helper dog should be within 20 pounds of the dog being assessed.

- Observer leaves to get appropriate helper dog, (this dog should be identified prior to assessment) while Assessor removes dog being assessed from room.
- Observer enters empty assessment room, bringing helper dog to far end of the room. Observer then stands still and quietly holds helper dog’s leash.
- Assessor re-enters with dog being assessed.
- Keep leash loose on approach.
- Observe dog’s responses as he notices and approaches helper dog.
- Physical contact is not necessary for this assessment item.



note

Item Seven: Dog-to-Dog Behavior is optional. Do not conduct if there are no suitable helper dogs in the facility. Instead observe how the dog responds to other dogs when moving him in and out of the cage and around the shelter. Make notes in the “Behaviors observed . . .” section.

**note**

Be sure to take your observational “snapshot” in the first few seconds of the approach. Dogs do not have to touch.

scoring:

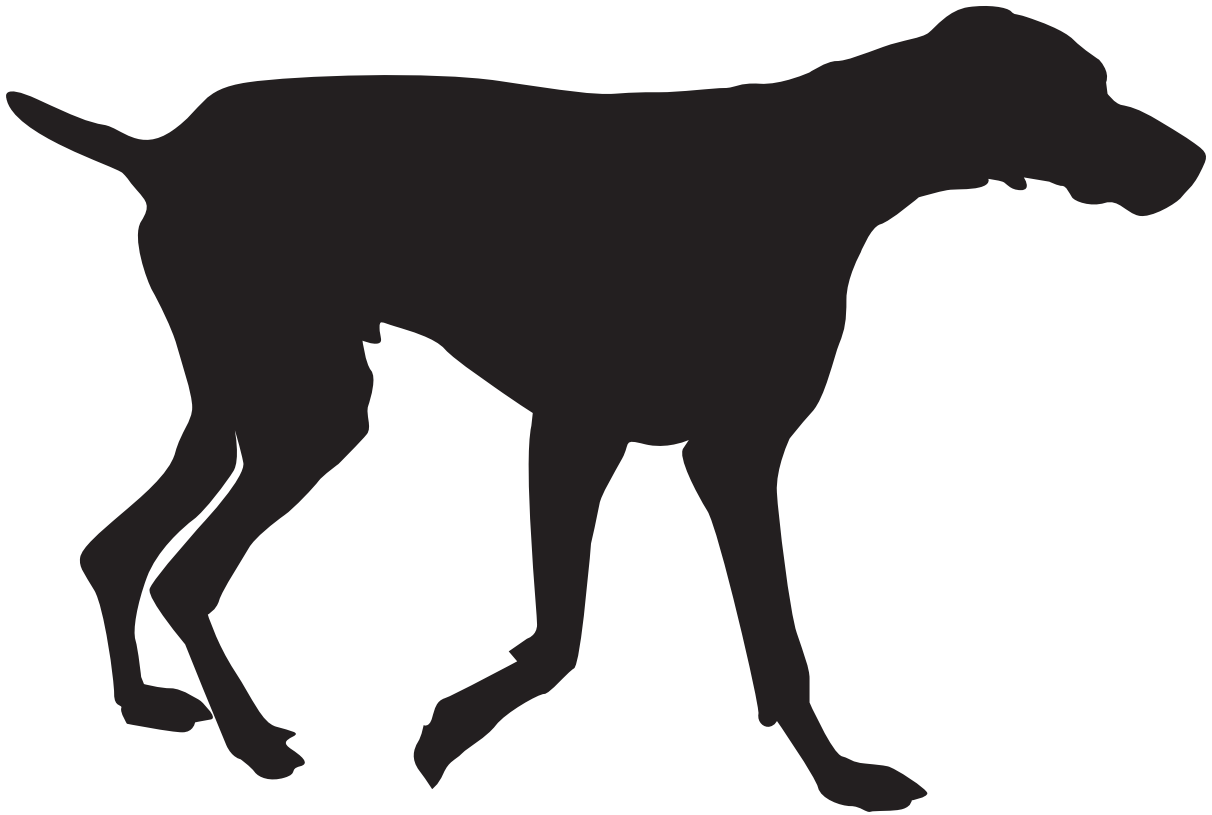
	Dog approaches the helper dog in play position. His mouth is open. [Enter “1”]
	Dog approaches the helper dog submissively (head low, tail low, ears back, lip long). [Enter “1”]
	Dog approaches helper dog with tail at spine level, body not stiff, ears relaxed, lip long or neutral. [Enter “2”]
	Dog does not approach the helper dog. Turns body to side in relation to other dog, or exits. [Enter “2”]
	Dog approaches the helper dog, body soft, tail well above spine level, ears forward. [Enter “2”]
	Dog approaches the helper dog by rushing in with his tail high, stiff body, head tall, and ears erect. [Enter “3”]
	Dog charges the helper dog while growling or attempting to bite. [Enter “4”]

Note behaviors observed before, during or after the item.

tips for success:

- Only use a dog that has already been SAFER™ assessed as the helper dog.
- Remember that the helper dog should be in the room before dog being assessed is brought back for last assessment item.
- Only the approach behavior is being observed and noted for assessment.
- Make sure video camera is set up to catch approach behavior, not actual dog-to-dog interaction.





**utilizing
the SAFER™
worksheet**

utilizing the SAFER™ worksheet

The SAFER™ worksheet captures the dog's responses for each assessment item. If aggression is noted, a clearer picture of each response is achieved by using the chart at the end of each assessment item. This additional information will be helpful in guiding the behavior team as it determines which dogs are candidates for behavior modification. There is also space to capture information about how the dog behaved before, during and after the assessment item. Behaviors such as yawning, lip licking, etc. can be valuable pieces of information and should be captured.

First, fill in the general information at the top of the sheet before beginning the assessment.

<input type="text"/>		date	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
shelter name							
<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>					
assessor		observer					
<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>				
dog's name		age	coat color				
sex	<input type="checkbox"/> male	<input type="checkbox"/> neutered male	<input type="checkbox"/> female	<input type="checkbox"/> spayed female	<input type="text"/>		
					breed		
date entered shelter	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	
						dog ID number	

Then, as each assessment item is conducted, choose the one response that best matches the dog's behavior. The realm of dog behavior responses is limitless, so those observed may not be an exact match. Choose the one that is closest to a match, and make sure to note other behaviors observed in the space provided marked "Note behaviors observed." Enter the number found at the end of the selected response on the line provided. **Note that scoring options progress from least likely to aggress to the most likely to aggress (softest behavior to stiffest behavior). Choose the response that encompasses the most severe behavior you observed, always keeping an eye on the dog's body tension.**

In the event that the dog responds in an aggressive manner, check or circle all the body postures observed in the chart following the scoring options.

Example of box at the bottom of Item One: Look

<p>If aggression is noted, use the checklist below to evaluate the dog's response. You can use this information to help best guide the behavior team regarding potential behavior modification and management (see guide for protocols).</p>			
<input type="checkbox"/> Body stiff	<input type="checkbox"/> Eyes hard	<input type="checkbox"/> Vocalizes	<input type="checkbox"/> Exposes teeth
<input type="checkbox"/> Freeze	<input type="checkbox"/> Ears back	<input type="checkbox"/> Dog growls	<input type="checkbox"/> Snaps no contact
<input type="checkbox"/> Tail up	<input type="checkbox"/> Ears forward		<input type="checkbox"/> Attempts to bite
<input type="checkbox"/> Tail down			

After the final item has been scored, review the scores and mark an “X” in the corresponding box for each assessment item in the large chart on the last page of the worksheet. The name of each item runs horizontally along the top of the box in the order they are conducted. The numbers 1-5 represent the possible scores for each item.

Note that shaded text appears in some of the boxes. These are designed to help guide the Assessor regarding both safety and potential behavior modification.

P = Potential behavior modification and/or management

R = Behavior modification and/or management strongly recommended

S = STOP item for safety reasons. Behavior modification and/or management strongly recommended.
Move to food if SOP suggests

For example if, during the Look Item, the dog averted his eyes and was stiff and fearful, the score is “2,” the Assessor would mark an “X” in “Look” column at row 2 as follows:

	Look	Sensitivity	Tag	Squeeze 1	Squeeze 2	Food	Toy	Rawhide	Dog
1									
2	X								
3		P	P	P	P	P	P	P	
4	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	P
5	S	S	S	S	R	R	R	R	

If the dog was “stiff but held eye contact,” the score would be “4.” The “X” would be placed over the letter “R” under the “Look” column.

If the dog froze and growled or attempted to bite during the Look item, the score would be “5” and the “X” would be placed in the box of the far left column, over the letter “S.” The Assessor would either end the assessment at this point or move to Food or Toy Behavior Items if additional information on the dog’s behavior is desired. This additional information may help determine the dog’s placement options.

The Sensitivity, Tag, Squeeze, Food Behavior and Toy Behavior items contain responses that may be scored “P.” These responses indicate arousal, fear or inhibited aggression on the dog’s part. The dog indicates a discomfort level with the assessment that might be modified through some behavior modification.





role of the observer

role of the observer

SAFER™ was specifically designed to be conducted by two staff members, an Assessor and an Observer. The Observer role is vital. The Observer serves the following purposes:

- Observes dog behavior that is not visible to Assessor
- Keeps notes regarding behavior and fills out the worksheet
- Takes responsibility for videotaping the assessment
- Holds dog for food bowl and toy behavior items
- Handles helper dog in dog-to-dog behavior item
- Helps defuse aggression when necessary
- Assists in assuring proper handling technique

observation of behavior: Oftentimes behaviors are not visible to the Assessor, such as tail position in the Look item, or eyes and ears in the Sensitivity item, and it is the job of the Observer to calmly and quietly communicate these to the Assessor. Comments about the perceived state of the dog (“he seems to like it,” “he seems happy”) are subjective statements and are not of use to the Assessor, and might even put her at risk.

fill out worksheet: The worksheet should be filled out after each assessment item is conducted. The Observer should keep notes regarding behavior both during and between each assessment item. The Observer should discuss the dog’s behavior for each item with the Assessor to determine which choice best describes the dog’s behavior for each item.

video recording: The video camera should have a wide angle option, and should be placed where it will not easily be knocked over. The Observer should turn the camera on at the beginning of each assessment and identify the name, breed and ID number of the dog being assessed. The Observer should turn the record function off before leaving to get the helper dog, and turn it back on when they return to the room. The camera should again be turned off at the conclusion of the dog’s SAFER™ assessment. The Observer should keep a log of which dogs are recorded on each particular

tape or DVD, so that they are easy to find in the future, if necessary.

holding for food bowl and

toy behavior items: The Observer holds the leash for both the Food and Toy Behavior items. It is important that there is slack in the leash during the items, so that the dog feels he has a choice as to where to move. At the same time, the Observer must always be aware of the length of leash available to the dog, and the safety of the Assessor.

Should the dog aggress, the Observer is responsible for safely containing the dog to avoid injury. The Observer should hold the leash with two hands, being careful not to stand in a corner or against a wall, which would make defensive handling difficult.

handling the helper dog for dog-to-dog

item: After the Toy Behavior item is complete, the Observer should give the dog’s leash back to the Assessor and fill out the worksheet for the previous item. The Observer will then leave to collect the helper dog. After the Observer leaves, the Assessor will also exit the room with the dog being assessed. The Observer should be sure the helper dog is of the same gender as the dog being assessed, and is appropriate with other dogs. The Observer should enter the assessment room first with the helper dog and stand far from the door. Ideally, the Observer and helper dog are about 10-15 feet from the doorway. The Observer will stand still and hold the leash while observing the behavior of the assessed dog as he enters the room. Both Assessor and Observer should take a mental “snapshot” of the assessed dog’s behavior upon the initial approach.

helping to defuse aggression when

necessary: On very rare occasions, a dog may display a high level of aggression. The Observer should always be ready to defuse this aggression. One useful tool is the clipboard used to hold the worksheet. Slamming the clipboard to the ground can produce a very loud noise that will likely distract the dog so that the Assessor can regain a safe position. We strongly suggest keeping SprayShield (formerly Direct Stop), a bucket filled with water or even a sound canister handy as tools to help defuse aggression.

assisting in proper handling technique:

The Observer should communicate to the Assessor any checks or improvements needed in handling. By working as equal partners, the assessment is more likely to be accurate and effective.



SAFER™
certification

SAFER™ certification

The SAFER™ assessment is a tool that requires strong handling skills, body awareness, and a keen understanding for objectively observing canine behavior. When the assessment was first introduced on a national level, there was no certification process. Over time it became apparent that a certification process was necessary to ensure that Assessors have the skills to conduct the assessment correctly. Certification is achieved when an ASPCA® SAFER™ reviewer validates an Assessor's skill in properly handling dogs and accurately scoring the appropriate behavior exhibited by the dog. Review is accomplished by viewing submitted video of assessments and corresponding worksheets. The certification is valid for one year after which recertification is required.

SAFER™ certification does not certify the organization that employs the person; rather it is certification of an individual to show that they have the skills necessary to conduct the assessment.

Certification helps ensure that an Assessor has the knowledge and skills to maintain her safety when handling a potentially aggressive dog. Improper handling and technique makes the Assessor vulnerable to a bite should the dog choose to aggress. Equally as important, proper handling ensures that the dog is exhibiting behavior that is more likely predictive of future behavior. Inappropriate handling can provoke responses that are not reliable, resulting in potential inappropriate choices regarding placement of the animal.

To apply for certification, the Assessor submits three full assessments on video and copies of the corresponding worksheets for review by the ASPCA®. The video is reviewed and feedback is given pertaining to technique and canine behavior scoring skills. It is possible that certification may not be achieved in the first attempt. In this case, the reviewer will inform the Assessor of modifications needed in technique and observation of behavior to properly implement the assessment. The Assessor can submit a second tape. When the Assessor consistently demonstrates strong techniques and objective behavior observations, she will be certified for one year.



SAFER™ certification does not certify the organization that the person is employed by; rather it is certification of an individual to show that they have the skills necessary to conduct the assessment.

practicing the assessment prior to a submission for certification

It is highly recommended that the assessment is practiced for 2–4 weeks before submitting a tape for certification. Prepare by doing the following:

1. Observe dog playgroups at the shelter and practice reading canine body postures and behavior, specifically: tail posture, ear posture, body posture, eye shape, lip length, invitations to play (play bow, huffing, and popping body movements), body slams, shoulder rubs, etc. Use the glossary in this guide and the video glossary on the SAFER DVD to aid in objectively identifying the behaviors.
2. Practice the assessment on resident/safe dogs.
3. Identify the most challenging assessment item, such as the Tag item, and be sure to practice proper handling with safe dogs.

4. Videotape all practice assessments and review them multiple times, critiquing both the handling skills and the canine behavior scoring skills of the Assessor. We highly recommend you use our SAFER Certification Checklist (image below and checklist template is included in the Reproducible Forms and Templates section of this guide) when reviewing your practice assessments as this is

the very document used by the SAFER reviewers to ensure your handling is correct. Other people from your facility who are also pursuing certification can critique the assessments for their own practice and to help you become certified. Over the weeks, improvement in handling and behavior observation skills should be noted.

ASPCA®

SAFER™
Certification Check List

preparing for your SAFER™ certification submission

- Frequently review the handling guide for proper technique.
- Observe play groups of dogs at the shelter to practice reading canine behavior: tail posture, ear posture, body posture, lip length, eye shape, etc.
- Practice assessment (especially assessment items you find to be challenging) on your own dogs or on a stuffed dog.
- Tape all of your practice assessments and review/critique your handling and behavior reading skills.
- Ask others from your agency who are also preparing for certification to review your practice assessments before taping for submission.

general checklist of requirements for SAFER™ certification submission

room set-up and video:

- Use a spacious, quiet room for your assessments.
- Rid your room of clutter.
- Have proper lighting so handling technique and canine behavior can be seen on SAFER™ reviewer.
- If needed, use a white noise machine or static channel on a radio to drown out background noise.
- Remove all other animals from the room.
- Use an armless chair for the assessment.
- Place your camera in an area of the room so that the dog and the Assessor (Observer may need to operate camera during tag to capture movement).
- If a mistake occurs while taping for certification, do not submit that dog's performance if it is still incorrect even when you make note of it on the scoring sheet. We need to see you performing each item of the assessment.

be sure to do the following in each assessment item to ensure proper handling

toy:

- Offer another type of toy in texture and shape if the dog does not show interest in your first choice.
- Allow the dog several seconds to be interested in the toy or to settle with the toy before reaching in with the Assess-A-Hand®.
- Ensure there is space between each toy so they are not in a pile.
- Offer a rawhide if the dog expresses no interest in the toys. When using a rawhide, it must be offered last.

dog introduction:

- Avoid pulling the dog being assessed towards the helper dog. Always allow choice of movement.
- Score the behavior the dog exhibits as he is initially approaching the helper dog.
- Dogs do not need to touch.
- Choose a helper dog that is loose and wiggly around other dogs.

other tips for proper handling:

- Never force the dog into position at any time during the assessment.
- Coax the dog into position for each item using your voice and body language.
- Allow the dog choice of movement at all times.
- Communicate with your Observer about all pertinent behaviors either of you observe during the assessment.
- Be sure to always use a six foot leash for your assessments.
- Minimize the amount of noise your chair makes when you move it around during the assessment.

notes:

be sure to do the following in each assessment item to ensure proper handling

look:

- The hand holding the leash is also lightly holding the collar with a couple of fingers. The other hand touches the dog with an open palm on the other side of the dog's face along the lower jaw line.
- Never hold the look for more than 3-5 seconds, and do not repeat unless the dog pulls out of your hands.
- If the dog pulls out of your hands, try a maximum of three tries to position them before proceeding.
- Avoid leaning forward into the face of the dog.
- Keep your upper body straight.
- Allow choice and never force the dog to look at you.

sensitivity:

- Ensure the hand that is holding the dog's collar is locked onto your knee.
- Hold the dog's collar on the side of the neck rather than over the back of the neck.
- Sit upright and keep your face away from his body and your hand.
- Begin your touch at the collar: firmly knead the skin (as if you're kneading dough) down to just past the hip, and back up to the collar.
- Use consistent touch moving from the collar to the hip and back up two times.

tag:

- Move the chair out of the way before starting Tag.
- Engage the dog with your voice and start moving before you touch him.
- Keep your voice engaged and your body moving the whole time. Do not stop once you've invited the dog to play unless the dog exhibits aggressive behavior or you have completed all three tags.
- Avoid leaning over or reaching over the dog at all times.
- Face the direction you are about to run before popping the dog, so when he spins around you are not facing him frontally.
- Tag the dog as you're moving in the opposite direction.
- Give the dog a loose leash at all times and avoid dragging the dog along with you.
- Always tag the dog lightly with one finger on the thigh that is closest to you.

squeezer:

- Secure your holding hand on the dog's collar on the side of the neck rather than the back of the dog's neck.
- Rock the dog's head away from your body.
- Use your free hand to lift his leg saying "squeeze" prior to touching the leg.
- Lift the dog's leg away from his head/body, so there is a V-shape between his leg and body.
- Say "squeeze" only once each time you lift the leg.
- When squeezing between the pads of the foot, apply just enough pressure for the dog to respond.
- Allow the dog to pull back his paw if he chooses to do so.
- Squeeze two consecutive times on the same paw.

food:

- Allow the dog enough time to become invested in the food bowl if he chooses.
- Ensure you are directly opposite of the Observer who is holding the leash.
- Ensure the Observer is giving the dog some slack in the leash so there is no tension.
- Approach from the front of the food bowl and pull the bowl towards you saying "Give me that" one time. Back away. Advance again and reach back in and push the dog out of the bowl two times.
- In between each intervention, step back so the dog can again "own" the bowl.
- Keep the Assess-A-Hand® behind you when you retreat and while waiting.
- The Observer needs to keep two hands on the leash at all times when handling the dog.

handling technique required for certification

Proper handling as a SAFER™ Assessor is crucial in two ways: 1) helping maintain safety if a dog chooses to aggress and, 2) in identifying a valid, predictive behavioral response from the dog. It is for those reasons that the Assessors are expected to consistently use proper handling techniques.

instructions for sending in a submission for certification

When submitting a tape for certification, there are strict guidelines that must be followed to ensure a smooth and timely review process. When improper submissions are made, the review is delayed and in some circumstances the tapes are not reviewed. Please follow the instructions in the Reproducible Forms and Templates section to successfully make a submission.

This is the certification certificate you will receive upon successful submission.





behavior modification and management protocols

introduction to behavior modification protocols

When conducting SAFER™, there is an opportunity to observe and identify behaviors that could be challenging to adopters and/or shelter staff. The following is a set of tested behavior modification protocols for dogs and puppies which, when coupled with adopter support and enrichment, should enhance the dog's adoptability and safety level in the home and community. The protocols provided here relate to behaviors identified through the SAFER™ assessments.

first steps

Before conducting behavior modification and management work, three important programs should be in place in your facility.

- **Program 1** is a general enrichment program
- **Program 2** is adoption follow-up
- **Program 3** is a standardized program for analyzing progress of animals receiving interventions.

The ASPCA® strongly recommends that Program 1 (enrichment) and Program 2 (adoption follow-up) be put in place before focusing on behavior modification. Together, these programs help ensure success by supporting the needs of both your dogs and adopters.



program one enrichment

One standard definition of enrichment is “Additions to an animal's environment with which the animal voluntarily interacts and, as a result, experiences improved physical and/or psychological health.” It is important to support dogs in your care with enrichment opportunities. There is a wealth of research that demonstrates that stress levels increase when enrichment is not provided to animals in shelters. Behaviors such as hyper-arousal, depression, and obsessive/compulsive behaviors are not uncommon when enrichment is not present. Dogs and puppies may display behaviors that make adoptions more challenging simply because they are not given the opportunity to chew, exercise their bodies and minds or have the opportunity to make choices in their environment. This is especially true for canines with behavior challenges.

In general, overall enrichment should include:

- Daily walks (controlled and monitored)
- Social interaction (both human and canine when possible)
- Food games (using food/treat-dispensing toys such as KONG®, Tug-a-Jug™, etc.)
- Opportunities for sensory stimulation such as sound (classical music), odor (lavender, spices, and even a bit of bedding from the cat area), and textures (feel a brush against the skin, soft bedding, and hard Boomer Balls® to nose around the play yard).



program two adoption follow-up

It is important to have good post-adoption support for your adopters. This is especially true for the more challenging matches, and for dogs and puppies with more challenging behaviors. Ideally, it's best to follow up with every adopter, but when time and resources are in short supply, start by following up with:

- Adopters who chose a dog with behavioral challenges
- Adopters who chose a dog outside their color category (for those shelters employing MYM Canine-ality™)

Reach out to your adopters the third day after the adoption, the third week after adoption, and the third month after adoption. Be sure to have a list of resources available, such as trainers and certified applied animal behaviorists in your area, in the event an adopter needs assistance with specific issues. Providing follow-up support is one of the best ways to help keep the bond between adopters and their new family members strong.

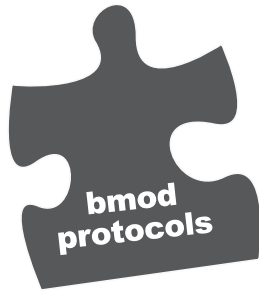


program three standard program for tracking progress

A vital part of any management/behavior-modification program is monitoring the progress of the chosen intervention for the individual dog or puppy. It is important to remain objective not only when conducting the SAFER™ assessment, but also when conducting behavior modification protocols. The ASPCA® strongly recommends keeping a behavior log of each behavior modification session. The template provided in the Reproducible Forms and Templates section is designed to easily keep track of the

number of sessions, the positive reinforcers used, and progress toward the goal. The template makes it easy to troubleshoot when a program is not moving forward as planned. One can read all of the dog's logs to find what reinforcers were successful, what time of day is more productive, etc. Review the previous day's logs before beginning each session.

Once you have these three programs in place, you are ready to begin working with the following set of protocols.



program four behavior modification protocols

who should be conducting the protocols?

It is strongly recommended that those implementing behavior modification programs have a solid working knowledge of learning theory. Certified Pet Dog Trainers are ideal candidates.

Before conducting behavior modification and management work, be sure to have programs one, two and three (enrichment, adoption follow-up and a system for tracking progress, respectively) in place in your facility.

In the SAFER™ assessment, some scores of “3,” “4,” and “5” indicate behavior modification is needed prior to adoption. The following protocols are specific to behaviors observed during the SAFER™ assessment. It is vital to track the dog’s progress when implementing a behavior modification protocol. Use the “Behavior Log” to monitor the protocol’s effectiveness and as a communication tool for staff.

behavior log		ASPCA®
DATE	NUMBER OF SESSIONS TO DATE	
YOUR NAME		
DOG'S NAME	ANIMAL #	
BEHAVIOR FOR MODIFICATION		
PRIMARY REINFORCER USED (FOOD, TOUCH, ETC.)		
SECONDARY REINFORCER USED (CLICKER, 'YES,' ETC.)		
THE DOG'S BEHAVIOR SINCE THE LAST TRAINING SESSION HAS: IMPROVED STAYED THE SAME DECLINED		
LENGTH OF SESSION		
WHICH BEHAVIOR WAS REINFORCED AT BEGINNING OF SESSION?		
WHICH BEHAVIOR WAS REINFORCED AT END OF SESSION?		
BASED ON YOUR ANSWERS TO THE TWO QUESTIONS ABOVE, WHICH BEHAVIOR SHOULD THE NEXT SESSION BEGIN WITH?		
DESCRIBE HOW MOTIVATED THE DOG WAS WHEN TRAINING TODAY		
USING A SCALE OF 1 TO 10 (1 BEING LEAST MOTIVATED, 10 BEING MOST MOTIVATED), RATE THIS DOG'S RESPONSE TO TODAY'S TRAINING COMPARED TO THE LAST TIME YOU WORKED WITH HIM. IF TODAY IS YOUR FIRST DAY WITH HIM, MARK N/A. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 N/A		
COMMENTS		

behavior modification protocols

One of a series of ASPCA® Behavior Modification Protocols developed by Emily Weiss, Ph.D., CAAB



food guarding program

The goal is to have the dog learn to be relaxed around the food bowl, lifting his head and even backing up from the bowl when you approach.

identifying dogs for the program:

- Dog is SAFER™ “1” or “2” on all parts of the SAFER™ assessment other than the food behavior.
- The dog does not shoulder rub or body slam during any part of the assessment.
- The dog does not body-block, place foot in bowl, or urinate in bowl.
- The dog was assessed with two toys and no possession-type behaviors were observed.

before you begin:

- Be sure the dogs are given enrichment and walks daily.
- All dogs entering the food program should be on free feed (access to a full bowl of food at all times) for at least 24 hours before starting this program. Dogs must be free fed consistently. If they are not on free feed, the protocol is much less likely to be effective.


program instructions:

1. Give dog some mildly valuable food such as a dry kibble that is a bit tastier than what he has as free feed. Prepare some tasty treats (balled up canned food works well). Approach the food bowl; and as long as he is not aggressive (i.e. stiffening, hard stare, guarding bowl), drop in a treat. If he displays aggressive behaviors, wait until he is done, refill his bowl and present it to him again. During your first session you may need to fill the bowl a few times before you are able to capture a relaxation in body.
2. After 5-7 repetitions, you can now expect him to lift his head when you approach — even just a tiny bit — before dropping in the next treat.
3. When he is reliably lifting his head for food, you will begin to bend down, as if to lift his bowl, and then drop the treat. Watch carefully for stiff behavior.
4. Increase the amount you bend.
5. At this point, you should now be able to take the bowl and exchange for something better.
6. Practice with at least two other Assessors, in two other physical spaces before the dog is placed on the adoption floor. In other words, the dog should be tested in at least four different spaces (one being his home kennel) by a total of three or more people.
7. Daily behavior logs must be kept for each dog on the program.


All dogs placed for adoption from this program must be clearly identified so adopters can be properly counseled, go home with the food-guarding program and be flagged for follow-up. Plan on a minimum of two 4-5 minute sessions a day.

when the dog is adopted: Review the “Food Program” instructions with the adopter which can be found in the Reproducible Forms and Templates section. Remember to follow up with the adopter at three days, three weeks and three months post-adoption.

food program



Congratulations!
You have adopted a new family member.



As your adoption counselor discussed with you, your dog displayed some food possession issues with the protocol. What does this mean? It means that your dog may be more likely to show aggression around his food than some other dogs. Food aggression dogs may take when they perceive that someone is trying to take their food. While we consider a successful behavior modification program with the dog during his time with us, we suggest that you continue this work with the dog when you take him home. Food aggression is both treatable and controllable. We suggest you follow the plan below, beginning the moment your dog comes into your home.

the plan:

- Food time should never be made into an event. Do not get the dog riled up for dinner.
- Be sure your dog sits and waits for the food bowl. For the first few days, you might want to leave the bowl on the dog for this exercise. As the dog sits, you will bend toward the dog with the bowl. If the dog gets up, stand up and have the dog sit again.
- Put small amounts of food in the bowl. As the dog finishes the first bites, place more food in the bowl. Feed the normal amount of food, but do so in small amounts.
- Feed one-half of the dog's food out of a food-dispensing toy such as the Buster Cube™. This will not only help with food issues, but it will also help keep your dog busy in body and mind.
- When your dog is interacting with the food-dispensing toy or eating food from the bowl, you can teach him that when he leaves the bowl or toy to look at you, he will get something even better. This is a very important and fun exercise! Begin by placing a kibble in the bowl or food-dispensing toy. Let the dog eat for a moment, then walk over with a tasty piece of cheese or other highly desirable food item. Say the dog's name if he lifts his head, praise him and give him the food item.
- Trade. While this game is similar to what is written above, here you are not only asking the dog to lift his head, but to let you have one object for another more desirable one. Place a tasty treat that the dog loves in your pocket, and begin by giving the dog a boring toy — one that the dog finds only marginally interesting. (We want the dog to quickly understand the game as well as avoid any aggression, so we must begin by giving the dog something that is not highly desirable.) Once the dog has this item for a moment, take the tasty treat out of your pocket and calmly say “Trade.” Draw the dog toward you with the treat, and let him nibble the treat while you pick up the boring toy. When he is done with the treat, have him sit and give back the toy. We want your dog to learn that you always have something better and that he can trade you.

If you are unable to do the preceding exercises, we suggest you choose another dog to adopt. While we cannot 100 percent predict the future, research does show that dogs who display food issues in the shelter are more likely to display the same behaviors in the home. We want you to be safe and for the dog to have the opportunity to be able to work through his issues. Please take the time to ask yourself if you are ready to take on a bit of a project.

behavior modification protocols

One of a series of ASPCA® Behavior Modification Protocols developed by Heather Mohan-Gibbons, MS, RVT, CPDT, ACAAB



how does the clicker work

The goal is introduce the dog to a conditioned reinforcer. A conditioned reinforcer tells the dog a reward is coming and marks the behavior you want the dog to repeat.

(Required technique for working with touch-sensitive dogs – see page 53)

how does the clicker work?

It can be difficult to deliver food at the exact moment you want to reinforce a behavior. A conditioned reinforcer, such as a clicker or the word “yes”, tells the dog the reward is coming and marks the behavior you want the dog to repeat.

The clicker is a novel and consistent sound that does not change with our mood or gender. Since dogs don’t find clicks or words inherently reinforcing, you will need to charge, or give meaning to, your clicker. First, we teach the dog that every time he hears the clicking sound, he gets a treat. Once he understands that clicks are always followed by treats, the click becomes a powerful feedback tool. Now the handler can click (to give feedback) the instant the dog does a select behavior. For example, if you want to teach a dog to sit, you click when his rear hits the floor and then immediately deliver a treat. With repetition, the dog learns that sitting earns rewards.

“charging” your clicker

Realize that in most instances the dog has not heard this sound before; therefore, it currently has no meaning. Here is how to change that:

1. Start with a container of soft and smelly treats cut up about the size of a pea nearby.
2. Place the clicker in your hand.
3. Click once and immediately reach for a treat and feed the dog.
4. Click again and offer another treat.
5. Continue to repeat the click-and-treat combination at varying intervals, sometimes after a few seconds, sometimes after one minute.
6. Repeat 20-30 more times.

tips:

- Remember to click just once and follow every click with a treat. After you click, deliver the treat to the dog’s mouth as quickly as possible so it is easier for him to make this connection.
- When you are clicking, keep your body still and quiet. Avoid reaching for the treats as you are clicking or saying “good boy!” while you click. We want the dog to learn that the click is the important thing, so click THEN treat and praise.
- Be generous. Lots of clicks/treats in the beginning will help the dog make the association and help him want to stay in the game. Keep the sessions short (5–10 minutes.)
- The dog will start to turn toward you and look expectant when he hears the click — which means he understands that meaning of the clicker. Once he understands this link between his behavior and getting a click, he is ready for training.

behavior modification protocols

One of a series of ASPCA® Behavior Modification Protocols developed by Emily Weiss, Ph.D., CAAB and Heather Mohan-Gibbons, MS, RVT, CPDT, ACAAB



working with touch-sensitive dogs

The goal is to decrease reactivity to touch.

program instructions:

1. Identify where the dog is touch-sensitive by reviewing the SAFER™ assessment and notes along with any other available information (relinquishment survey, vet exam, notes from kennel staff and volunteers).
2. Define your goals. Is your goal for the dog to be completely non-reactive, even to a strong tail pull? Is it for the dog to remain relaxed and open-mouthed even when he is restrained for a vet hold? Write down your goal behavior; then note where the dog is now with regard to the goal behavior. Plot the distance between the starting place and the goal, and then break that distance down into easy-to-achieve steps. Start at step one and use the behavior log to keep track of progress.
3. Identify what the dog finds motivating. Let the dog tell you how he wants to be “paid” for learning new behavior. Have a variety of rewards on hand: liver treats, hot dogs, cheese, tennis balls. Track what the dog prefers on the Behavior Log. Reward with higher value treats when the dog gives a particularly relaxed response and as you get closer to the touch sensitive area. Otherwise, vary the treats so the dog never knows what’s coming.
4. Introduce the dog to a conditioned reinforcer such as a clicker or the word “yes.” Refer to Clicker Training protocol included in this chapter (page 52).
5. Begin by touching the dog in a place where you know he is not sensitive. You want to start far away from the sensitive area and move closer over time (multiple sessions) while he stays non-reactive. For example, if the dog head flipped when you touched his flank area during the Sensitivity item, begin training by first touching his shoulder. This way you’ll be setting him up for success — a light touch on the shoulder should bring about a non-reactive response, and you will click and treat that response. The sequence is this: You touch, dog stays relaxed, click, and then treat. Repeat often. Go slowly and work at each level (refer to your goal and easy-to-achieve steps) with the dog relaxed. You know you have moved too quickly if the dog changes from relaxed to stiff behavior. If that happens, do not correct the dog; instead view it as feedback that he is not ready for you to go that quickly. Make note of where it was that you touched him when he became stiffer, go back one step, and continue the session. End each session on a positive note.
6. Progress at a slow pace, paying attention to feedback given to you by the dog, towards the goal behavior. You may choose to vary the speed, pressure or location of the touch depending on your goal. If you choose to vary the touch, ensure that each variance is tried independently. Do not try to train them all at once. It may take weeks before the dog meets the goal behavior. Be patient and remember to take it slow.

when the dog is adopted: Review the “Touch Sensitivity” instructions with the adopter which can be found in the Reproducible Forms and Templates section. Remember to follow up with the adopter at three days, three weeks and three months post-adoption.



touch sensitivity ASPCA
guidelines to assimilate your new companion

Congratulations!
You have adopted a new family member.

As your adoption counselor discussed with you, your dog didn't always accept all kinds of touching. This dog indicated on during his behavior assessment that he might not appreciate if he was patted beyond his comfort level. Your dog has had some training time to help him be more comfortable with touch. Being comfortable with different types of touch is important and to do this you can help him continue to learn at home.

What does this mean? Your dog is more likely to show anxiety or aggression when being touched on certain body parts, with a certain pressure or strength, or when being touched at the same time that you are holding his collar. His dog may also react more when you touch him with a stick. But with the training you receive, the learning in your home. We strongly suggest you follow the guidelines below working with his dog and bring him home. It is essential to make your dog feel this behavior issue with time, patience and practice.

guidelines:

- **Be aware of the touches your dog enjoys and doesn't enjoy.** Your dog has shown sensitivity to... Some you know when your dog is uncomfortable being touched. Notice family members and visitors to touch the dog where he likes to be touched instead. For instance, this is the dog's dog. Notice the small touch if you would reach down and pet his chest. This is his favorite place to be touched. If every new person he meets would reach down and pet his chest, that's his favorite place to be touched.
- **Reward your dog for accepting touch.** This will convince your dog that tolerating touch pays off and the behavior is worth repeating. Have a supply of dog-safe, high-value treats like hot dogs, semi-moist liver treats, cheese or dried liver cut into pieces the size of a pea. Put your hand on your dog and while touching him, feed him a treat. You are teaching your dog that accepting touch and remaining relaxed pays off.
- **Refrain from engaging in wrestling or physical roughhousing with your dog.** While some dogs may enjoy this as much as many humans do, a touch-sensitive dog will almost certainly find this unpleasant. Don't unduly play hard words. Play cooperative games instead. Use fetch, hide-a-treat games (like hide and seek), bring-room agility, or teach him some tricks.

If you are unable to do these at-home exercises, we suggest you choose another dog to adopt. We want you to be safe, and the dog to be able to work through his issues. Please take this through and ask yourself if you have the time and motivation to help this dog learn to enjoy touch.

behavior modification protocols

One of a series of ASPCA® Behavior Modification Protocols developed by Emily Weiss, Ph.D., CAAB



over-arousal

The goal is to teach self control to easily over-aroused dogs.

tug-and-drop training

The rules for tug-and-drop:

- 1. The dog sits (or lies down) and waits for you to invite him to play (“Take it” or “Get it”) before ever putting his mouth on the toy;**
- 2. The dog releases the toy to you whenever you request (“Drop” or “Give”);**
- 3. The dog takes care not to put his mouth on human skin while playing tug.**

program instructions:

Most dogs will play tug with any type of toy, but tug is most pleasurable for the human when they are comfortable with the toy. Obtain a fleece or soft rope toy 1-2 feet long. Handles are useful although dogs often enjoy playing with the handles so much that they are inclined to grab the handle, whether there is a human hand attached there or not. A tug toy with a bungee type handle puts less stress on both the dog and the human.

- 1.** Grasp the toy with one hand at each end. Ask the dog to sit. When he does, say “Yes, get it!” and wave the toy in front of the dog’s face or drag it along the ground in front of him, so that he is likely to grab the toy in the middle, thereby avoiding your hands. When he grasps it, verbally encourage him to play while you move the toy back and forth, up and down, to stimulate him to tug. Do this for 10-20 seconds.
- 2.** The next step is to teach the dog to release the toy on cue. Different approaches work for different dogs. You should not shout or intimidate the dog in order to get him to release the toy. Say “Give” or “Drop” in a conversational voice. Avoid repeating the cue over and over; say it once and then take action to prompt the dog to release. Here are a few suggestions:
 - a.** Say “Give” and instantly stop tugging the toy (let your arm go limp), but keep hold of it with one hand. Say “Sit.” If the dog releases the toy and sits, immediately say “Yes, get it!” and entice the dog to play again. With sufficient repetitions, the dog should learn to let go of the toy and sit as soon as he hears you say “give.” Eventually, you vary how long the dog must sit before you invite him to play again.
 - b.** Say “Give” and instantly stop tugging the toy (let your arm go limp), but keep hold of it with one hand. With the other hand, reach over the dog’s head to cover his eyes. Some dogs will release the toy as soon as you do this. If the dog releases the toy, immediately say “Yes, get it!” and entice the dog to play again. With sufficient repetitions, the dog should learn to let go of the toy as soon as he hears you say “give,” so you don’t have to cover his eyes. Eventually, vary how long the dog must wait before you invite him to play again. Sometimes ask him to sit before inviting him to play.
 - c.** Say “Give” and instantly stop tugging the toy (let your arm go limp), but keep hold of it with one hand. With the other hand, reach and grasp the dog by his collar. Pull him forward toward you and hold him stationary. This has the effect of making any tugging he does ineffective. Wait. Most dogs will drop the toy after a few seconds. Immediately say “Yes!” release his collar, say “Get it,” and invite the dog to play again. With sufficient repetitions, the dog should learn to let go of the toy as soon as he hears you say “give,” so you don’t have to take hold of his collar. Eventually,

sometimes ask the dog to sit, after the dog releases the toy, before inviting him to play again.

- d. Say “Give” and instantly stop tugging the toy (let your arm go limp), but keep hold of it with one hand. With the other hand, place a treat right in front of the dog’s nose so that he can’t help but smell it. Most dogs will instantly release the toy to grab the treat. Say “Yes,” give him the treat, and ask him to sit. When he does, say, “Get it,” and invite the dog to play again. With sufficient repetitions, the dog should learn to let go of the toy as soon as he hears you say “give,” so you don’t have to use the treat. You will still want to reward him with a treat when he releases the toy until the release behavior is fully learned. Sometimes ask the dog to sit after the dog releases the toy, before inviting him to play again. This method is undesirable if the dog is reluctant to play again after receiving the treat. Some dogs are so motivated by food that they are uninterested in play after eating a treat and so it is hard to accomplish the tug training.
3. Repeat the sequence of tugging for 10-20 seconds, then asking for a release, at least 10 times in succession. Realize that for procedures “a-c,” the reward for the dog releasing the toy is to get you to play again. This means that, while the dog is learning to play tug, you should instantly say “yes!” when he releases and invite play again. Don’t waste time praising or patting him. When a dog is into playing tug, they usually don’t care about praise or patting — they want to play more! For procedure “d,” the dog has two incentives for releasing the toy: to get the food reward and to get you to play again. So it’s still important to get the game going again quickly. Only when the dog promptly and willingly drops the toy as soon as you ask, should you ask him to sit and wait for any amount of time between bouts of tugging.
4. If, at any time, the dog jumps forward to grab at the toy when you have not invited him, say “Uh-uh!” and instantly pull the toy behind your back or over your shoulder where it is inaccessible. If the dog already has the toy in his mouth, do what works (from above options) to get him to release it again but don’t reward him when he lets go. Next time, be ready so that when he jumps forward to grab it, you can snatch it away. Ask him to sit and wait before presenting the toy and inviting him to “get it.” You must teach him that he never gets the toy when he jumps for it before you ask. If you are consistent with this, he will learn that the best way to get you to play tug is to sit and wait patiently until you start the game.
5. If, at any time, the dog misses the toy and puts his mouth on your hand, instantly shriek loudly, drop the

toy, and march out of the room (time out). If there is a door, slam it in the dog’s face. Wait a few seconds (no more than 20-30 seconds), then return and act like nothing happened. Invite him to play again, but use a warning voice to remind him to be careful. If the dog bites your hand more than a few times (3-4) in one play session, despite implementing time-outs, your dog may not be able to learn to play tug appropriately. Certainly if he keeps doing this, despite continued corrections, it’s not safe to play tug with him. If you’re really committed to teaching this game, use I-o-o-n-g tug toys so there’s plenty of room for his mouth and your hands.

6. When you’re ready to end the game, follow the same steps to get the dog to release the toy on request, but this time, ask him to sit and offer him a treat. While he’s eating the treat, put the tug toy away. He should not have access to the tug toy except when you are playing with him.
7. If the dog starts playing but then escalates to the point where he’s no longer playing but instead is aggressively guarding the toy, immediately cease playing tug with him. The way to determine if your dog has switched from play to aggression is to watch for signs such as a stiff body, stiff tail, “hard” eye contact and snarling (lifting/wrinkling lips while growling). If the dog is becoming aggressive, simply drop the toy and walk away.

when the dog is adopted: Review the “Tug-and-Drop Training” instructions with the adopter which can be found in the Reproducible Forms and Templates section. Remember to follow up with the adopter at three days, three weeks and three months post-adoption.

tug-and-drop training

ASPCA

these are the three basic parameters for playing tug-and-drop:

program instructions:

1. The dog sits (or lies down) and waits for you to invite him to play (“Take it” or “Get it”) before ever putting his mouth on the toy.
2. The dog releases the toy whenever you request (“Drop” or “Give”).
3. The dog takes care not to put his mouth on human skin while playing tug.

Most dogs will play tug with any type of toy, but tug is most pleasurable for the human when they are comfortable with the toy. Obtain a fleece or soft rope toy 1-2 feet long. Handles are useful although dogs often enjoy playing with the handles so much that they are inclined to grab the handle, whether there is a human hand attached there or not. A tug toy with a bungee type handle puts less stress on both the dog and the human.

2. The next step is to teach the dog to release the toy on cue. Different approaches work for different dogs. You should not shout or intimidate the dog in order to get him to release the toy. Say “Give” or “Drop” in a conversational voice. Avoid repeating the cue over and over; say it once and then take action to prompt the dog to release. Here are a few suggestions:

- a. Say “Give” and instantly stop tugging the toy (let your arm go limp), but keep hold of it with one hand. Say “Sit.” If the dog releases the toy and sits, immediately say “Yes, get it!” and
- entice the dog to play again. With sufficient repetitions, the dog should learn to let go of the toy and sit as soon as he hears you say “give.” Eventually, you vary how long the dog must sit before you invite him to play again.
- b. Say “Give” and instantly stop tugging the toy (let your arm go limp), but keep hold of it with one hand. With the other hand, reach over the dog’s head to cover his eyes. Some dogs will release the toy as soon as you do this. If the dog releases the toy, immediately say “Yes, get it!” and entice the dog to play again. With sufficient repetitions, the dog should learn to let go of the toy as soon as he hears you say “give,” so you don’t have to cover his eyes. Eventually, vary how long the dog must wait before you invite him to play again. Sometimes ask him to sit before inviting him to play.
- c. Say “Give” and instantly stop tugging the toy (let your arm go limp), but keep hold of it with one hand. With the other hand, reach and grasp the dog by his collar. Pull him forward toward you and hold him stationary. This has the effect of making any tugging the dog does ineffective. Wait. Most dogs will drop the toy after a few seconds. Immediately say “Yes!” release his collar, say “Get it,” and invite the dog to play again. With sufficient repetitions, the dog should learn to let go of the toy as soon as he hears you say “give,” so you don’t have to take hold of his collar. Eventually,

behavior modification protocols

One of a series of ASPCA® Behavior Modification Protocols developed by Emily Weiss, Ph.D., CAAB



working with fearful/timid dogs

Please note this protocol is not without risk. The dogs that benefit most from this protocol are those who cannot be taken out of the cage for SAFER™ assessments due to their present state. This protocol should only be used with dogs that are cowering in the back of the cage but are not showing signs of fear aggression. (Conflicted dogs showing signs of fear aggression could choose to bite the moment you turn your back to them.) It is vital that the handler conducting this protocol has a solid understanding of canine behavior.

program instructions:

- Sit in the doorway of the cage with door open and your back to the dog, with left arm behind the back with hand on the floor, palm up, loaded with a high-value treat.
- Sit still, talking to the dog without looking at him, waiting for him to eat the treat in hand.
- Once a treat is eaten, load up another one.
- Once the dog begins to "explore" handler – sniffing hair or ears, pawing at hand instead of running to the back of the cage – as the next treat is taken, touch the dog's chin or side of face with one finger.
- After a few repetitions, move to the sideways position, leaving treat hand at side.
- After a few repetitions in that position, bring the treat hand into your lap. Before you know it, the dog is sitting in your lap and ready to have a slip lead put on around the neck.
- Toss a treat away from you to get the dog off your lap and try to go for a walk.

With a dog too stressed to walk on a leash or for one that may have never been on a leash, it would be best for the dog to be on a buckle collar and leash rather than a slip lead that might tighten when he panics.

For dogs that freeze when they feel pressure from the lead we recommend that the leash be clipped to the dogs buckle collar while the dog is in his kennel. Disperse treats throughout his space so that he is likely to move about. Leave the leash on for a couple of hours so that he is likely to step on the leash and become used to pressure on and off around the collar. Be sure that he is monitored while wearing the leash in his run.

when the dog is adopted: Review the "Program for Fearful Behavior" instructions with the adopter which can be found in the Reproducible Forms and Templates section. Remember to follow-up with the adopter at three days, three weeks, and three months post-adoption.

program for fearful behavior



Congratulations!
You have adopted a new family member.

As your adoption counselor discussed with you, your dog displayed significant fearful behavior, especially around humans, while in the shelter. What does this mean? It means that your dog may be more likely to exhibit fearful behavior around new people, places, and things. While we conducted a successful behavior modification program with the dog while he was with us, we suggest that you continue this work with the dog when you take him home. Fearful behavior is both treatable and manageable. We suggest you follow the plan below, beginning the moment your dog comes into your home.



the plan:

- Be aware of your body language at all times with your dog. Keep a sideways stance to your dog and avoid eye contact as a frontal stance and eye contact can increase his fearful responses. Be sure new people coming to your home are aware of their own body posture. Remember that a forward posture can communicate aggression to your dog and increase his fear.
- Ignore all of your dog's fearful behavior. By trying to help him through his fear by petting and talking to him, you'd actually be rewarding the behavior and increasing the likelihood of him repeating the behavior again in the future.
- Keep tasty treats around your home, especially for the first few weeks living with your new friend. You will want to give him treats when he approaches you, other family members, or decides to explore different rooms or items in your home. It is important for him to learn that something good happens when he chooses to explore novel people or things.
- When strangers come to your home, give them tasty treats to give to the dog if he chooses to come over to sniff them. If the dog chooses to not approach new people, he should be ignored.
- If your dog is dog-friendly, arrange for him to go for walks with other dogs who will give him an added level of confidence on the street.

If you are unable to do the preceding exercises, we suggest you choose another dog to adopt. While we cannot 100 percent predict the future, research does show that dogs who display fearful behavior in the shelter are more likely to display the same behaviors in the home. We want you and your dog to create a strong bond early on post-adoption and for your dog to have the opportunity to be able to work through his issues. Please take the time to ask yourself if you are ready to take on a bit of a project.

behavior modification protocols

One of a series of ASPCA® Behavior Modification Protocols modified by Emily Weiss, Ph.D., CAAB (Original program developed by Dee Ganley, CPDT and Nancy Lyon at the Upper Valley Humane Society)



aggression behind the kennel door

The goal of this program is to decrease aggression behind the kennel door.

identifying dogs for the program:

- The dog was SAFER™ assessed and meets the adoption criteria at your facility.
- The dog aggresses at the kennel door towards people or dogs, but his eyes are soft, ears back, and lip is long. His body posture is likely backwards, facing away from kennel door.
- When the kennel door is open, the dog runs to the rear of the kennel and keeps a sideways stance to the kennel door and keeps soft body posture.

before you begin:

- Provide extra kennel enrichment for the dog.
- Identify what triggers the aggressive response at the kennel door (i.e. dogs, people, people wearing hats, etc.). Most commonly in the shelter environment dogs are reactive to people and dogs.
- Place a treat cup on the door and be sure that staff and volunteers have treat bags or treats in their pockets at all times.

program instructions:

1. Place a visual barrier, such as a blanket or nylon panel, over the kennel door of the reactive dog.
2. When the stimulus (most likely yourself or a person with a dog on leash) that causes reactivity in the kenneled dog passes by the kennel door, toss a high value treat under the door when there is a noted decrease in reactivity (i.e. the dog is quieter). You may have to stand in front of the kennel door and wait for a decrease in reactivity prior to tossing in a treat and walking away. Remember to keep a sideways stance in relation to the dog and kennel door. Repeat this each time the aversive stimulus passes by. Staff and volunteers should go about their daily routine, but be aware of the reactive dog and toss treats into kennel accordingly for decreased reactivity. (Note: If you choose to walk away from the kennel door while the dog is reactive, you're rewarding the reactive behavior and will have an increased difficulty in modifying the behavior).
3. When there is a marked decrease in reactivity and you notice the dog approaching the kennel door with a loose body posture as the aversive stimulus passes by the kennel door, slightly raise the visual barrier so that the dog can see a few inches under the barrier.
4. Toss treats under the kennel door for a noted decrease in reactivity each time the aversive stimulus passes by the kennel door. You may have to stand in front of the kennel door and wait for a decrease in reactivity prior to tossing in a treat and walking away.
5. Repeat the above procedure until the dog is standing at the kennel door relaxed with no visual barrier and the aversive stimulus passes by.
6. Before the dog can be placed on the adoption floor, be sure that he replicates relaxed behavior at the kennel door in at least 3 different kennels including his adoption floor kennel.
7. Place a treat cup on his kennel door so that adopters can toss treats in his kennel as they walk by.
8. Keep a daily behavior log.

behavior modification protocols

One of a series of ASPCA® Behavior Modification Protocols developed by Emily Weiss, Ph.D., CAAB



reactivity towards other dogs

The goal of this program is to manage the dog's reactive behavior by teaching him to look at the person holding the leash when in the presence of other dogs.

identifying dogs for the program:

- The dog is a SAFER™ “1” and “2” dog on all parts of the assessment other than the Dog-to-Dog Behavior item.
- He likely responds to seeing other dogs by attempting to rush in with tail high and ears forward, growling, alarm barking, and/or lunging on the end of the leash.

before you begin:

- Provide extra kennel enrichment for the dog in the program.
- Provide daily walks with skilled staff members and volunteers on a path less frequented by other dogs.

program instructions:

1. Teach the dog a “look” cue. The goal of using this cue is to have the dog turn and make eye contact with you when you say the verbal cue.
 - a. Charge (classically condition) a reward marker (click, “good,” etc.).
 - b. Hold a treat in your hand that is visible to the dog. Bring the treat up to the outer corner of your eye, then use your reward marker and deliver the treat when the dog follows the treat with his eyes and makes eye contact with you. Repeat until dog is reliably replicating this behavior.
 - c. Now say the verbal cue “look” and bring the treat up close to your eye. Reward the dog when he tracks the treat with his eyes and makes eye contact. Repeat until he is reliably replicating the behavior.
 - d. At this point, begin to keep the treat hidden until after you deliver the “look” verbal cue and the dog makes eye contact with you. Repeat until he is reliably replicating this behavior in other locations besides the room in which you did the initial training.

2. Teach the dog the “sit” cue.

- a. Get dog to stand toe-to-toe with you.
- b. Place bit of food between thumb and forefinger.
- c. Bring treat (lure) to dog's nose and get his attention with it. It is okay if he licks or nibbles at it, but do not give him the treat yet.
- d. Slowly raise the lure up and as the dog follows it with his nose, move it back over his head a few inches.
- e. As his head tilts back, he is likely to sit.
- f. As soon as the rear touches the floor, say “yes” and give the dog the treat.
- g. Practice 6-10 times in quick succession.
- h. After the dog is anticipating the next move and begins to sit before you move your hand up and back, he is ready to learn the verbal command. Take a piece of food, hold it in your hand at about waist level and when the dog looks like he's ready to offer the behavior, say “sit.” When he sits, say “yes” and give him the food.

- i. Dogs need the opportunity to generalize. In order for him to really know the command, you must practice it in many locations, under various weather conditions, around different levels of distraction, and on different flooring surfaces.

Note: The two verbal cues are going to stay separate and you will not be chaining the “look” and “sit” cue/behaviors together. Asking the dog to sit will make it more difficult to be reactive in the initial stages of the program. Once the dog is adopted into a new home, he will be able to be on a walk and be asked to “look” while continuing to walk.

3. Now that the dog knows how to both “look” and “sit,” another dog can be brought into the behavior modification.
4. Have the reactive dog on leash and identify a safe distance from another dog on leash to begin practicing the “look” and “sit” cues. When correctly identifying the proper distance to begin the program, the dog should show little to no reactivity.
5. Have the non-reactive dog out of view and have someone helping bring him into view of the reactive dog. The moment the reactive dog sees him say the “look” cue and reward him for the correct behavior. Then immediately ask the dog to “sit” and reward him for the correct behavior. Be sure you are rewarding each individual behavior in order to keep them separate. The non-reactive dog then leaves out of view. Repeat this until the reactive dog reliably looks and sits when you ask each time the non-reactive dog comes into view. If you cannot get his attention off the other dog, you likely have to begin from a further distance.
6. Once the dog is successful at a certain distance, decrease the distance between the two dogs and repeat the above procedure.
7. Continue to decrease the distance according to the dog’s success and repeat the above procedure.

8. Once the dog reliably look and sits on cue in the presence of many dogs in multiple locations, he is ready for adoption.
9. Keep a daily behavior log.

Note: This is not a behavior modification protocol, but a way to manage the behavior of the dog around other dogs. Be sure to teach the adopters how to use the “look” cue prior to them leaving the shelter with the dog.


When the dog is adopted: Review the “Program for Reactivity Towards Other Dogs” instructions with the adopter which can be found in the Reproducible Forms and Templates section. Remember to follow-up with the adopter at three days, three weeks, and three months post-adoption.

program for reactivity towards other dogs

ASPCA®

Congratulations!
You have adopted a new family member.

As your adoption counselor discussed with you, your dog displayed reactive behavior towards other dogs while in the shelter. **What does this mean?** It means that your dog may be more likely to rush towards other dogs with tail posture, growl, alarm bark, and/or lunge at other dogs while on leash. We began a successful management program for this behavior while the dog was at the shelter and we highly recommend that if you choose to adopt, you continue the program in your home. We suggest you follow the plan below, beginning the moment your dog comes into your home.



the plan:

- Continue to practice the “look” cue (using treats to reward the appropriate behavior) shown to you by your adoption counselor in the presence of other dogs and without other dogs around.
- Fit your dog with a Gentle Leader™, which can be found at your local pet supplies store. Follow the DVD instructions to help your dog smoothly accept the device.
- Give lots of treats to your dog when he acts in a relaxed, non-reactive manner around other dogs.
- Avoid introducing your dog to other dogs until you are able to recognize his reactive behavior and the cues leading up to that point and also have a few solid verbal cues including “look at me” and “come.”
- When introducing your dog to other dogs, be sure to have a loose leash. If you are unable to do the preceding exercises, we suggest you choose another dog to adopt. While we cannot 100 percent predict the future, research does show that dogs who display reactive behavior towards dogs in the shelter are more likely to display the same behaviors in the home. It is important to note that your dog’s reactivity towards other dogs has not been modified, but is simply being managed by this program. We cannot guarantee that your dog can be off-leash with other dogs without displaying aggressive behavior. If you choose to adopt, we highly recommend that you contact a local trainer or behaviorist who uses positive reinforcement techniques to modify your dog’s behavior. We want you and your dog to create a strong bond quickly post-adoption and for your dog to have the opportunity to be able to work through his issues. Please take the time to ask yourself if you are ready to take on a bit of a project.

behavior modification protocols

One of a series of ASPCA® Behavior Modification Protocols developed by Emily Weiss, Ph.D., CAAB



i hold the resources

The goal of this program is to manage a bossy or anxious dog using predictable, non-physical methods.

Any dog would benefit from this program; however, dogs that feel they need to control resources in the home and guard them from humans do quite well. Other behaviors such as body slamming, shoulder rubbing, and body blocking indicate a dog that would benefit from this program. The basis of the program is that the dog must do something, such as “sit,” before he receives anything of value to him.

identifying dogs for the program:

- The dog scores a “3,” “4,” or “5” on the Food Behavior item (only if he body blocks, places paws in bowl or bites the bowl) and the Toy Behavior item, and your behavior team chooses behavioral intervention for the dog.
- The dog exhibits body slamming, shoulder rubbing, and/or tall body posture throughout the assessment. (*Note: For safety reasons, the dog should have a loose body and soft eye while exhibiting these behaviors.*)

before you begin:

teach the dog the “sit” cue.

- Get dog to stand toe-to-toe with you.
- Place bit of tasty, stinky food (hot dogs or cheese) between thumb and forefinger.
- Bring treat (lure) to dog’s nose and get his attention with it. It is okay if he licks or nibbles at it, but do not give him the treat yet.
- Slowly raise the lure up and as the dog follows it with his nose, move it back over his head a few inches.
- As his head tilts back, he is likely to sit.
- As soon as the rear touches the floor, say “yes” and give the dog the treat.
- Practice 6-10 times in quick succession.
- After the dog is anticipating the next move and begins to sit before you move your hand up and back, he is ready to learn the verbal command. Take a piece of food, hold it in your hand at about waist level and when the dog looks like he’s ready to offer the behavior, say “sit.” When he sits, say “yes” and give him the food.
- Dogs need the opportunity to generalize. In order for him to really know the cue, you must practice it in many locations, under various weather conditions, around different levels of distraction, and on different flooring surfaces.

program instructions:

The program requires you to ask the dog to “sit” before he receives anything that is important to him. This can be used on a consistent basis for all of the dogs in your facility and should be used to manage dogs that are in a behavior modification program prior to adoption. The dog should “sit” for the following things to occur:

- Receive his meals
- Receive toys or treats
- Have a person enter his kennel
- Exit his kennel
- Go through a door
- Receive attention
- Have his leash put on
- Anything he really likes!



By keeping clear rules in your kennels, your dogs will understand that you control important resources. In addition, they’ll learn that if they don’t defer to you, they will not receive items that they perceive to be valuable. You will have better and clearer communication with the dogs using non-physical methods. Your adopters will see the dogs’ manners and will be more likely to take a dog home!

when the dog is adopted: Review the “I hold the resources!” instructions with the adopter which can be found in the Reproducible Forms and Templates section. Remember to follow-up with the adopter at three days, three weeks and three months post-adoption.

i hold the resources!

ASPCA®

Congratulations!

You have adopted a new family member.

As your adoption counselor discussed with you, your dog displayed some bossy behavior around important resources while in the shelter. **What does this mean?** It means that your dog may be more likely to control resources or attempt to control resources by guarding his food and toys and/or body slamming you and/or rubbing you with his shoulder and then ignoring you. While we conducted a management program with the dog while he was with us, we suggest that you continue this work with the dog when you take him home. The simple premise of the program is that you control the resources in the home using non-confrontation/non-physical methods. We suggest you follow the plan below, beginning the moment your dog comes into your home.

The program requires you to ask the dog to “sit” before he receives anything that is important to him. This can be used on a consistent basis throughout the life of your dog and should be used to manage a dog that needs behavioral intervention.



the plan:

1. Teach the dog the “sit” cue.

- Get dog to stand toe-to-toe with you.
- Place bit of food between thumb and forefinger.
- Bring treat (lure) to dog’s nose and get his attention with it. It is okay if he licks or nibbles at it, but do not give him the treat yet.
- Slowly raise the lure up and as the dog follows it with his nose, move it back over his head a few inches.
- As his head tilts back, he is likely to sit.
- As soon as the rear touches the floor, say “yes” and give the dog the treat.
- Practice 6-10 times in quick succession.
- After the dog is anticipating the next move and begins to sit before you move your hand up and back, he is ready to learn the verbal command. Take a piece of food, hold it in your hand at about waist level and when the

dog looks like he’s ready to offer the behavior, say “sit.” When he sits, say “yes” and give him the food.

• Dogs need the opportunity to generalize. In order for him to really know the command, you must practice it in many locations, under various weather conditions, around different levels of distraction, and on different flooring surfaces.

2. You ask your dog to “sit” for the following things to occur:

- Receive his meals
- Play with his favorite toys
- Engage in play with you
- Jump up to lay on the couch or bed
- Go through the door
- Cross the street
- Have his leash put on
- Exit the elevator
- ... Anything he really likes!

By keeping clear rules in your house, your dog will understand that you control important resources. In addition, he’ll learn that if he doesn’t defer to you, he will not receive items that are valuable to him. You will have better and clearer communication with your dog using non-physical methods, which is the best case scenario for both of you!

If you are unable to do the preceding exercises, we suggest you choose another dog to adopt. While we cannot 100 percent predict the future, research does show that dogs who display anxiety around resources in the shelter are more likely to display the same behaviors in the home. We want you and your dog to create a strong bond early-on post-adoption and for your dog to have the opportunity to be able to work through his issues. Please take the time to ask yourself if you are ready to take on a bit of a project.

behavior modification protocols

One of a series of ASPCA® Behavior Modification Protocols modified by Emily Weiss, Ph.D., CAAB (Original program developed by Dee Ganley, CPDT)



inappropriate play – body slamming, moderate mouthing, etc.

The goal of this program is for the dog to play in a less physical and more appropriate manner with humans.

identifying dogs for the program:

- The dog is SAFER™ “1” or “2” on all parts of the assessment other than the Tag item.
- During the Tag item, the dog remained loose with mouth open and soft eyes during the body slamming, mounting/masturbating, and/or moderate mouthing. (Note: This protocol is not appropriate for dogs who mount with a stiff body and hard eye.)

before you begin:

- Provide extra kennel enrichment for the dog in the program.
- Provide daily walks with staff members and volunteers who are skilled in ignoring inappropriate behavior and rewarding appropriate behavior.
- Choose a non-reward marker (NRM), such as “oops” or “too bad,” to use in a voice of dismay (do not yell or use an aggressive voice) when the dog chooses an incorrect behavior in regards to play. The NRM will immediately precede him being removed from play and returned to his crate or kennel.

program instructions:

1. Move an appropriately sized crate into a large outdoor or indoor space where the behavior modification will take place.
2. Engage the dog in a polite (not rough and tumble) game of tug or chase. The moment the dog engages in physical play with you by moderately mouthing, mounting/masturbating, or body slamming use your NRM in a tone of dismay and gently place the dog into his crate and ignore him.
3. After 1–2 minutes allow him to exit the kennel and re-engage in play with you.
4. Repeat the sequence for 10–20 minutes 2 times per day.
5. Once you see a significant and consistent reduction in inappropriate play, practice in another location with another person prior to placing in adoption.
6. Daily behavior logs must be kept for each b-mod dog in the program.

Note: The same protocol can be used for inappropriate play with other dogs. Instead of having a human engage in play with the dog, a social/polite dog can engage the dog in play after a smooth introduction. The dog is placed in the kennel proceeding the NRM when he uses inappropriate physical play.

when the dog is adopted: Review the “Inappropriate Play” instructions with the adopter, which can be found in the Reproducible Forms and Templates section. Remember to follow-up with the adopter at three days, three weeks and three months post-adoption.

program for inappropriate play ASPCA®

Congratulations!
You have adopted a new family member.

As your shelter volunteer discussed with you, your dog displayed some inappropriate/physical play behavior while in the shelter. What does this mean? It means that your dog may be more likely to mount, mouth, and body slam you and/or other dogs while playing. While we conducted a successful behavior modification program with the dog while he was with us, we suggest that you continue the work with the dog when you take him home. Inappropriate play is both treatable and manageable. We suggest you follow the plan below, beginning the moment your dog comes into your home.



the plan:

- **Avoid rough and tumble games with your dog.** Although you would both likely have a great time with the game, it encourages your dog to begin playing in inappropriate and physical ways.
- **Be sure to have an appropriately sized crate or a small room in your house that you can use to put your dog into during “time-out”** when he plays too physically.
- **When your dog mounts, mouths, or body slams you or another dog,** in a neutral voice say “oops” or “too bad,” and put him into the designated room or crate for a 1-2 minute “time-out.” After the time out, he can exit the kennel and re-engage in play as long as he is appropriate.

If you are unable to do the preceding exercises, we suggest you choose another dog to adopt. While we cannot 100 percent predict the future, research does show that dogs who display inappropriate play in the shelter are more likely to display the same behaviors in the home. We want you and your dog to create a strong bond early on post-adoption and for your dog to have the opportunity to be able to work through his issues. Please take the time to ask yourself if you are ready to take on a bit of a project.

top 10 ways to provide enrichment for the dogs in your care

Below are 10 ways to provide enrichment for the dogs in your care. It is important that enrichment is provided for the entire duration of a dog's stay at your facility. Remember that enrichment is only enriching when the dog engages with it, so it is important to have a variety of opportunities available at your disposal. It is not necessary to use all ten of these; they are suggestions. When constructing an enrichment plan for the dogs in your care, it is important to stimulate the dogs in different ways using all of their senses and to frequently change the type of enrichment to decrease boredom and increase novelty in the kennels.



1. Rotate toys two or three times per day, providing items of different textures, shapes and sizes.
2. Provide play dates with other social dogs in your facility.
3. Make mealtime more interesting by placing food in kibble-dispensing enrichment devices.
4. Provide two walks per day with your volunteers.
5. Have volunteers read to the dogs in the kennel.
6. Teach the dogs a few verbal cues, using positive reinforcement only, including "sit," "stay," "high five," etc.
7. Give the dogs paper products to shred, including newspaper, paper towel and toilet paper tubes, and paper from the recycling bin.
8. Freeze peanut butter, canned food, yogurt, cottage cheese, or applesauce in a Kong®.
9. Play soft, classical music during adoption hours.
10. Rub spices (peppermint, cinnamon or allspice) into toys or bedding or dilute extracts and spray them on the walls of the kennel.





glossary

glossary of terms

aggression

Aggression encompasses a range of behaviors that usually begins with warnings and can culminate in an attack.

arousal

A change in physiological state caused by excitement that can sometimes lead to aggression. During arousal, the dog's tail will be perpendicular to spine, ears will be forward, and dogs will sometimes body-slam and mouth with pressure. Hair is frequently raised (piloerect).

assessment

The action or an instance of assessing: appraisal, estimation, measurement, determination, and evaluation.

attempt, or try, to bite

The dog attempts to bite Assessor but is foiled due to proper handling.

body block

Dog moves around the food bowl, toy or rawhide and places his body directly in between the Assessor and the resource. Or dog stands over or lies on top of toys, rawhide or bowl. The behavior is replicated when you reposition your body with respect to the resource.

body slam

Dog firmly jumps with two or four feet on Assessor with a stiff/tense body and then turns away from Assessor.

body weight back

Dog's body is leaning away from Assessor, carrying the bulk of his weight over his back legs.

body weight forward

Dog's body is leaning toward Assessor, carrying the bulk of his weight over forelegs.

ear posture

ears back

Dog lays ears flat to the head and the tips of the ears are pointing to the rear of the dog. Slight variations will occur depending on breed of dog and shape of ears.

ears forward

The base of the ear is brought further towards the front of the head. Oftentimes, the dog's forehead will be furrowed when ears are forward.

eyes

hard eye

Dog's eye is large and the whites are likely observable. Dog is likely stiff or is freezing. Sometimes called whale eye.

soft eye (blinking)

Dog's eye is an almond shape. The whites of the eye can barely be seen and the dog is likely blinking.

squinty eye

Dog's eyes appear to be partially closed and relaxed. They are smaller than the almond shape.

fearful

A physiological state which can be observed as dilated pupils, ears back, tail tucked, body low to the ground. Dog may freeze or try to exit.

freeze

Dog temporarily ceases all movement, stops breathing and becomes stiff.

furrowed brow

There are wrinkles across the forehead of the brow.

greeting

Dog approaches Assessor, body soft and wiggly, shifting weight from foot to foot, wagging tail. Face oriented toward Assessor's face.

greeting jump

Dog softly jumps up on Assessor or onto Assessor's lap to get closer and submissively lick the Assessor's chin. Dog's ears are back, eyes are soft, tail at spine level or low, lip is long and body is relaxed.

head flip

Dog swiftly turns head towards Assessor's hand with closed mouth. This behavior can be paired with a muzzle punch.

huffing (laughing)

A short, repetitive pant that the dog exhibits during play.

inguinal exposure

The dog sits with his hip rocked to one side with an outstretched rear leg exposing his belly.

lip length**long lip**

Dog's lip is long and stretched towards the ear.

pursed lip

Dog's lip is tense and short.

lip lick

Dog licks his lips out of the context of food or eating, sometimes called a tongue flick.

look away

Dog clearly avoids eye contact with another human or dog by obviously turning his head sideways.

loose and wiggly

Dog's entire body is relaxed. His body, from neck to tip of tail, is wagging back and forth.

mouths

Dog places mouth on Assessor, another dog, or leash/other items and can use pressure on a scale ranging from no pressure up to extreme pressure leaving tooth impressions on skin. This behavior is seen in many different contexts, including play, expressing discomfort, frustration, and arousal.

mouth position**closed mouth**

Dog brings upper and lower jaw, lips and teeth together. He is unable to pant through his mouth.

open mouth

Dog's jaw is relaxed with the lower jaw separated from the upper jaw and lip.

muzzle punch

Dog firmly hits Assessor's body or hand with his muzzle – he likely has a closed mouth.

panting**relaxed panting**

Dog's overall body is relaxed and has a soft face, has his mouth open and is calmly breathing through his mouth at a fairly normal respiration rate.

stress panting

Dog's mouth is open and is breathing at a rapid rate. Oftentimes, there are significant tight facial wrinkles.

paw lift

Dog holds one of his front paws off the floor.

play bow

Dog lowers the front of his body to the floor with his legs outstretched in front of him with his rear elevated to initiate play.

popping body movements

Dog makes quick, dramatic, short movements with his body and stops or becomes still in-between each movement to initiate play.

predictive

Foretell on the basis of observation, experience, or scientific reason.

shoulder rub

Dog leans his body into Assessor and in a short but deliberate move, rubs with his shoulder then moves away and tends to other stimuli in the room. The dog may appear to be unconnected to the Assessor.

reliable

Giving the same result on successive trials. Reliability, within the context of SAFER research, refers to the degree to which the assessment is consistent and stable in its measurements when repeated by different people and in different facilities.

research design

The goal of performing research is to test a question and set up the design so the study is reliable and valid. Statistics can then be done to determine if one thing has a direct relationship to another. If that relationship (correlation) is found, you cannot change anything from the original design, or you have to re-test to know if you get the same results.

With regard to SAFER, the assessment was designed with specific order, handling and equipment. When the assessment is conducted the way it was designed there is a predictive relationship between the behavior during the assessment and the dog's future behavior. This assessment has been determined to be valid and reliable. This is why we do the assessment in the same way and in the same order each time. If SAFER is done differently, one cannot make any inferences about behavior or until that new design has been re-tested.

snaps

Dog quickly brings upper and lower jaw together, usually only front incisors are visible. Does not make contact. A snapping/clicking of the teeth is oftentimes audible.

squared

Dog's body is tense and tall. His body appears to make a square shape and he likely has ears forward and tail tall or perpendicular to spine. This position is most easily observed in front-weighted dogs. For dogs who are naturally square in body, look for taller head posture and stiffer body.

stiff

The muscles in the dog's body are taut.

stress yawn

The dog yawns out of the context of sleep or being tired.

submissive grin

Dog lifts his lips and exposes his teeth upon greeting. The rest of his body is likely loose and wiggly, his ears are back, his eyes are soft or squinty and his tail and body are low, sometimes called smile.

submissive rollover

Dog rolls onto back and exposes his belly. His ears are back, eyes are soft and tail low or tucked. He may urinate a bit.

sweating paws

A stress response that causes the pads of the dog's feet to sweat. Wet spots are left behind on the floor where the dog walks.

tail postures

down

Dog's tail runs parallel to his rear legs or points to the floor.

neutral

The dog's tail is at spine level or parallel to spine.

perpendicular to spine

Dog's tail is above spine level and makes a 90-degree angle where it attaches to the body.

stiff tail

Dog's tail is not moving or is flagging back and forth and is paired with a stiff body. Tail is likely tucked or perpendicular to spine.

tucked

Dog's tail is tucked under the dog's body and is covering his/her genitalia. Or the docked tail is pressed down, tight to the body.

tail wag

Tail wags should be put in context with above postures.

circle wag

Dog moves tail in slow circles.

flagging

Tail stiff and tall. Tip of tail moving in short rapid back-and-forth movements. Observed with tail high and tail at spine level. (Not to be confused with the female in heat who "flags" her tail to one side when touched on the rear.)

sweeping

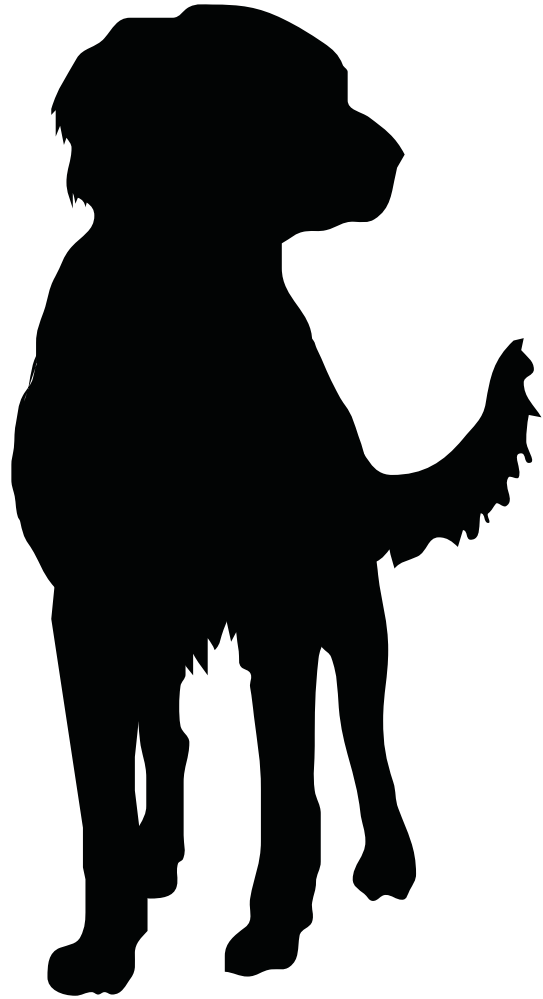
Tail moving back and forth in a sweeping motion.

urine marking

Dog lifts his leg or positions his body to urinate on an item, another dog or a person.

validity

Assessment validity refers to the degree to which the assessment actually measures what it claims to measure.



reproducible forms and templates

Agencies have permission to reprint the following program forms and templates. The templates provided need to be used without altering their content or appearance. Should you have any questions about formatting of these forms, please contact meetyourmatch@aspc.org.

reproducible forms and templates

The following documents and forms have been provided to you for reproduction. As SAFER™ is a copyrighted program, all templates must be used as presented. Should you have any questions about formatting of these forms, please contact meetyourmatch@aspc.org.

In the event your templates become lost, damaged or destroyed, you can contact the ASPCA® at meetyourmatch@aspc.org.

The image shows the 'SAFER™ worksheet' form. It includes the ASPCA logo and a header with the title 'SAFER™ worksheet'. Below the header is a form for entering the dog's name, breed, sex, and other details. The main body of the form contains a section titled 'Items to look:' followed by a list of 12 numbered items, each with a checkbox and a brief description of what to observe during the assessment. At the bottom, there are checkboxes for 'Behaviors observed before, during or after the test'.

SAFER™ worksheet

Use an assessment form for each dog and keep it with the dog's paperwork.

7 pages

The image shows the 'SAFER™ Certification Check List' form. It features the ASPCA logo and the title 'SAFER™ Certification Check List'. The form is divided into two main sections: 'preparing for your SAFER™ certification submission' and 'general checklist of requirements for SAFER™ certification submission'. Each section contains a list of items with checkboxes, providing a step-by-step guide for the applicant. The 'preparing' section includes items like 'Please verify you're the handler you're certifying for' and 'Create your group of dogs to be able to practice handling tasks'. The 'general checklist' section includes items like 'Use a quiet, quiet room for your assessments' and 'Have people together with handling technique and canine behavior use the newly issued SAFER™ manual'.

preparing for certification checklist

Use this checklist when preparing for SAFER™ certification.

3 pages

The image shows the 'SAFER™ submission' form. It features the ASPCA logo and the title 'SAFER™ submission for SAFER™ certification'. The form is designed for the applicant to provide contact information for their organization, including name, address, phone number, and email address. It also includes a section for 'if you attended a SAFER™ handler workshop' with checkboxes for 'yes' or 'no'. At the bottom, there is a section for 'check one' with checkboxes for 'initial certification', 'renew certification', '1st submission', '2nd submission', '3rd submission', and '4th submission'. The form concludes with a section for 'Submit the CVC, complete worksheets, fill completed a revision form, and a check for \$30 payable to the ASPCA' and contact information for the ASPCA.

SAFER™ submission form

Complete and enclose this form with each SAFER certification submission.

1 page

behavior log ASPCA

DATE: _____ NUMBER OF SESSIONS TO DATE: _____

YOUR NAME: _____

DOG'S NAME: _____

BEHAVIOR FOR MODIFICATION: _____

PRIMARY REINFORCER USED (FOOD, TOUCH, ETC.): _____

SECONDARY REINFORCER USED (GLOUSER, TREAT, ETC.): _____

THE DOG'S BEHAVIOR SINCE THE LAST TRAINING SESSIONS: _____

WHICH BEHAVIOR WAS REINFORCED AT BEGINNING OF SESSION? _____

WHICH BEHAVIOR WAS REINFORCED AT END OF SESSION? _____

BASED ON YOUR ANSWERS TO THE TWO QUESTIONS ABOVE, WHICH BEHAVIOR WAS THE NEXT SESSION BEHAVIOR? _____

DESCRIBE HOW MOTIVATED THE DOG WAS WHEN TRAINING TODAY: _____

USING A SCALE OF 1 TO 10 (1 BEING LEAST MOTIVATED, 10 BEING MOST MOTIVATED), RATE THE DOG'S MOTIVATION TO LEARN IN THIS SESSION TO THE LAST TIME YOU WORKED WITH HIM/HER IN YOUR PAST (DO NOT WRITE A NUMBER): _____

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 NA

COMMENTS: _____

behavior log

Use this form to keep track of each dog's progress when implementing behavior modification protocols.

1 page

food program ASPCA

Congratulations!
You have adopted a new family member.

the plan:

- **Feed time should never be made into an event.** Do not get the dog that is for dinner. Instead, walk out to the dog's food bowl, pick up the bowl, and hand the dog with the bowl. Feed the correct amount of food, but do so in total anonymity.
- **Feed one-half of the dog's food out of a food-dispensing toy such as the Buster Cube™.** This will not only keep your dog busy, but it will also keep your dog from eating too fast.
- **When your dog is interacting with the food-dispensing toy or eating from the bowl, you can break that when he leaves the bowl or toy for food at you. He will get something even better.** This is a very important and fun moment! Begin by giving the water in the bowl or food-dispensing toy to the dog for a moment. Then walk away with a long piece of cheese or your dog's favorite treat. This will give the dog a positive association with you.

If you are unable to do the preceding exercises, we suggest you choose another dog to adopt. While we cannot tell you when the future, research shows that dogs who display food issues in the shelter are more likely to display the same behaviors in the home. We want you and your dog to have the opportunity to be able to work through the issues. Please take the time to ask yourself if you are ready to make us a bit of a project.

food guarding handout

Review this handout with adopters who choose a dog who exhibited food guarding tendencies during the food behavior assessment item.

1 page

touch sensitivity ASPCA
guidelines to acclimate your new companion

Congratulations!
You have adopted a new family member.

the plan:

- **Feed time should never be made into an event.** Do not get the dog that is for dinner. Instead, walk out to the dog's food bowl, pick up the bowl, and hand the dog with the bowl. Feed the correct amount of food, but do so in total anonymity.
- **Feed one-half of the dog's food out of a food-dispensing toy such as the Buster Cube™.** This will not only keep your dog busy, but it will also keep your dog from eating too fast.
- **When your dog is interacting with the food-dispensing toy or eating from the bowl, you can break that when he leaves the bowl or toy for food at you. He will get something even better.** This is a very important and fun moment! Begin by giving the water in the bowl or food-dispensing toy to the dog for a moment. Then walk away with a long piece of cheese or your dog's favorite treat. This will give the dog a positive association with you.

If you are unable to do the preceding exercises, we suggest you choose another dog to adopt. While we cannot tell you when the future, research shows that dogs who display touch issues in the shelter are more likely to display the same behaviors in the home. We want you and your dog to have the opportunity to be able to work through the issues. Please take the time to ask yourself if you are ready to make us a bit of a project.

touch sensitivity handout

Review this handout with adopters who choose a dog who exhibited touch sensitivity tendencies during the assessment.

1 page

program for inappropriate play ASPCA

Congratulations!
You have adopted a new family member.

the plan:

- **Avoid rough and tumble games with your dog.** Although you would both have a great time with the game, it encourages your dog to begin playing in inappropriate and physical ways.
- **Be sure to have an appropriately sized crate or a small room in your house that you can use to put your dog during "time-outs" when he plays inappropriately.**
- **When your dog mounts, nuzzles, or body bumps you or another dog, in a neutral voice say "stop" or "back" and put him into the appropriate room or crate for a 10-minute "time-out."** After the time-out, he can sit and the trainer or manager to play as long as he is appropriate.

If you are unable to do the preceding exercises, we suggest you choose another dog to adopt. While we cannot tell you when the future, research shows that dogs who display inappropriate play in the shelter are more likely to display the same behaviors in the home. We want you and your dog to have the opportunity to be able to work through the issues. Please take the time to ask yourself if you are ready to make us a bit of a project.

inappropriate play handout

Review this handout with adopters who choose a dog who exhibited inappropriate play behavior during the assessment.

1 page

program for fearful behavior ASPCA

Congratulations!
You have adopted a new family member.

the plan:

- **Be aware of your body language at all times with your dog.** There is a subtle warning to your dog when you are not a neutral voice and you cannot see your own body posture. Do not show people coming to your dog or a pack of their own body posture. Remember that a neutral posture is not confrontational. It is not a sign of interest in the behavior again in the future.
- **Ignore all of your dog's fearful behavior.** By trying to help him through his fear by getting and talking to him, you are actually reinforcing the behavior and increasing the likelihood of him repeating the behavior again in the future.
- **Keep leads taut around your home, especially for the first few weeks living with your new dog.** This will not only help him feel secure, but it will also help you see his body posture. At anything that happens when he is in the house, you can see his posture. If he is in the house, you can see his posture. If he is in the house, you can see his posture. If he is in the house, you can see his posture.

If you are unable to do the preceding exercises, we suggest you choose another dog to adopt. While we cannot tell you when the future, research shows that dogs who display fearful behavior in the shelter are more likely to display the same behaviors in the home. We want you and your dog to have the opportunity to be able to work through the issues. Please take the time to ask yourself if you are ready to make us a bit of a project.

fearful behavior handout

Review this handout with adopters who choose a dog who exhibited fearful behavior during the assessment.

1 page

tug-and-drop training ASPCA

these are the three basic parameters for playing tug-and-drop:

program instructions:

1. The dog will be able to drop the toy when you say "drop" or "back" before you pick up the toy.
2. The dog will be able to drop the toy when you say "drop" or "back" before you pick up the toy.
3. The dog will be able to drop the toy when you say "drop" or "back" before you pick up the toy.

If you are unable to do the preceding exercises, we suggest you choose another dog to adopt. While we cannot tell you when the future, research shows that dogs who display tug-and-drop issues in the shelter are more likely to display the same behaviors in the home. We want you and your dog to have the opportunity to be able to work through the issues. Please take the time to ask yourself if you are ready to make us a bit of a project.


tug-and-drop handout

Review this handout with adopters who choose a dog who exhibited difficulty dis-arousing during the assessment.

2 pages

program for reactivity towards other dogs

ASPCA



Congratulations!
You have adopted a new family member.

the plan:

- Continue to practice the "look" cue using treats to reward the appropriate behavior, always to you. Do your attention exercises in the presence of other dogs and other dogs around.
- Fill your dog with a **Denlie Leader™**, which can be found at your local pet supplies store. Follow the **DO** directions to help your dog exercise around the device.
- Give lots of treats to your dog when he acts in a relaxed, non-reactive manner around other dogs.
- Avoid introducing your dog to other dogs until you are able to recognize his reactive behavior and the cues leading up to that point and also have a few solid recall cues including "sit" or "stay".
- When introducing your dog to other dogs, be sure to have a **look** lead.

If you are unable to do this practice exercise, we suggest you choose another dog to begin. While we cannot 100 percent predict the future, research does show that dogs who develop positive reactions to the handler are less likely to display the aggressive behavior in the future. It is important to make your dog's reactivity exercises fun for him. He should not be overly excited or stressed by the program. We cannot guarantee that your dog can be off-leash with other dogs without displaying aggressive behavior. If you choose to adopt, we highly recommend that you contact a new trainer or behaviorist who uses positive reinforcement techniques to modify your dog's behavior. We expect you and your dog to be happy and healthy together and for your dog to have the opportunity to be able to interact through his leash. Please take the time to see yourself if you are ready to be in a lot of fun!

reactivity to other dogs handout

Review this handout with adopters who choose a dog who exhibited reactivity toward other dogs during the dog-to-dog assessment item.

1 page

i hold the resources!

ASPCA

Congratulations!
You have adopted a new family member.

the plan:

1. Teach the dog the "sit" cue.
 - Dog must have a way to offer the resource. Dog will sit to ask the "sit" and give him the food.
 - Dog must be comfortable to generalize to other for him to make him the command. Use real practice in many locations, under various weather conditions, among different levels of distractions, and at different timing intervals.
2. You ask your dog to "sit" for the following things to occur:
 - Resource in hand.
 - Dog will sit to ask.
 - Engage in play with you.
 - Sit through the door.
 - Close the door.
 - Have the door put on.
 - Call to attention.
 - Anything to easily hear.

the plan:

- Teach the dog the "sit" cue.
- Dog must have a way to offer the resource. Dog will sit to ask the "sit" and give him the food.
- Dog must be comfortable to generalize to other for him to make him the command. Use real practice in many locations, under various weather conditions, among different levels of distractions, and at different timing intervals.
- You ask your dog to "sit" for the following things to occur:
 - Resource in hand.
 - Dog will sit to ask.
 - Engage in play with you.
 - Sit through the door.
 - Close the door.
 - Have the door put on.
 - Call to attention.
 - Anything to easily hear.

i hold the resources handout

Review this handout with adopters who choose a dog who exhibited "bossy" behavior during the assessment.

1 page

SAFER™ worksheet



<input type="text"/>		date	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
shelter name							
<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>					
assessor		observer					
<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>			
dog's name		age		coat color			
sex	<input type="checkbox"/> male	<input type="checkbox"/> neutered male	<input type="checkbox"/> female	<input type="checkbox"/> spayed female	<input type="text"/>		
					breed		
date entered shelter		<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
		<input type="text"/>					
		dog ID number					

item 1 – look:

	Dog leans forward or jumps up to lick the Assessor's face with tail wagging, ears back and eyes averted. [Enter "1"]
	Dog's eyes are averted, with tail wagging and ears back. He allows head to be held loosely in Assessor's cupped hands. [Enter "1"]
	Dog holds gaze with soft eyes, soft body. He allows head to be held loosely in Assessor's cupped hands. Dog holds gaze for three full seconds. [Enter "1"]
	Dog's eyes are averted. His ears are back, his tail is down, and he has a relaxed body posture. Dog allows head to be held loosely in Assessor's cupped hands. [Enter "1"]
	Dog's eyes are averted. His body posture is stiff and fearful, his tail is low and not moving. He allows head to be held loosely in Assessor's cupped hands. [Enter "2"]
	Dog pulls out of Assessor's hands each time without settling during three repetitions. [Enter "2"]
	Dog jumps on the Assessor, consistently rubs his shoulder on the Assessor, and will not allow Assessor to conduct the assessment. [Enter "3"]
	Dog holds eye contact while remaining motionless with ears forward. His body is stiff and becomes stiffer as assessment progresses. [Enter "4"]
	Dog freezes and/or growls or tries to bite. [Enter "5"]

If aggression is noted, use the checklist below to evaluate the dog's response. You can use this information to help best guide the behavior team regarding potential behavior modification and management (see guide for protocols).

- | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Body stiff | <input type="checkbox"/> Eyes hard | <input type="checkbox"/> Vocalizes | <input type="checkbox"/> Exposes teeth |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Freeze | <input type="checkbox"/> Ears back | <input type="checkbox"/> Dog growls | <input type="checkbox"/> Snaps no contact |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tail up | <input type="checkbox"/> Ears forward | | <input type="checkbox"/> Attempts to bite |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tail down | | | |

Behaviors observed before, during or after the item:

item 2 – sensitivity:

	Dog leans into the Assessor, eyes soft or squinty, soft and loose body, open mouth. [Enter “1”]
	Dog stands still and accepts the touch, his eyes are averted, and his tail is in neutral position with relaxed body posture. Dog’s mouth is likely closed for at least a portion of the assessment item. [Enter “1”]
	Dog displays high energy and movement, but it is directed toward getting closer to the Assessor. His body is soft, likely panting, may jump up between attempts to lick Assessor. [Enter “2”]
	Dog is active and focused on the Assessor and all other stimuli available. His body is soft, likely panting, likely to display high movement between attempts. [Enter “2”]
	Dog stands still and accepts the touch, his eyes are averted, his tail is between his legs, body stiff, mouth closed, lip long, ears likely back, may lip lick. [Enter “2”]
	Dog repeatedly turns toward the Assessor’s hand, with loose body and open mouth, mouths the hand, but does not apply pressure. Or, dog licks hands while lips are long. [Enter “2”]
	Dog is not fearful and is struggling to get away. The dog is not focused and is in constant movement, unconnected to the Assessor. [Enter “3”]
	Dog stands tall and square. His tail perpendicular to spine, mouth closed for the majority of assessment item. [Enter “3”]
	Dog repeatedly turns toward the Assessor’s hand with a very fast head movement. If able, he muzzle punches the hand. His body is stiff and he has a closed mouth with a short lip. [Enter “4”]
	Dog freezes, growls or tries to bite. [Enter “5”]
<p>If aggression is noted, use the checklist below to evaluate the dog’s response. You can use this information to help best guide the behavior team regarding potential behavior modification and management (see guide for protocols).</p>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Body stiff <input type="checkbox"/> Freeze <input type="checkbox"/> Tail up <input type="checkbox"/> Tail down	<input type="checkbox"/> Eyes hard <input type="checkbox"/> Ears back <input type="checkbox"/> Ears forward
<input type="checkbox"/> Vocalizes <input type="checkbox"/> Dog growls	<input type="checkbox"/> Exposes teeth <input type="checkbox"/> Snaps no contact <input type="checkbox"/> Attempts to bite

Behaviors observed before, during or after the item:

item 3 – tag:

	Dog assumes play position and joins the game. Or dog indicates play with huffing, soft ‘popping’ of the body, etc. Dog might jump on Assessor once play begins. [Enter “1”]		
	Dog stands with his tail low and wagging, and comes toward the Assessor in a friendly manner when the Assessor ceases moving. [Enter “1”]		
	Follows at end of leash, body soft, or low and a bit fearful. [Enter “1”]		
	Dog is fearful but unresponsive when touched. Approaches the Assessor when the game ends. Dog is likely crouching, may have long lip or lip lick. [Enter “2”]		
	Dog is not fearful but is unresponsive to the Assessor, and approaches the Assessor at the end of the game (may need coaxing to approach). He is focused on stimuli other than the Assessor. [Enter “2”]		
	Dog repeatedly turns quickly away when touched, or repeatedly spins toward the touch, and repeatedly tries to exit. Dog may be crouching, tail is tucked, mouth closed, body stiff. [Enter “3”]		
	Dog responds with his tail high, ears forward, mouth likely closed for at least half of the assessment item, body stiff and body checks the Assessor. Dog is often focused on other stimuli in the room. [Enter “3”]		
	Dog panics with vocalization combined with tail tuck, yelping and repeatedly trying to exit. (If dog settles after 1st or 2nd tag, choose 1st “3” scoring option). [Enter “4”]		
	Dog stands his ground while not cornered and barks at the Assessor with ears forward, body stiff, mouth closed and lips pursed when not barking. [Enter “4”]		
	Dog growls or tries to bite. [Enter “5”]		
<p>If aggression is noted, use the checklist below to evaluate the dog’s response. You can use this information to help best guide the behavior team regarding potential behavior modification and management (see guide for protocols).</p>			
<input type="checkbox"/> Body stiff <input type="checkbox"/> Freeze <input type="checkbox"/> Tail up <input type="checkbox"/> Tail down	<input type="checkbox"/> Eyes hard <input type="checkbox"/> Ears back <input type="checkbox"/> Ears forward	<input type="checkbox"/> Vocalizes <input type="checkbox"/> Dog growls	<input type="checkbox"/> Exposes teeth <input type="checkbox"/> Snaps no contact <input type="checkbox"/> Attempts to bite

Behaviors observed before, during or after the item:

Note: If the dog's behavior upon the first attempt matches any of the response choices higher than a "2", you should use the rear flank.

item 4 – squeeze:

if paw is used:

First Attempt	Second Attempt	
		Dog gently pulls back his paw. Dog may lick hand. [Enter "1"]
		Dog does not respond at all for three seconds. His eyes are averted and his ears are relaxed or back. [Enter "1"]
		Dog gently pulls back and whimpers. [Enter "2"]
		Dog gently places his open mouth over the Assessor's hand without applying pressure. [Enter "2"]
		Dog closes mouth, becomes stiff. [Enter "3"] Note: If this behavior occurs on the first attempt, use the flank instead.
		Dog is soft in body and eye, and moves his legs/body so that the Assessor is unable to hold the paw [Enter "3"] Note: If this behavior occurs on the first attempt, use the flank instead.
		Dog yelps repeatedly or screams. [Enter "3"] Note: If this behavior occurs on the first attempt, use the flank instead.
		Dog head flips while pulling back paw. [Enter "3"] Note: If this behavior occurs on the first attempt, use the flank instead.
		Dog reaches toward the Assessor's hand on the second attempt while moving his paw away when the Assessor attempts to lift it. The dog will not allow the Assessor to assess second time. [Enter "4"] Note: If this behavior occurs on first attempt, use the flank instead.
		Dog growls. [Enter "4"] Note: If this behavior occurs on the first attempt, use the flank instead.
		Dog freezes and/or tries to bite. [Enter "5"] Note: If this behavior occurs on the first attempt, use the flank instead.

if rear flank is used:

First Attempt	Second Attempt	
		Dog sits, mouth open or lip long. [Enter "1"]
		Dog does not respond at all. [Enter "1"]
		Dog gently places his open mouth over the Assessor's hand without applying pressure. [Enter "2"]
		Dog closes mouth, begins to purse lips and becomes stiff. [Enter "3"]
		Dog head flips while moving hip away. [Enter "3"]
		Dog growls. [Enter "4"] Note: If this behavior occurs on the first attempt stop the assessment. Proceed to the Food and Toy Behavior items if additional information is desired.
		Dog tries to bite. [Enter "5"] Note: If this behavior occurs on the first attempt stop the assessment. Proceed to the Food and Toy Behavior items if additional information is desired.

If aggression is noted, use the checklist below to evaluate the dog's response. You can use this information to help best guide the behavior team regarding potential behavior modification and management (see guide for protocols).

- | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Body stiff | <input type="checkbox"/> Tail down | <input type="checkbox"/> Ears forward | <input type="checkbox"/> Exposes teeth |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Freeze | <input type="checkbox"/> Eyes hard | <input type="checkbox"/> Vocalizes | <input type="checkbox"/> Snaps no contact |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tail up | <input type="checkbox"/> Ears back | <input type="checkbox"/> Dog growls | <input type="checkbox"/> Attempts to bite |

Behaviors observed before, during or after the item:

**note**

If the dog does not eat, try another type of food. If necessary, reassess at a later point.

item 5 – food behavior:

	Dog lifts head and ceases eating when you reach to pull the bowl away or push him out. [Enter “1”]
	Dog calmly allows the food to be moved, follows the dish, but does not interfere with the dish’s movement. Dog’s body is soft and loose, eyes soft, tail neutral. He lifts his head when hand is pushed against his cheek. [Enter “1”]
	Dog follows the dish with his tail down, body likely a bit stiff. Dog lifts head after a bit of pressure from hand to cheek. [Enter “2”]
	Dog follows the dish, his tail between his legs, ears are forward. His body is stiff. Dog does not lift his head from the bowl when hand is applied to his cheek. [Enter “3”]
	Dog gulps food, begins to eat faster and with bigger bites, body stiff. He does not lift head when hand is applied to cheek. [Enter “3”]
	Dog freezes and/or growls. [Enter “4”]
	Dog tries to bite. (Use chart on the worksheet to identify level of bite attempt/bite.) [Enter “5”]

If aggression is noted, use the checklist below to evaluate the dog’s response. You can use this information to help best guide the behavior team regarding potential behavior modification and management (see guide for protocols)

- | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Body block | <input type="checkbox"/> Ears back | <input type="checkbox"/> Paws in bowl | <input type="checkbox"/> Snaps at hand (no contact) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Body stiff | <input type="checkbox"/> Ears forward | <input type="checkbox"/> Urinates in bowl | <input type="checkbox"/> Repeated contact bite |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Freeze | <input type="checkbox"/> Eyes hard | <input type="checkbox"/> Bites bowl | <input type="checkbox"/> Leaves bowl to bite hand |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tail up | <input type="checkbox"/> Exposes teeth | | <input type="checkbox"/> Bites up Assess-a-Hand® |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tail down | <input type="checkbox"/> Vocalizes | | |

Behaviors observed before, during or after the item:

**note**

Recommend using 2 non-food toys (rope, squeaky, etc.) and then 1 unbasted rawhide item. Enter number for each item in that part of the column.

item 6 – toy behavior:																						
Toys only	Rawhide (if used)																					
		No interest. [Enter “1”]																				
		Dog settles down close to chew, will relinquish toy or rawhide to you. [Enter “1”]																				
		Dog settles close, keeps a firm grip and is loose and wiggly. He does not place his body between you and the toy/rawhide. [Enter “1”]																				
		Dog takes toy away, keeps a firm hold. His body is between you and the toy or rawhide, and he is loose and wiggly. No growling or stiffness. [Enter “2”]																				
		Dog takes toy/rawhide away, keeps a firm hold. His body is stiff. [Enter “3”]																				
		Dog freezes and/or growls. [Enter “4”]																				
		Dog attempts bite (use chart on worksheet) [Enter “5”]																				
<p>If aggression is noted, use the checklist below to evaluate the dog’s response. You can use this information to help best guide the behavior team regarding potential behavior modification and management (see guide for protocols)</p>																						
<table border="0"> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Body block</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Ears back</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Paws on toy</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Snaps at hand (no contact)</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Body stiff</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Ears forward</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Urinates on toy</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Repeated contact bite</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Freeze</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Eyes hard</td> <td></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Leaves toy to bite hand</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Tail up</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Exposes teeth</td> <td></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Bites up Assess-a-Hand</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Tail down</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Vocalizes</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table>			<input type="checkbox"/> Body block	<input type="checkbox"/> Ears back	<input type="checkbox"/> Paws on toy	<input type="checkbox"/> Snaps at hand (no contact)	<input type="checkbox"/> Body stiff	<input type="checkbox"/> Ears forward	<input type="checkbox"/> Urinates on toy	<input type="checkbox"/> Repeated contact bite	<input type="checkbox"/> Freeze	<input type="checkbox"/> Eyes hard		<input type="checkbox"/> Leaves toy to bite hand	<input type="checkbox"/> Tail up	<input type="checkbox"/> Exposes teeth		<input type="checkbox"/> Bites up Assess-a-Hand	<input type="checkbox"/> Tail down	<input type="checkbox"/> Vocalizes		
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<input type="checkbox"/> Tail up	<input type="checkbox"/> Exposes teeth		<input type="checkbox"/> Bites up Assess-a-Hand																			
<input type="checkbox"/> Tail down	<input type="checkbox"/> Vocalizes																					

Behaviors observed before, during or after the item:



Be sure to take your observational “snapshot” in the first few seconds of the approach. Dogs do not have to touch.

enter name and sex of dog-to-dog helper dog.

name _____ sex male female

item 7 – dog-to-dog behavior:

	Dog approaches the helper dog in play position. His mouth is open. [Enter “1”]
	Dog approaches the helper dog submissively (head low, tail low, ears back, lip long). [Enter “1”]
	Dog approaches helper dog with tail at spine level, body not stiff, ears relaxed, lip long or neutral. [Enter “2”]
	Dog does not approach the helper dog. Turns body to side in relation to other dog, or exits. [Enter “2”]
	Dog approaches the helper dog, body soft, tail well above spine level, ears forward. [Enter “2”]
	Dog approaches the helper dog by rushing in with his tail high, stiff body, head tall, and ears erect. [Enter “3”]
	Dog charges the helper dog while growling or attempting to bite. [Enter “4”]

If aggression is noted, use the checklist below to evaluate the dog’s response. You can use this information to help best guide the behavior team regarding potential behavior modification and management (see guide for protocols).

- | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Freeze | <input type="checkbox"/> Eyes soft | <input type="checkbox"/> Vocalizes | <input type="checkbox"/> Exposes teeth |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Body soft | <input type="checkbox"/> Eyes hard | <input type="checkbox"/> Dog growls | <input type="checkbox"/> Snaps no contact |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Body stiff | <input type="checkbox"/> Ears back | | <input type="checkbox"/> Attempts to bite |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tail up | <input type="checkbox"/> Ears forward | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tail down | | | |

Behaviors observed before, during or after the item:

	Look	Sensitivity	Tag	Squeeze 1	Squeeze 2	Food	Toy	Rawhide	Dog
1									
2									
3		P	P	P	P	P	P	P	
4	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	P
5	S	S	S	S	R	R	R	R	

For each item, mark an ‘x’ in the box that intersects with the score for that item.

(Ex.: If the Sensitivity item has a score of “2”, put an “x” in the box where row “2” and “Sensitivity” intersect.)

Legend:

P = Potential behavior modification and/or management

R = Behavior modification and/or management strongly recommended

S = STOP item for safety reasons. Behavior modification and/or management strongly recommended.
Move to food if SOP suggests

General observations and recommendations:



SAFER™

Certification Check List

preparing for your SAFER™ certification submission

- Frequently review the handling guide for proper technique.
- Observe play groups of dogs at the shelter to practice reading canine behavior: tail posture, ear posture, body posture, lip length, eye shape, etc.
- Practice assessment (especially assessment items you find to be challenging) on your own dogs or on a stuffed dog.
- Tape all of your practice assessments and review/critique your handling and behavior reading skills.
- Ask others from your agency who are also preparing for certification to review your practice assessments before taping for submission.

general checklist of requirements for SAFER™ certification submission

room set-up and video:

- Use a spacious, quiet room for your assessments.
- Rid your room of clutter.
- Have proper lighting so handling technique and canine behavior can be easily viewed by SAFER™ reviewer.
- If needed, use a white noise machine or static channel on a radio to drown out background noise.
- Remove all other animals from the room.
- Use an armless chair for the assessment.
- Place your camera in an area of the room so that the dog and the Assessor are in the frame at all times (Observer may need to operate camera during tag to capture movement back and forth).
- If a mistake occurs while taping for certification, do not submit that dog's tape. Items knowingly performed incorrectly are still incorrect even when you make note of it during the video or on the scoring sheet. We need to see you performing each item of the assessment correctly for certification.

be sure to do the following in each assessment item to ensure proper handling

look:

- The hand holding the leash is also lightly holding the collar with a couple of fingers. The other hand touches the dog with an open palm on the other side of the dog's face along the lower jaw line.
- Never hold the look for more than 3-5 seconds, and do not repeat unless the dog pulls out of your hands.
- If the dog pulls out of your hands, try a maximum of three tries to position them before proceeding.
- Avoid leaning forward into the face of the dog and keep your upper body straight.
- Allow choice and never force the dog to look at you.

sensitivity:

- Ensure the hand that is holding the dog's collar is locked onto your knee.
- Hold the dog's collar on the side of the neck rather than over the back of the neck.
- Sit upright and keep your face away from his body and your hand.
- Begin your touch at the collar; firmly knead the skin (as if you're kneading dough) down to just past the hip, and back up to the collar.
- Use consistent touch moving from the collar to the hip and back up two times.

tag:

- Move the chair out of the way before starting Tag.
- Engage the dog with your voice and start moving before you touch him.
- Keep your voice engaged and your body moving the whole time. Do not stop once you've invited the dog to play unless the dog exhibits aggressive behavior or you have completed all three tags.
- Avoid leaning over or reaching over the dog at all times.
- Face the direction you are about to run before popping the dog, so when he spins around you are not facing him frontally.
- Tag the dog as you're moving in the opposite direction.
- Give the dog a loose leash at all times and avoid dragging the dog along with you.
- Always tag the dog lightly with one finger on the thigh that is closest to you.

squeeze:

- Secure your holding hand on the dog's collar on the side of the neck rather than the back of the dog's neck.
- Rock the dog's head away from your body.
- Use your free hand to lift his leg saying "squeeze" prior to touching the leg.
- Lift the dog's leg away from his head/body, so there is a V-shape between his leg and body.
- Say "squeeze" only once each time you lift the leg.
- When squeezing between the pads of the foot, apply just enough pressure for the dog to respond.
- Allow the dog to pull back his paw if he chooses to do so.
- Squeeze two consecutive times on the same paw.

food:

- Allow the dog enough time to become invested in the food bowl if he chooses.
- Ensure you are directly opposite of the Observer who is holding the leash.
- Ensure the Observer is giving the dog some slack in the leash so there is no tension.
- Approach from the front of the food bowl and pull the bowl towards you saying "Give me that" one time. Back away. Advance again and reach back in and push the dog out of the bowl two times.
- In between each intervention, step back so the dog can again "own" the bowl.
- Keep the Assess-A-Hand® behind you when you retreat and while waiting.
- The Observer needs to keep two hands on the leash at all times when handling the dog.



how to become a SAFER™ certified assessor

To become certified, ideally you would attend a two-day SAFER™ workshop taught by ASPCA SAFER facilitators, or purchase and review the SAFER manual and training guide and SAFER instructional DVD. Once trained, record your assessment technique with three dogs in your specific assessment area, as described in the steps below.

1. Record three (3) full assessments per SAFER Assessor and submit to the ASPCA via DVD, electronic video clip, or You Tube

During the assessment:

- Be sure to conduct the Dog-to-Dog Behavior Item even if the agency you work for does not require the item. This **MUST** be included for certification.
 - Interact as you normally would with your Observer. An important part of the assessment is interaction and objective observation from both individuals. This includes audible conversation on video that results in the choice of a score for each assessment item.
 - We are certifying the Assessor, so the final decision regarding observation of behavior of each dog should be made by the Assessor.
2. Complete the SAFER worksheets for the three (3) dogs, and be sure to include the following information:
 - Name of the Assessor and the Observer, and the name of the facility
 - Physical description of each dog
 - Where on the DVD each dog is (for example, first dog on DVD, fifth dog on DVD) or clearly labeled video clips if submitted electronically
 - Any health information, adoption recommendations, or other information you feel would be helpful in evaluating the assessment being demonstrated
 3. Submit the video, completed worksheets and completed submission form, with a check (payable to the ASPCA) for \$30 (per submission for each person requesting certification) to:

Wanda Echevarria, Community Outreach Office Manager, ASPCA
424 East 92nd Street, New York, New York 10128

NOTE: Be sure to complete the Submission for Certification form and include it with your submission. If you choose to submit your video electronically, please send it to meetyourmatch@aspc.org and include in the email the Assessor's name, the agency name, and time-line for submitting paperwork and submission check to the ASPCA's New York offices. Your video will not be reviewed until all the proper paperwork and check has been processed.

Your submission will be evaluated by an ASPCA SAFER facilitator, and you will receive a written response to your submission within four weeks. If your technique and ability to assess behavior are appropriate and lead to valid and predictive assessments, you will become a certified SAFER Assessor.

If you need assistance with technique, you will receive a report identifying areas that need refinement. After you implement those changes in your technique, you can then submit a new video and set of worksheets for certification. A \$30 fee is required for each certification attempt.

Certification is good for one year. When your certification expires, you can submit a recent video of three assessments as described above to be recertified.

If you have questions about the SAFER certification process, please contact us at meetyourmatch@aspc.org. Thank you.



submission for SAFER™ certification

Please complete a separate form for each person requesting certification. Include this form with your video tape or DVD, SAFER assessment worksheets, and a check for the certification fee (\$30, payable to the ASPCA) when you send these materials to the ASPCA.

name _____

organization _____

address _____

phone number _____

email address _____

if you attended a SAFER two-day workshop: where (city and state) _____

when (month and year) _____

date of workshop _____

check one **initial certification** **renew certification**

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> first submission | <input type="checkbox"/> first submission |
| <input type="checkbox"/> second submission | <input type="checkbox"/> second submission |
| <input type="checkbox"/> third submission | <input type="checkbox"/> third submission |

Submit the DVD, completed worksheets, this completed submission form, and a check for \$30 payable to the ASPCA to:

Wanda Echevarria, Community Outreach Office Manager
ASCPA
424 East 92nd Street
New York, New York 10128

Email electronic video to meetyourmatch@aspc.org along with Assessor's name and agency.

behavior log



DATE

NUMBER OF SESSIONS TO DATE

YOUR NAME

DOG'S NAME

ANIMAL #

BEHAVIOR FOR MODIFICATION

PRIMARY REINFORCER USED (FOOD, TOUCH, ETC.)

SECONDARY REINFORCER USED (CLICKER, "YES," ETC.)

THE DOG'S BEHAVIOR SINCE THE LAST TRAINING SESSION HAS:

IMPROVED STAYED THE SAME DECLINED

LENGTH OF SESSION

WHICH BEHAVIOR WAS REINFORCED AT BEGINNING OF SESSION?

WHICH BEHAVIOR WAS REINFORCED AT END OF SESSION?

BASED ON YOUR ANSWERS TO THE TWO QUESTIONS ABOVE,
WHICH BEHAVIOR SHOULD THE NEXT SESSION BEGIN WITH?

DESCRIBE HOW MOTIVATED THE DOG WAS WHEN TRAINING TODAY

USING A SCALE OF 1 TO 10 (1 BEING LEAST MOTIVATED, 10 BEING MOST MOTIVATED), RATE THIS DOG'S RESPONSE TO TODAY'S TRAINING COMPARED TO THE LAST TIME YOU WORKED WITH HIM. IF TODAY IS YOUR FIRST DAY WITH HIM, MARK N/A.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 N/A

COMMENTS

Congratulations! You have adopted a new family member.

As your adoption counselor discussed with you, your dog displayed some food aggression issues while in the shelter. **What does this mean?** It means that your dog may be more likely to show aggression around his food than some other dogs. Food-aggressive dogs may bite when they perceive that someone is trying to take their food. While we conducted a successful behavior modification program with the dog during his time with us, we suggest that you continue this work with the dog when you take him home. Food aggression is both treatable and controllable. We suggest you follow the plan below, beginning the moment your dog comes into your home.



the plan:

- **Food time should never be made into an event.** Do not get the dog riled up for dinner.
- **Be sure your dog sits and waits for the food bowl.** For the first few days, you might want to keep the leash on the dog for this exercise. As the dog sits, you will bend toward the dog with the bowl. If the dog gets up, stand up and have the dog sit again.
- **Put small amounts of food in the bowl.** As the dog finishes the first bites, place more food in the bowl. Feed the normal amount of food, but do so in small amounts.
- **Feed one-half of the dog's food out of a food-dispensing toy such as the Buster Cube.™** This will not only help with food issues, but it will also help keep your dog busy in body and mind.
- **When your dog is interacting with the food-dispensing toy or eating food from the bowl, you can teach him that when he leaves the bowl or toy to look at you, he will get something even better.** This is a very important and fun exercise! Begin by placing dry kibble in the bowl or food-dispensing toy. Let the dog eat for a moment, then walk over with a tasty piece of cheese or other highly desirable food item. Say the dog's name. If he lifts his head, praise him and give him the food item.
- **Trade.** While this game is similar to what is written above, here you are not only asking the dog to lift his head, but to let you have one object for another more desirable one. Place a tasty treat that the dog loves in your pocket, and begin by giving the dog a boring toy — one that the dog finds only marginally interesting. (We want the dog to quickly understand the game as well as avoid any aggression, so we must begin by giving the dog something that is not highly desirable.) Once the dog has this item for a moment, take the tasty treat out of your pocket and calmly say "Trade." Draw the dog toward you with the treat, and let him nibble the treat while you pick up the boring toy. When he is done with the treat, have him sit and give back the toy. We want your dog to learn that you always have something better and that he can trust you.

If you are unable to do the preceding exercises, we suggest you choose another dog to adopt. While we cannot 100 percent predict the future, research does show that dogs who display food issues in the shelter are more likely to display the same behaviors in the home. We want you to be safe and for the dog to have the opportunity to be able to work through his issues. Please take the time to ask yourself if you are ready to take on a bit of a project.

touch sensitivity

guidelines to assimilate your
new companion

ASPCA®

Congratulations!

You have adopted a new family member.

As your adoption counselor discussed with you, your dog didn't always accept all kinds of touching. This dog indicated to us during his behavior assessment that he might act aggressively if he was pushed beyond his comfort level. Your dog has had some training here to help him be more comfortable with touch. Being comfortable with different types of touch is important and is a skill you can help him continue to learn at home.

What does this mean? Your dog is more likely to show anxiety or aggression when being touched on certain body parts, with a certain pressure or strength, or when being touched at the same time that you are holding his collar. Any dog may bite when they are uncomfortable with a touch, so it will be important to continue the training in your home. We strongly suggest you follow the guidelines below starting with the first day you bring him home. It is possible to move your dog past this behavior issue with time, patience and practice.



guidelines:

- **Be aware of the touches your dog enjoys and doesn't enjoy.** Your dog has shown sensitivity to _____. Since you know where your new dog is uncomfortable being touched, instruct family members and visitors to touch the dog where he likes to be touched instead. For instance, "This is my new dog, Tickles. He would love it if you would squat down and pet his chest. That's his favorite place to be petted." If every new person he meets pets him appropriately, it will help him relax when being touched.
- **Reward your dog for accepting touch.** This will convince your dog that tolerating touch pays off and the behavior is worth repeating. Have a baggy of tiny, soft, high-value treats like hot dog, semi-moist liver treats, cheese or dried liver cut into pieces the size of a pea. Put your hand on your dog and while touching him, feed him a treat. You are teaching your dog that accepting touch and remaining relaxed pays off!
- **Refrain from engaging in wrestling or physical rough-housing with your dog.** While some dogs may enjoy this as much as many humans do, a touch-sensitive dog will almost certainly find this unpleasant. Don't undo all your hard work! Play cooperative games instead, like fetch, find-it games (like hide and seek), living room agility, or teach him some tricks.

If you are unable to do these at-home exercises, we suggest you choose another dog to adopt. We want you to be safe, and the dog to be able to work through his issues. Please think this through and ask yourself if you have the time and motivation to help this dog learn to enjoy touch.

program for inappropriate play

ASPCA®

Congratulations!

You have adopted a new family member.

As your adoption counselor discussed with you, your dog displayed some inappropriate/physical play behavior while in the shelter. **What does this mean?** It means that your dog may be more likely to mount, mouth, and body slam you and/or other dogs while playing. While we conducted a successful behavior modification program with the dog while he was with us, we suggest that you continue this work with the dog when you take him home. Inappropriate play is both treatable and manageable. We suggest you follow the plan below, beginning the moment your dog comes into your home.



the plan:

- **Avoid rough and tumble games with your dog.** Although you would both likely have a great time with the game, it encourages your dog to begin playing in inappropriate and physical ways.
- **Be sure to have an appropriately sized crate** or a small room in your house that you can use to put your dog into during “time-outs” when he plays too physically.
- **When your dog mounts, mouths, or body slams** you or another dog, in a neutral voice say “oops” or “too bad” and put him into the designated room or crate for a 1-2 minute “time-out.” After the time out, he can exit the kennel and re-engage in play as long as he is appropriate.

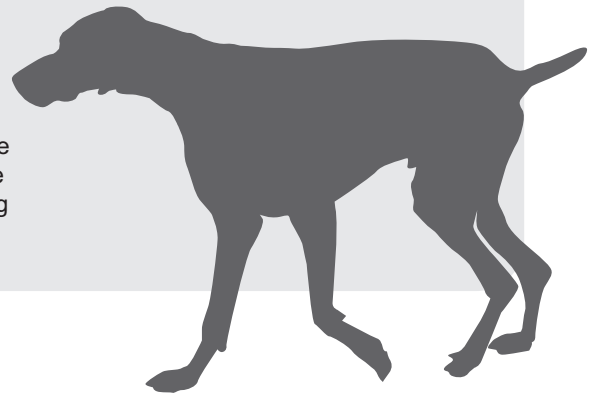
If you are unable to do the preceding exercises, we suggest you choose another dog to adopt. While we cannot 100 percent predict the future, research does show that dogs who display inappropriate play in the shelter are more likely to display the same behaviors in the home. We want you and your dog to create a strong bond early-on post-adoption and for your dog to have the opportunity to be able to work through his issues. Please take the time to ask yourself if you are ready to take on a bit of a project.

program for fearful behavior



Congratulations! **You have adopted a new family member.**

As your adoption counselor discussed with you, your dog displayed significant fearful behavior, especially around humans, while in the shelter. **What does this mean?** It means that your dog may be more likely to exhibit fearful behavior around new people, places, and things. While we conducted a successful behavior modification program with the dog while he was with us, we suggest that you continue this work with the dog when you take him home. Fearful behavior is both treatable and manageable. We suggest you follow the plan below, beginning the moment your dog comes into your home.



the plan:

- **Be aware of your body language at all times with your dog.** Keep a sideways stance to your dog and avoid eye contact as a frontal stance and eye contact can increase his fearful responses. Be sure new people coming to your home are aware of their own body posture. Remember that a forward posture can communicate aggression to your dog and increase his fear.
- **Ignore all of your dog's fearful behavior.** By trying to help him through his fear by petting and talking to him, you'd actually be rewarding the behavior and increasing the likelihood of him repeating the behavior again in the future.
- **Keep tasty treats around your home, especially for the first few weeks living with your new friend.** You will want to give him treats when he approaches you, other family members, or decides to explore different rooms or items in your home. It is important for him to learn that something good happens when he chooses to explore novel people or things.
- **When strangers come to your home, give them tasty treats to give to the dog if he chooses to come over to sniff them.** If the dog chooses to not approach new people, he should be ignored.
- **If your dog is dog-friendly, arrange for him to go for walks with other dogs who will give him an added level of confidence on the street.**

If you are unable to do the preceding exercises, we suggest you choose another dog to adopt. While we cannot 100 percent predict the future, research does show that dogs who display fearful behavior in the shelter are more likely to display the same behaviors in the home. We want you and your dog to create a strong bond early-on post-adoption and for your dog to have the opportunity to be able to work through his issues. Please take the time to ask yourself if you are ready to take on a bit of a project.

tug-and-drop training



these are the three basic parameters for playing tug-and-drop:

program instructions:

- 1. The dog sits (or lies down) and waits for you to invite him to play ("Take it" or "Get it") before ever putting his mouth on the toy;**
- 2. The dog releases the toy to you whenever you request ("Drop" or "Give");**
- 3. The dog takes care not to put his mouth on human skin while playing tug.**



Most dogs will play tug with any type of toy, but tug is most pleasurable for the human when they are comfortable with the toy. Obtain a fleece or soft rope toy 1-2 feet long. Handles are useful although dogs often enjoy playing with the handles so much that they are inclined to grab the handle, whether there is a human hand attached there or not. A tug toy with a bungee type handle puts less stress on both the dog and the human.

- 1.** Grasp the toy with one hand at each end. Ask the dog to sit. When he does, say "Yes, get it!" and wave the toy in front of the dog's face or drag it along the ground in front of him, so that he is likely to grab the toy in the middle, thereby avoiding your hands. When he grasps it, verbally encourage him to play while you move the toy back and forth, up and down, to stimulate him to tug. Do this for 10-20 seconds.
- 2.** The next step is to teach the dog to release the toy on cue. Different approaches work for different dogs. You should not shout or intimidate the dog in order to get him to release the toy. Say "Give" or "Drop" in a conversational voice. Avoid repeating the cue over and over; say it once and then take action to prompt the dog to release. Here are a few suggestions:
 - a.** Say "Give" and instantly stop tugging the toy (let your arm go limp), but keep hold of it with one hand. Say "Sit." If the dog releases the toy and sits, immediately say "Yes, get it!" and

entice the dog to play again. With sufficient repetitions, the dog should learn to let go of the toy and sit as soon as he hears you say "give." Eventually, you vary how long the dog must sit before you invite him to play again.

- b.** Say "Give" and instantly stop tugging the toy (let your arm go limp), but keep hold of it with one hand. With the other hand, reach over the dog's head to cover his eyes. Some dogs will release the toy as soon as you do this. If the dog releases the toy, immediately say "Yes, get it!" and entice the dog to play again. With sufficient repetitions, the dog should learn to let go of the toy as soon as he hears you say "give," so you don't have to cover his eyes. Eventually, vary how long the dog must wait before you invite him to play again. Sometimes ask him to sit before inviting him to play.
- c.** Say "Give" and instantly stop tugging the toy (let your arm go limp), but keep hold of it with one hand. With the other hand, reach and grasp the dog by his collar. Pull him forward toward you and hold him stationary. This has the effect of making any tugging he does ineffective. Wait. Most dogs will drop the toy after a few seconds. Immediately say "Yes!" release his collar, say "Get it," and invite the dog to play again. With sufficient repetitions, the dog should learn to let go of the toy as soon as he hears you say "give," so you don't have to take hold of his collar. Eventually,

sometimes ask the dog to sit, after the dog releases the toy, before inviting him to play again.

- d.** Say "Give" and instantly stop tugging the toy (let your arm go limp), but keep hold of it with one hand. With the other hand, place a treat right in front of the dog's nose so that he can't help but smell it. Most dogs will instantly release the toy to grab the treat. Say "Yes," give him the treat, and ask him to sit. When he does, say, "Get it," and invite the dog to play again. With sufficient repetitions, the dog should learn to let go of the toy as soon as he hears you say "give," so you don't have to use the treat. You will still want to reward him with a treat when he releases the toy until the release behavior is fully learned. Sometimes ask the dog to sit after the dog releases the toy, before inviting him to play again. This method is undesirable if the dog is reluctant to play again after receiving the treat. Some dogs are so motivated by food that they are uninterested in play after eating a treat and so it is hard to accomplish the tug training.
- 3.** Repeat the sequence of tugging for 10-20 seconds, then asking for a release, at least 10 times in succession. Realize that for procedures "a-c," the reward for the dog releasing the toy is to get you to play again. This means that, while the dog is learning to play tug, you should instantly say "yes!" when he releases and invite play again. Don't waste time praising or patting him. When a dog is into playing tug, they usually don't care about praise or patting — they want to play more! For procedure "d," the dog has two incentives for releasing the toy: to get the food reward and to get you to play again. So it's still important to get the game going again quickly. Only when the dog promptly and willingly drops the toy as soon as you ask, should you ask him to sit and wait for any amount of time between bouts of tugging.
- 4.** If, at any time, the dog jumps forward to grab at the toy when you have not invited him, say "Uh-uh!" and instantly pull the toy behind your back or over your shoulder where it is inaccessible. If the dog already has the toy in his mouth, do what works (from above options) to get him to release it again but don't reward him when he lets go. Next time, be ready so that when he jumps forward to grab it, you can snatch it away. Ask him to sit and wait before presenting the toy and inviting him to "get it." You must teach him that he never gets the toy when he jumps for it before you ask. If you are consistent with this, he will learn that the best way to get you to play tug is to sit and wait patiently until you start the game.
- 5.** If, at any time, the dog misses the toy and puts his mouth on your hand, instantly shriek loudly, drop the toy, and march out of the room (time out). If there is a door, slam it in the dog's face. Wait a few seconds (no more than 20-30 seconds), then return and act like nothing happened. Invite him to play again, but use a warning voice to remind him to be careful. If the dog bites your hand more than a few times (3-4) in one play session, despite implementing time-outs, your dog may not be able to learn to play tug appropriately. Certainly if he keeps doing this, despite continued corrections, it's not safe to play tug with him. If you're really committed to teaching this game, use l-o-o-n-g tug toys so there's plenty of room for his mouth and your hands.
- 6.** When you're ready to end the game, follow the same steps to get the dog to release the toy on request, but this time, ask him to sit and offer him a treat. While he's eating the treat, put the tug toy away. He should not have access to the tug toy except when you are playing with him.
- 7.** If the dog starts playing but then escalates to the point where he's no longer playing but instead is aggressively guarding the toy, immediately cease playing tug with him. The way to determine if your dog has switched from play to aggression is to watch for signs such as a stiff body, stiff tail, "hard" eye contact and snarling (lifting/wrinkling lips while growling). If the dog is becoming aggressive, simply drop the toy and walk away.

program for reactivity towards other dogs

ASPCA®

Congratulations! You have adopted a new family member.

As your adoption counselor discussed with you, your dog displayed reactive behavior towards other dogs while in the shelter. **What does this mean?** It means that your dog may be more likely to rush towards other dogs with tall posture, growl, alarm bark, and/or lunge at other dogs while on leash. We began a successful management program for this behavior while the dog was at the shelter and we highly recommend that if you choose to adopt, you continue the program in your home. We suggest you follow the plan below, beginning the moment your dog comes into your home.



the plan:

- **Continue to practice the “look” cue (using treats to reward the appropriate behavior)** shown to you by your adoption counselor in the presence of other dogs and without other dogs around.
- **Fit your dog with a Gentle Leader™**, which can be found at your local pet supplies store. Follow the DVD instructions to help your dog smoothly accept the device.
- **Give lots of treats to your dog when he acts in a relaxed, non-reactive manner around other dogs.**
- **Avoid introducing your dog to other dogs until you are able to recognize his reactive behavior and the cues leading up to that point** and also have a few solid verbal cues including “look at me” and “come.”
- **When introducing your dog to other dogs, be sure to have a loose leash.**
If you are unable to do the preceding exercises, we suggest you choose another dog to adopt. While we cannot 100 percent predict the future, research does show that dogs who display reactive behavior towards dogs in the shelter are more likely to display the same behaviors in the home. It is important to note that your dog’s reactivity towards other dogs has not been modified, but is simply being managed by this program. We cannot guarantee that your dog can be off-leash with other dogs without displaying aggressive behavior. If you choose to adopt, we highly recommend that you contact a local trainer or behaviorist who uses positive reinforcement techniques to modify your dog’s behavior. We want you and your dog to create a strong bond quickly post-adoption and for your dog to have the opportunity to be able to work through his issues. Please take the time to ask yourself if you are ready to take on a bit of a project.

i hold the resources!

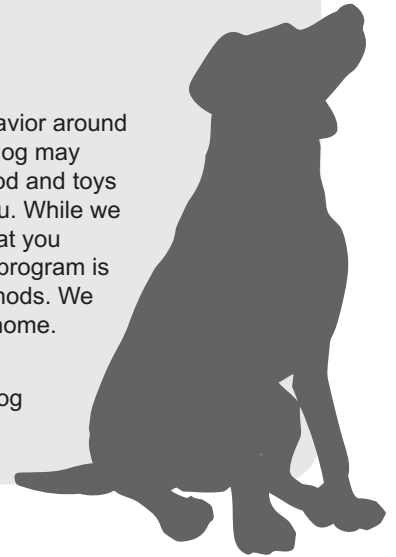


Congratulations!

You have adopted a new family member.

As your adoption counselor discussed with you, your dog displayed some bossy behavior around important resources while in the shelter. **What does this mean?** It means that your dog may be more likely to control resources or attempt to control resources by guarding his food and toys and/or body slamming you and/or rubbing you with his shoulder and then ignoring you. While we conducted a management program with the dog while he was with us, we suggest that you continue this work with the dog when you take him home. The simple premise of the program is that you control the resources in the home using non-confrontation/non-physical methods. We suggest you follow the plan below, beginning the moment your dog comes into your home.

The program requires you to ask the dog to “sit” before he receives anything that is important to him. This can be used on a consistent basis throughout the life of your dog and should be used to manage a dog that needs behavioral intervention.



the plan:

1. Teach the dog the “sit” cue.

- Get dog to stand toe-to-toe with you.
- Place bit of food between thumb and forefinger.
- Bring treat (lure) to dog’s nose and get his attention with it. It is okay if he licks or nibbles at it, but do not give him the treat yet.
- Slowly raise the lure up and as the dog follows it with his nose, move it back over his head a few inches.
- As his head tilts back, he is likely to sit.
- As soon as the rear touches the floor, say “yes” and give the dog the treat.
- Practice 6-10 times in quick succession.
- After the dog is anticipating the next move and begins to sit before you move your hand up and back, he is ready to learn the verbal command. Take a piece of food, hold it in your hand at about waist level and when the

dog looks like he’s ready to offer the behavior, say “sit.” When he sits, say “yes” and give him the food.

- Dogs need the opportunity to generalize. In order for him to really know the command, you must practice it in many locations, under various weather conditions, around different levels of distraction, and on different flooring surfaces.

2. You ask your dog to “sit” for the following things to occur:

- Receive his meals
- Play with his favorite toys
- Engage in play with you
- Jump up to lay on the couch or bed
- Go through the door
- Cross the street
- Have his leash put on
- Exit the elevator
- ... Anything he really likes!

By keeping clear rules in your house, your dog will understand that you control important resources. In addition, he’ll learn that if he doesn’t defer to you, he will not receive items that are valuable to him. You will have better and clearer communication with your dog using non-physical methods, which is the best case scenario for both of you!

If you are unable to do the preceding exercises, we suggest you choose another dog to adopt. While we cannot 100 percent predict the future, research does show that dogs who display anxiety around resources in the shelter are more likely to display the same behaviors in the home. We want you and your dog to create a strong bond early-on post-adoption and for your dog to have the opportunity to be able to work through his issues. Please take the time to ask yourself if you are ready to take on a bit of a project.