

Supporting a rescue dog – from handover to home.

By Ali Stickler



Even, male pointer has been waiting 8.5 years for his forever home

You have just done an amazing thing, something you should be very proud of. You have adopted a dog; taking them out of a refuge and giving them a home will not only change their life but also yours as you begin to build a bonding relationship based on trust.

This guide has been written to help you make the transition from refuge to home as smooth as possible, however should you have any queries or problems please do contact us; if we cannot help we will find someone who can. There are links to websites/ Facebook pages included and a book list at the end you may find useful.

"When the Man waked up he said, 'What is Wild Dog doing here?' And the Woman said, 'His name is not Wild Dog any more, but the First Friend, because he will be our friend for always and always and always.'"

~ Rudyard Kipling

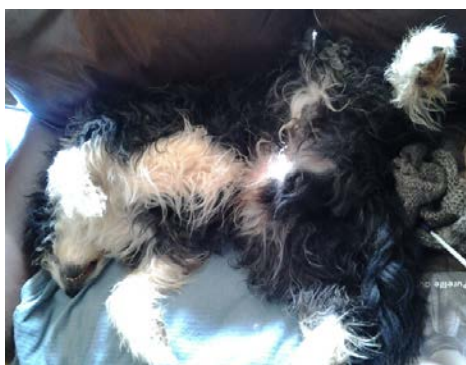
All rescue dogs have a past, however from their day of adoption it's time for them to move forward and enjoy a new life with you. As their guardian it is up to you to be a benevolent leader, caring for their whole well being and helping them live as happy, confident canines. The best thing you can give them initially is time; time to settle into their new surroundings, time to feel safe, time for them to feel comfortable and to be confident with you, to know their needs are going to be met.

When adopting a rescue dog it can be as if completing a second hand jigsaw puzzle. On the outside we can see the picture, we take it home, sit at the table and start to join the pieces together, we have no problems finding the corners and outside edge; and yet as we piece our puzzle together, nearing completion we find there are a few pieces missing. This may be seen in a rescue dog, on the outside we know their size, colour, if they have four legs and maybe even what breed or cross breed they may be. However, on the inside there may be a few of those puzzle pieces missing, for some their past may be known but for others their previous history or why they behave as they do may never be understood.

Some may find it easier to settle into their new home than others. Some may have never been in a house before so it may be alien to them, some may be fearful through their body language and communication telling you they need extra time and patience. Many will fit in with no problems, as if they have always been around, they get on with everyone and see each day as an adventure enjoying whatever it brings.

For some it can be a stressful time going into a new home: meeting new people, dogs or other animals, new smells, routines and having to negotiate new house rules. These are the dogs that may need time to feel safe, help to enjoy their new life and you at their side to support them in facing new experiences. Some days may be like a roller coaster of emotions, the 'what have we done', sadness of what their past was and joy at seeing them for the first time take the 'roach'* position.

* this is where we see our dog stretch out on his back with legs in the air as he sleeps with a feeling of being safe and secure.



So you have a furry friend at the end of the lead you are holding, what do you do next? Your car journey home may not have gone to plan, some dogs, especially if they have not been used to car travel may show signs of travel sickness. If this is the case with your new friend it's not the end of the world, you may just need to find solutions to overcome this problem.

Your dog will have had a veterinarian health check before being released to you. The refuge will give you your dog's health book, which will have details of vaccinations, worming and any medical intervention / medications given along with his chip identification number and details. By logging onto the I-CAD website you will be able to change these details to your name and address. This is important to update should they get lost and found. Details will be given if they have any special requirements; food, medication or behavioural advice.

Staff will be able to tell you how your dog behaved in the refuge however they may not know how they will be in a house, for example, if he is toilet trained.

Settling in

If you pick up your canine companion as early as you can in the day you give them time to find their bearings, before being bedded down for the night. Take them on a lead around the garden for a sniff and to relieve themselves (don't forget to praise for this) and then they can have a sniff inside. Initially you may wish to give access to one room, once settled and can be trusted they can explore more. Lead them to the water bowl and let them find their bed or where they wish to lay then do nothing, giving a few days of quiet to 'decompress' from life in the refuge with no pressures or demands. Praise and encourage them should they need it. Keep the household calm and stress free, don't rush stroking them and let them initiate coming to you and meeting any family members. Some dogs will want attention straight away and some may be overwhelmed, if the latter is the case, keep visitors at bay until they are settled.

As long as they are in a safe environment you can let your new companion sleep where they choose to feel safe. In time they will find that comfortable bed you have provided. You can make a crate into a den by covering it with a blanket and leaving the door open for them to enter and leave. However, if you wish to contain your dog in a crate you will need to get them used to it first, meaning small steps of positive reinforcement making it a happy good place to be before you shut the door. Please read this if you are thinking about using a crate <https://devotedtodog.com/crate-training-a-rescue-dog/>

According to Patricia B McConnell PhD and Karen B London PhD a rescue dog's settling in period can be seen in 3s; three days (minimum) for the dog to transition from refuge to home, three weeks where they will get used to routines, the comings and goings of the household and three months until they understand they are home and staying.

From the onset it is kind to your dog in the long run to provide clear boundaries which all the family adhere to. By being lenient and feeling sorry for them in the beginning, letting them get away with behaviour that you know will not be encouraged once they are settled will only confuse them later on. If you don't want them on the furniture discourage this from the beginning, you can't expect them to understand that they can sit with you to watch TV but not when you have visitors.

The behaviour shown by the dogs at the refuge does not truly reflect how they may normally behave. The refuge for many dogs will have been stressful, where they may have been fearful, anxious or highly aroused. This can be seen by some hiding and shying away from humans or by the barking, jumping, lunging and pulling on leads that others exhibit.

Once in their own home their true personality and character will emerge. Some may need time to settle in with comforting strokes and words to make them feel safe. Some will need a consistent reminder to follow the rules and boundaries you may have. Others will require patience and understanding of their behaviour. What they all have in common is that this behavior is due to what has (or hasn't) happened in their past. You have adopted them to help them overcome this and enjoy the life they deserve, for which they will give you their love and undivided attention in return.

To encourage wanted behavior, build a relationship and gain their trust use positive reinforcement: reward through food, play, words or strokes (you will get to know what your dog prefers as some are not food orientated but may love you to play with a toy).

The use of physical punishment, aversive tools and corrections should never be used. All dogs have emotions and feelings. Please respect these and think of the outcomes of your actions. You will probably induce fear, possibly aggression and mistrust along with a break down in your relationship.

So what emotions can a dog feel? A dog's brain is thought to work at a level of a 2.5 year old child and feel the same emotions of a toddler including joy, excitement, distress, fear, anger, shyness, affection and love.

At the moment there is no evidence that a dog feels guilt. The look you get when you walk in, seeing the bin contents arranged on the floor again and start shouting is the look of appeasement. They are trying to calm you down. Unless you caught them in the act and are able to stop and redirect the behaviour they will not understand why you are shouting at them and why you are cross.

A note on hand feeding

While many people recommend forming a bond by feeding your new friend out of your hand rather than a bowl, this initially may not be ideal for a fearful dog or a dog who has had bad experiences of hands. If your dog is fearful of people this is going to add to their stress and may result in being unable to take necessary nourishment. You are also taking away the choice of interacting with you. It is far better to give food in a bowl and leave them to eat it, even you being near watching may be too stressful. One method is to scatter their food by placing their kibble in an area for them to hunt out. In time, once trust has been established, you can then change eating routines such as interacting with them, hand feeding, rewarding with food.

Other animals

Hopefully your new arrival will have been introduced to your other dog(s) before adoption. If dogs have not met you will need to keep a watchful eye on how they get on and be ready to intervene if needed. Many dogs are OK with cats but be aware, many are not. Your dog may have passed the cat test at the refuge but please take appropriate steps at introducing them to each other in your home and note that a running cat may be seen as a chase opportunity.

A few strategies for all to cohabit;

- Let dogs meet on a neutral ground before entering the garden and house;
- By letting the new rescue go in the house first your dogs will smell them once they enter;
- Initially put away all high value toys and items that might cause conflict;
- Provide tall gates between door ways separating the dogs (and cats) for initial greetings;
- Provide extra water bowls initially, your new dog may drink more due to stress;
- Feed separately to begin with;
- Provide enough bedding and room for dogs to feel happy and relax;
- Observe how the dogs interact; their body language and communication;
- Don't leave new animals together until you are confident they are OK together;
- Observe the new dog's reaction to your cat before he gets too close;
- Keep your new dog on a lead when meeting your cat;
- Be careful with dogs eyes around cats claws;
- Make sure cats have an exit route;

Children

Children should be taught how to act appropriately around dogs and should not be left unsupervised. Some dogs find children scary with their uncoordinated, fast movements and noise level. The dog may communicate to be left alone but children may not understand these signals. Please look at the following links which give advice, resources and downloadable clips to watch for you and small members of your family to watch.

<https://www.rspca.org.uk/adviceandwelfare/pets/dogs/company/children>

<https://www.learnwithdogstrust.org.uk/be-dog-smart//>

Routines

Dogs are happy when they have a routine they can understand, much like humans, they like to know what to expect. This will help them settle in easier. After a while you will be able to understand what they are asking by their body language and given signals. They will settle into a routine, perhaps to be let outside first thing in the morning, a walk followed by breakfast and a comfy bed with opportunities for play, relaxation and attention from you. Give them plenty of opportunities to go outside to relieve themselves- after a drink, meal or sleep which will reduce any accidents in the house. You may see them sniffing, pacing or circling; this is a sign that they may need to go outside.

However, once settled by they will be more flexible in their routines. They are able to cope when their walk or food being 15 minutes late, which is beneficial if you have an early appointment or are delayed when shopping.

On the subject of routines, it is worth getting into the habit of safety checking for your dog. Checks that:

- Gates from the garden to the outside are shut and secure before you let them out into the garden;
- Fences have no escape holes in or under them;
- Walking equipment is OK: check for wear and stitching on buckles, clasps, leads, harnesses;
Also make sure the ring clasp that keeps the identity disc on the dog's collar is OK;
- Toys and chews are safe, once ripped the plastic squeakers can be easily removed and eaten;
- Cupboards where harmful products are stored cannot be opened;
- Food items are removed from surfaces;
- Cherished items and objects are put away out of reach in case they are chewed.

Equipment

A few basic items include;

- **Collar with an identification tag.** All dogs are required to wear a collar with a contact tag.
- **Harness and lead.** Good fitting harnesses are useful should they be fearful or pull as this does not put pressure on the neck or throat. If you know your dog is fearful, invest in a lead with a clasp at each end that can be fixed to a harness and collar to ensure you have two points of contact. A scared dog may do everything they can to escape should they be startled on a walk. By pulling back they can free themselves from a collar or a ill-fitting harness.
- **Comfy bed** in a quiet draft free area from where they can watch the comings and goings. (You may want to wait a while before purchasing expensive bedding, some dogs may initially chew).
- **Crate.** They may find comfort in a crate (and later it can be used if you are worried about leaving them in the room on their own). By leaving the door open they can choose to retreat to it for time out, this can be covered to make a cozy den. If you wish to confine them to a crate they will need to be introduced and get used to it before shutting the door, which may cause fear and stress.
- **Suitable sized bowls for food and water** which should be changed daily.

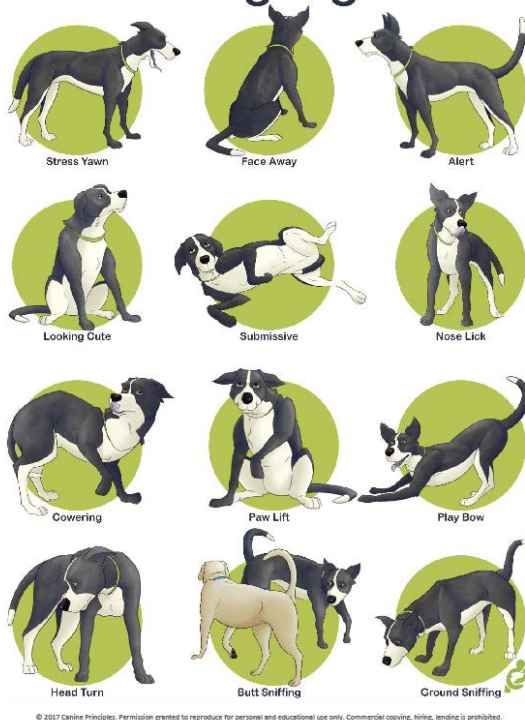
Communication



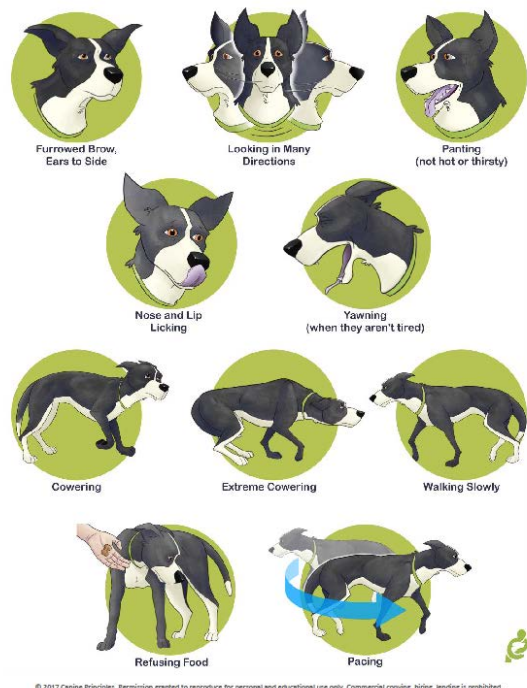
Dogs do not understand our language, scent is their primary sense. 40% of their brain is devoted to decoding smells helping them make sense of the world they live in, so giving them time and opportunities to ‘read’ all those scents left by other dogs and animals is so beneficial to them.

They also have had many years to perfect the art of communication through their body language with their own species. However, some dogs find it harder to communicate their intentions than others. This is caused by artificial selective breeding which changes their appearance or by lack of socialisation in meeting other dogs when a puppy. By observing them we can begin to understand some of the signs they exchange to other dogs and also to us (although we as humans often do not pick up these deliberate signals).

Calming Signals



Fear & Anxiety



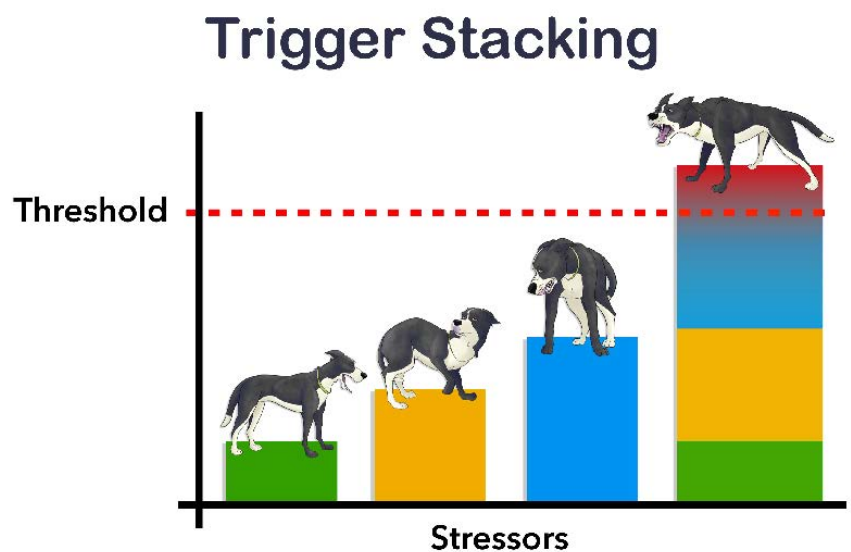
Calming signals are given to other dogs and humans, and can be a way for the dog to calm themselves down. However, we must take into account the context the dog is in and all of their body language to get a clear understanding. Furthermore, each dog is different and therefore may not show the same signs as others. By thinking of the word 'temp' (tail, ears, eyes, mouth, posture) we can look at what their body is signalling and how they are feeling:

- **Tail** : the way in which the tail is held in relation to the body shows us how they are feeling. Is it up? (aroused/ alert/ excited) wagging loosely? (happy/ excited) or tucked under their body? (fearful/ stressed/ anxious).
A wagging tail is not always a sign of a happy dog. Of course, this may be difficult to read if the tail is docked or curled; as is the case for pointers or pugs.
- **Ears** : for some dogs it may be difficult to see their ear movements; e.g.: long eared scent hounds. Many dogs can show their feelings through the position of their ears. Are they up and forward? (alert/ interested /suspicious) back and flat to their head? (fear) or up and relaxed? (happy/calm)
- **Eyes** : are they looking directly forwards? (wanting engagement) looking away? (wanting space) gazing softly? (content/happy/relaxed) or staring hard? (suspicious/alert/aggressive)
- **Mouth** : we probably all would understand a dog that is snarling, a mouth wide open with lips curled back and teeth exposed (beware: angry and ready to fight) or a slightly open relaxed tongue (happy/ excited/ hot or stressed); but how about a tongue-lick, a calming signal which can be for the dog themselves, another dog or person ?
- **Posture** : how are they holding their body ? Backing away may be fear, forward may be confrontational.
- **Barking** : they may be barking for a lot of reasons, a few being: fear, boredom, territory and excitement. All dogs should have the opportunity to bark, some tend to be more vocal than others. Once we try to understand the cause of their barking we can manage and help them if needed.
- **Growling** : 'NEVER PUNISH THE GROWL'. A dog that is growling is communicating his need for space or need of distance. Previous signs can tell you they are not happy; a head turn, a paw lift, a lip lick or walking may have been missed so their alternative is to 'up' their signal to you.
If you have stopped a dog from growling they may forego this sign and use the next one in their repertoire; a bite. (Due to their previous signs being ignored or stopped by their guardian)

Trigger stacking/ Arousal overload

Most dogs' past history may not affect them, whereas some may react to certain situations, environments, cars, people or other dogs One day they are fine with what seems no uneasiness and the next they may be seen barking, lunging and reacting. This is what is termed as trigger stacking or arousal overload which is described by Pat Miller - a well renowned dog trainer and author - as '*the canine equivalent of road rage in humans*'. This is an emotional and physical response to an accumulation of triggers (stressors) over a short period of time. At some point the dog reaches overload (his threshold) and reacts accordingly. Be aware that pain (an old injury, undiagnosed medical condition), illness and itching (through food, parasites, allergies..) can cause stress.

If we can imagine a series of events throughout a short period of time – the postman coming, next door's cat in the garden, chasing a rabbit while on a walk etc. these can all build up. The next trigger they encounter - perhaps a passing cyclist - may be enough to send them over the edge with an outburst of reactivity.



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For them to 'de-stress' and for their body to stop producing stress hormones caused by a trigger, it can take, depending on the individual, between 70 – 110 minutes. Given that stress is cumulative it is easy to see how each triggers can build up to the threshold level. It can then take up to 72 hours for their arousal levels to return to a base level. Therefore, the least amount of triggers they are exposed to each day the better it is for their emotional and physical well-being.

Their body's response on the outside can be observed by their language and communication. You will learn with time what their triggers may be and how they communicate their feelings (see the images). They may not offer all of these signals but we should get an overall picture of how they are feeling and responding.

Once your dog has gone over their threshold their internal response switches to natural survival mode. They are no longer able to think rationally and calmness has been blocked by instinctive reactions: fight or flee. Help your dog by reducing stressful situations and thinking one step ahead e.g. if you know they will be stressed by going to the vets, go first thing in the morning and keep the rest of the day calm. If they react to a certain dog you pass on your walk change the route so they do not have to encounter the dog each time.

You can help your dog by working on gaining their confidence, managing their environment, observing their body language and communication, understanding their triggers/stressors and

following a protocol of desensitisation using positive force free methods which will enable them to cope in situations they find difficult/ that they react to.

Feeding

The saying ‘you are what you eat’ not only applies to us humans but to our dogs too. A balanced nutritious diet will not only be beneficial from the outside but the inside too and in the long run can reduce vet bills. Many illnesses, allergies and behaviour problems can be put down to diet. Choices are home cooked, raw or commercial dog food, but with many brands on offer it can be confusing as to which one to give our dog.

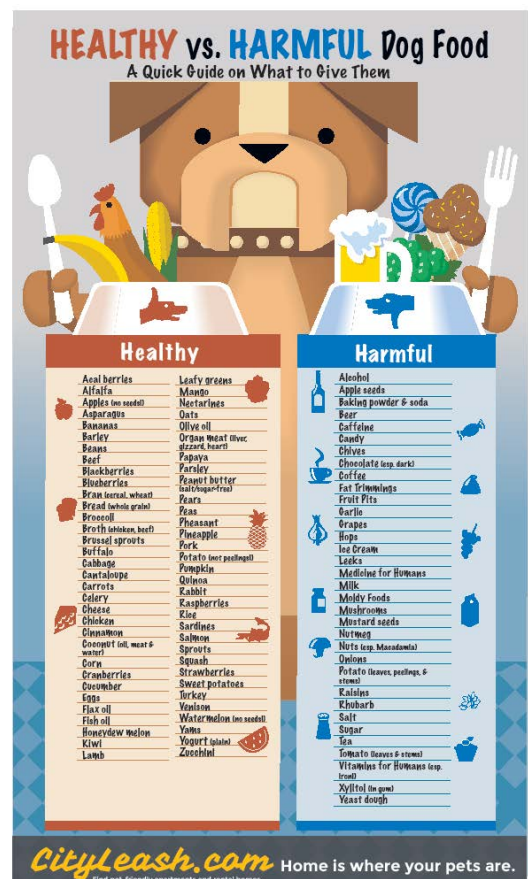
Cheap foods can contain many chemicals, colouring agents and preservatives added along with cheap fillers and unrecognisable ingredients. When looking for a good quality kibble a guide is to look at the ingredients listed. The first one should be the meat content e.g. chicken, dried chicken or chicken meal and it's %. Watch out for foods labelled ‘meat’ with meat derivatives and a long list of unknown ingredients. The same applies to dogs treats. Many commercially produced ones have the same ingredients and are full of additives.

Here are some useful websites on understanding what a dog's nutritional needs are :

- <https://www.allaboutdogfood.co.uk/dog-feeding-guide.php>.
- <https://www.wsava.org/WSAVA/media/Arpita-and-Emma-editorial/The-Savvy-Dog-Owner-s-Guide-to-Nutrition-on-the-Internet.pdf>
- <http://rawfeddogs.org/rawguide>
- https://www.whole-dogjournal.com/issues/15_7/features/Home-Prepared-Dog-Food-Nutritional-Information_20568-1.html

Although dogs have evolved to eat a varied diet, including our scraps and waste, there are some human foods that are harmful or poisonous to them, even in small doses. One of the most poisonous products used to sweeten food is Xylitol found in some peanut butters, chewing gum, manufactured cakes and sweets. Check products first and keep them out of reach of dogs. On the subject of poisons anti freeze, human pain killers and rodent poison, to name a few, are deadly. There are many plants toxic to dogs as well as.

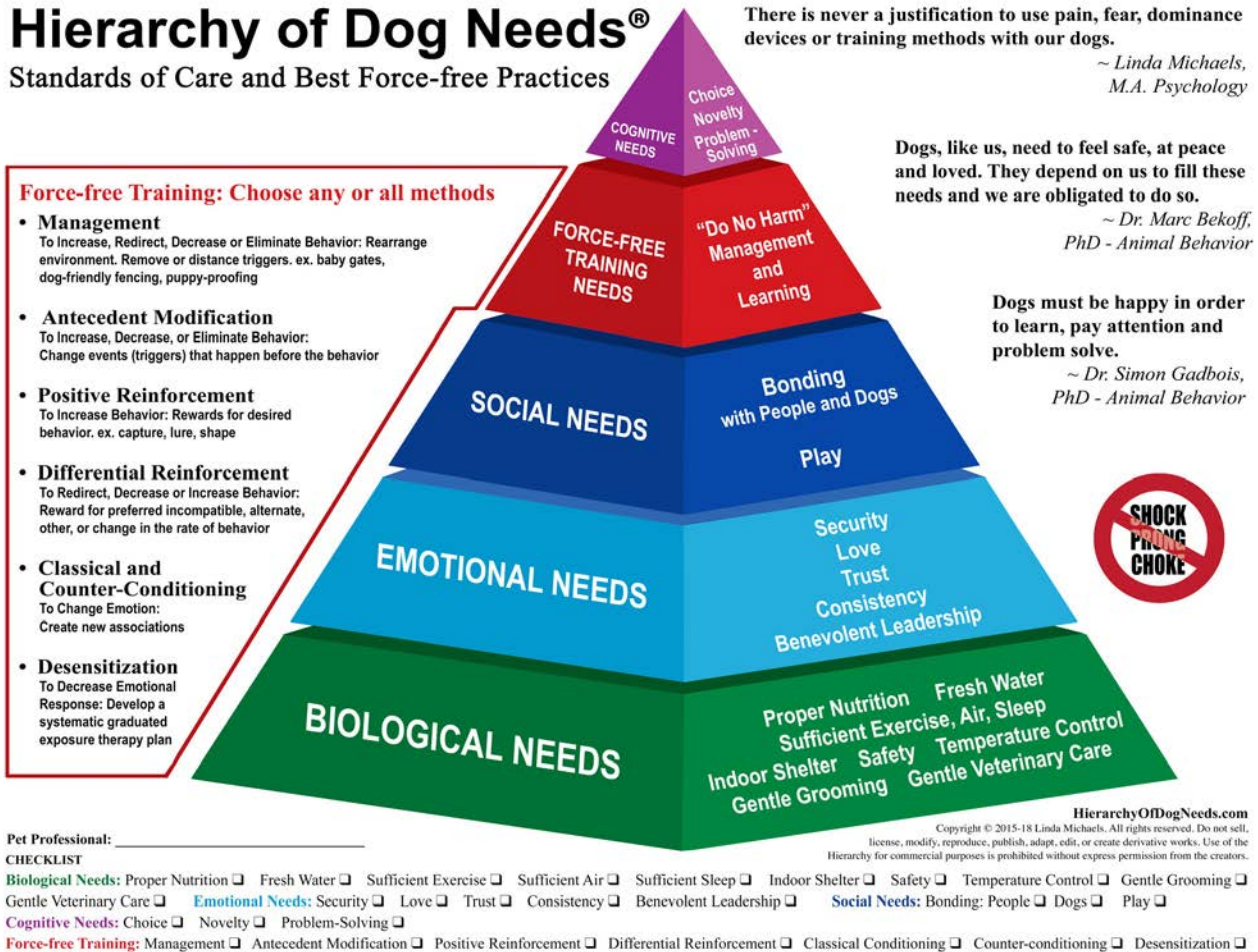
<https://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/health/for-owners/common-canine-poisons/>



The Hierarchy of Dog Needs

Created by Linda Michaels M.A Psychology ‘The Hierarchy of Dog Needs® (HDN)’ is a unique model of wellness and behaviour modification outlining standards of care and best force-free practices created for everyone who loves a dog. The dog’s needs are listed by hierarchy : <http://www.dogpsychologistoncall.com/hierarchy-of-dog-needs-tm/>

Hierarchy of Dog Needs® Standards of Care and Best Force-free Practices



Exercise

A dog's walk is for them, not for their human – Mark Bekoff, Ph.D. 2018

Dogs need physical exercise to maintain and promote their health. It keeps their internal organs, joints and digestive system in working order. As well as burning off energy and keeping them (and us) fit it reduces stress and anxiety. The amount of exercise will depend on the dog; some will need more than others depending on their age, health and breed. Over time you will understand how much is needed and good for them as too much may also be a bad thing. Walking, running, carnicross and agility are all good but forever increasing physical exercise means that we can inadvertently train our dog to an Olympic athlete’s fitness level. Consequently we will not be able to tire them out with just physical exercise (dogs also needs mental exercise). They may enjoy

games of catch but these should be kept to a sensible amount of time as for some dogs these can become an obsession. They can start to show signs of stress in the fact that they can no longer 'switch off' from their addiction of repetitive behaviour of running and catching. It can also put strain on their bodies and can cause injuries.

We also need to consider who we are walking for. Us or our dog ? We need to give them time to be able to explore and make sense of the environment, to sniff who and when has passed. According to Frank Rossell in his book *Secrets of the Snout* 'when given free rein, they sniff around 33 percent of the time' - that's a lot of sniffing.

Canine enrichment



Canine enrichment provides dogs with opportunities to use their senses and to exercise them mentally. This is as beneficial to their well being as physical exercise; problem solving and seeking out engage their brains. The benefits are; it tires them mentally, relieves boredom, engages their brain and reduces stress which can lead to a balanced and confident dog. If they must 'work' for their food they mimic their ancestral needs of hunting and scavenging (something our pets do not have to do now). There are many puzzles, games and food dispensers on the market, but many things can be used within the home for free or made for a few Euros. Once you start getting creative you will begin to look at objects and think how they can be used. Here are a few ideas to get you started :

- You can make a snuffle mat with a plastic draining mat. Add cut strips of fleece knotted underneath for dogs to find pieces of kibble in.
- Stuffed and frozen raw marrow bones.
- Toilet rolls filled with kibble, paper stuffed in each end and then placed in a box.
- Cardboard boxes filled with items for dogs to sniff the hidden kibble. A muffin tin with tennis balls hiding a piece of food.
- Play games by hiding treats or toys for them to seek out. Start easy then adapt it to the outside and on walks.
- Kong (there are many different makes of fillable chew toys) and licky mats are great for de-stressing, cleaning teeth and relieving boredom.
- Hiding food while out on a walk on obstacles and in the grass to be sniffed out.

Play



Having an opportunity to watch dogs play with each other is an enjoyable sight, however it is advisable to understand your dog's character before letting them off the lead at the sight of another dog (please ask the dog guardians whether their dog is happy to interact with others, as some may not be). Play is such an important part of a dog's social behaviour. As well as being fun, the benefits are clear for the dogs physical health as well as improving balance and coordination. Play will also help expend pent-up energy and anxieties that some dogs may have, thus it makes them a calmer, more even-tempered dog.

Mentally the dog's mind is kept active by making decisions and keeping focused. If the play is in a safe, friendly environment where dogs can socialise without pressure it is emotionally healthy as well as a stress reliever. It gives a chance for dogs to meet, interact and bond with playmates, learn how to communicate while gaining confidence and behave like a dog.

Toys



Before purchasing every toy in the pet shop you may wish to find their play style. Not all dogs will have had the opportunity to learn how to play. Over time they can be encouraged and will enjoy interacting with you but for some this does not come naturally. Finding which toys appeals to them may be by trial and error. Their breed and genetics may have programmed a distinctive play style:

retrieving items, sniffing out treat filled clams, playing tug or tearing a soft toy apart. The latter must be checked for missing stuffing and squeakers (you can buy non stuffed soft toys).

Vets

Find a local vet and register with them before an emergency may occur, which will give you peace of mind. A check-up once you have brought them home can be beneficial for your dog as it allows them to become familiar with the practice, vet and staff before any medical issues arise. A positive meeting where they can smell and check out the environment and are given a welcome and treats will make the next visit less stressful (for you too).

Should you have any concerns about your dog's health, if their behaviour changes or you are worried they are not their normal self a vet check will put your mind at rest.

Grooming

Depending on your dog's coat they may need a weekly brush for a short haired dog or a daily groom for long hair. This is a good opportunity to check for parasites, skin complaints, cuts or lumps. Some dogs love having a brush and others not so much; they may of never have had the opportunity to have a relaxing brush and so they may need some gentle encouragement. The brush may need to be broken down into small steps for a positive experience: use food rewards or a toy to play with while you introduce the brush and the experience of being brushed. Holding a dog down to remove tangles or cut toenails will give a negative experience, which may make them fearful or react in the future.

A few do's and don't s

Do

- Check ears regularly for wax build up / discharge (you may notice a smell which can be a sign of ear mites)
- Check for foreign bodies. The worse culprit is the foxtail seed which works its way into (but not out of) paw pads, between toes, ears, noses and eyes. If you only read one link, please make it this one (or look up foxtail grass seeds on the internet) as if left unattended they can be fatal : <http://www.marcthevet.com/2011/05/preparing-your-dog-for-summer-the-dreaded-grass-seed-2/#comment-8879>
- Check teeth and gums regularly for plaque and gingivitis.

Don't

- ◆ Put any objects in ears, eyes or mouth, consult your vet if you think they may have a foreign object stuck anywhere.
- ◆ Use human shampoo: firstly consider if they really need a bath (it may depend if they love rolling in smells or enjoy getting muddy). Dogs have natural oils on their coats to protect them, which frequent washing can interfere with. Again, they may have never experienced a bath or the hose pipe, so be patient and take small steps to get them used to it.
- ◆ Cut nails too short, small amounts is far better than cutting to the quick causing bleeding.

- ◆ Get out the scissors or electric clippers before checking if their coat is suitable for being trimmed. Many breeds have two coats which act as insulation against heat and protect against the sun. An explanation is given here :
<https://www.dogsnaturallymagazine.com/why-you-shouldnt-shave-your-dog-in-summer/>

Parasites

As much you love your dog, you will not love the small parasites that they attract on their coat and inside their body (worms). Fleas, ticks and mites can be difficult to see but once you are aware you will be attuned to finding them on your dog. You can be proactive each month by treating, regardless of signs of infestation, however this can put a strain on your dog's body. There has been much publicity on the use of pesticides and their reactions on dogs. Natural alternatives include herbs and tinctures that you can add to food, shampoos and sprays (you can make a home-made one with essential oils, cider vinegar and water to be sprayed on each week). Before treating your dog you may wish to read and educate yourself (with reliable information) on the various products as well as get a consultation with your vet.

If you will be travelling with your dog outside of France then they will need to have a passport and follow an immunisation programme. Your vet should be up to date with the needed requirements.

Here are some useful links :

<https://www.dogsnaturallymagazine.com/herbal-options-for-your-dogs-worms/>

https://www.wsava.org/WSAVA/media/PDF_old/WSAVA-Owner-Breeder-Guidelines-14-October-2015-FINAL.pdf <https://www.bsava.com/Resources/Pet-owner-resources/Pet-travel>

Always use positive reinforcement to train your dog.

Remember they may be experiencing many new things for the first time. Take your time and be patient with them and think how a situation, object or noise may effect their emotions. Any new experience should be positive. It may need to be broken down into small steps with positive reinforcement, such as a food reward to pair something new = something good is going to happen.

Just like people, dogs that are stressed or anxious do not learn well. They need to be calm and focused to really interact with you and learn what you're asking of them. Train them little and often and bear in mind that your interactions, communication and the environment you are teaching them in may effect their ability to understand what you are asking of them. Keep your language (including body) clear and simple.

Most dogs are food motivated which helps when training or rewarding and can be used for desensitising a dog from their fears. Each time a dog is positively rewarded with food this releases dopamine, the feel good hormone. Dopamine is also now known as the motivator chemical. Each time a behaviour is asked for and rewarded, dopamine is released making the dog want to repeat the behaviour. If we think of our dogs brain having lots of pathways for each behaviour: the more that behaviour is practised the pathway gets worn and the behaviour stays ingrained.

Here is a good explanation of dopamine and the use of food :

<https://consciouscompanion2012.com/tag/dopamine-dogs/>

Behaviour

All dogs are individuals, coming in many different sizes and breeds or cross breeds, who need to be treated individually. Like people there will be the confident, anxious, timid or happy dog, the dog that likes to be a loner or the one who seeks out attention; the introverts and extroverts.

Some may be more demanding, however no dog wants to dominate us. This is a debunked theory from many years ago from a study on captive wolves. According to this theory, given that wolves are related to dogs, dogs will try to dominate humans and so humans must take a proactive step in order to dominate. A dog that is showing aggression, unless it has been trained to respond this way, is most probably showing signs of fear, unless there is an underlying medical condition.

What us humans see as a problem may well be normal dog behaviour. Sometimes it is us humans that ask too much of our dogs, wanting to change a natural instinct. Putting in place simple strategies and management can be effective. Think of your garden as an outside room where you may not leave them to bark, chase the birds, find an escape route, dig or get into trouble. For a period of time, until you know your new dog, you may need to supervise them as you do inside the house where they may chew objects or furniture, counter surf, raid bins or jump up at guests as they come through the door.

A few common behaviours us humans may find difficult;

- **Digging** : a normal behaviour for dogs, however some breeds have a tendency to dig more. It is mentally and physically stimulating. Is the dog digging to hide a bone, is it hungry, making an earth bed, searching for a mouse or digging through boredom/ lack of stimulation? Find the solution by understanding why the dog is digging. Can they be given a designated space to dig their heart out? You may be able to interrupt the behaviour if you ask for another and add mental stimulation; sprinkle kibble to find or give them time on a walk to dig.
- **Barking** : again a normal behaviour for dogs; it is a way of communicating verbally - which could be because of frustration, excitement, fear, pain or boredom - that has been learnt through time (barking at the post van each day makes it go away in their minds). Identify when and why your dog is barking so that you are able to stop or help them. Although you feel like shouting at your dog to stop barking, this isn't the best plan of action as this means, to them, you are joining in. Consequently there could be a 'bark off' or if they are afraid or fearful their body's fight/flight response kicks in ; unable to think rationally they will not be able to respond to your request to stop barking. Management is an option – if you know they will bark at the postman get them inside before he calls, if they are fearful of the outside don't leave them on their own to 'manage'.
- **Recall**: a reliable recall is probably one of the most important behaviours your dog can have but for so many it has not been learnt, has been damaged or they find temptations get in the way of coming back to you, e.g.: other dogs, a running deer, people, cars ... which all seem to be more rewarding. Unfortunately dogs do not come with a built in 'come back' switch; it is a behaviour that needs to be learnt, repeated time and time again and rewarded.

The greatest mistakes for owners are :

- Repeatedly calling the dog back (“Here Rover, Rover, Rover, Come here Rover, ROVER. Will you come here, now, Rover...”). If they have heard you and not come back after the initial couple of calls chances are they are heading for the hills as your voice has become white noise to them.
- Not proofing the recall (in different environments and with distractions)
- Reprimanding the dog when they do eventually return, yes you may be annoyed/worried/feel helpless but would you come running back if you knew you were only going to get told off?
- Not rewarding the return. This could be changed by using food treats, toys, a game with you, letting them off the lead again to go and play.
- Not being as fun / interesting as the reward they have if they run off.

Until you have formed a relationship with your dog and trained a recall you can not expect them to come running back to you. In the meantime you can use a long line attached to a harness or keep them on a lead. Here is a good link to achieving a recall :

<https://www.thelabradorsite.com/train-a-puppy-or-dog-to-come/>

- **Separation anxiety / hyper attachment** : this can be seen in dogs that show signs of not being able to be left on their own. They are not behaving badly to annoy, it can be difficult for guardians to understand and help their dog. Ideally we would be around them all the time but this is not always an option. For some dogs their previous experiences may make them anxious of being left or they were not given the option of learning that being left on their own was OK and their guardian will return.
- **Hyper attachment** : the dog will follow you around, not letting you out of his sight and becomes anxious if you leave a room. Separation anxiety is seen in dogs unable to cope with being left on their own. It can be classed from mild separation anxiety - where the dog may howl or bark, pace and drawl - to severe - where the dog may self harm, defecate and urinate, chew windows and doors to get out to be reunited with you (note chewing of objects, settees, beds... is probably not separation anxiety). True separation anxiety needs a behaviour modification programme of desensitisation to help the dog and it cannot be ‘fixed’ overnight. You may need to get outside help from a qualified behaviourist if you feel your dog maybe suffering; it will not pass nor will dog grow out of it.
- **Chewing** : another natural behaviour. Dogs explore the world through their mouths and chew for a number of reasons; teething in puppies, boredom, hunger, stimulation, fun and to relieve stress (it can be calming to them). They do not understand your attachment to a pair of expensive shoes. If you don’t want things chewed it is advisable to ‘dog proof’ the house and put things out of the dog’s reach (and get family members trained in this). Again by looking at why they are chewing a solution can be found. It may be a case of management to give appropriate chew toys: filled Kong or dried animal products give them opportunities for appropriate chewing. Teach them a give or drop cue and what they can/can’t chew using positive reinforcement.

Do not reprimand after the event, they will not understand why and you will break the relationship you have made. You may be recommended by others to get a repellent spray to spray on objects and furniture. Although this can work it can be an aversive tool depending on why your dog is chewing. If your dog chews you should seek help before using it. A stressed dog cannot help their actions and you may cause the behaviour to escalate if they can’t relieve their need to chew. It can be a sign of separation anxiety, as above.

- ◆ **Resource guarding** : guarding an object is another natural, normal behaviour. We as humans constantly resource guard; we lock our cars, keep our handbags on our laps, hide our chocolate bars from our children, keep our animals enclosed. Dogs are no different. In the wild they will guard food or a sleeping area. In our homes it may be seen as a fear of losing something they see as valuable to them – beds, food, settees, a human, toys, chews. You can tell if a dog is guarding by looking at their body language signals (a hard stare, body freeze, standing over an object, which may escalate into growling if you continue to move towards the object they are guarding). You have to manage and modify the behaviour with advice from a professional force-free behaviourist.

Adopting an older dog

An older dog will probably be grateful you have adopted them: wiser, calmer, content to be by your side and happy to enjoy their days relaxing on their bed, taking a walk and knowing their needs are catered for. Like us they will begin to show signs of getting on in years so it is important to watch out for any changes in their attitude to life and behaviour. You should discuss this with your vet and they may require routine health checks. This guide can help you care for them in their twilight years : <https://www.bsava.com/Portals/0/resources/documents/PetSavers-caring-for-your-elderly-pet-guide.pdf?ver=2016-08-30-150151-850>

When the worst happens: losing your Dog

Hopefully this will not happen but if they do escape from the garden or run off when on a walk, how do you get them back? If they are chipped and wearing a collar with your contact details and should someone pick them up, you will be contacted by the person that has found him or who has read his chip. This may not be easy if they are scared or fearful as they and may not advance to a stranger. Before you take on the many offers to help find them, it may be worth contacting the refuge for advice, as although friends intentions are good, many people looking for a lost dog may make them wary and run further away.

Should they not return you should contact your local Marie, Gendarmes, vets and rescue centers. Let your post lady/man know with a photo as they may know if a dog has been found. Make posters with a photo and contact details by placing them on bins within the area they will get a lot of viewings as people dispose of their rubbish.

There are a couple of websites to list a missing animal;

- Chien Perdu <https://www.chien-perdu.org/fr-fr/> - Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/chienperdu.org/>
- Pet alert <https://www.petalert.fr/> - for a small fee advertises your lost dog on social media, their regional and national website and informs their network of users of your lost dog (vets, police, shelters). They also offer a poster printing service along with guardian angels who have signed up to alert them of a sighting of a missing animal.

Lastly for peace of mind you could think about a tracker which goes on the dogs collar with an app so you can see the route there are covering on your phone or tablet.

Thank you for taking the time to read this, I hope it has helped.
Now it's time to enjoy many years of a happy life changing relationship you will have with your furry friend.

Good reads

Being a Dog The world from your dog's point of view by Karen Wild https://www.amazon.co.uk/Being-Dog-world-your-point/dp/0600631508/ref=sr_1_3?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1549137743&sr=1-3&keywords=being+a+dog

Top dog by Kate Bendix https://www.amazon.co.uk/Top-Dog-Everything-Need-Marvellous/dp/1780721781/ref=sr_1_2?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1549136828&sr=1-2&keywords=kate+bendix

Inspiring Resilience in Fearful and Reactive Dogs by Sally Gutteridge https://www.amazon.co.uk/Inspiring-Resilience-Fearful-Reactive-Dogs/dp/172893978X/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1549136919&sr=1-1&keywords=sally+gutteridge

Dog communication; The Language of a species by Sally Gutteridge [https://www.amazon.co.uk/Canine-Communication-Language-Sally-](https://www.amazon.co.uk/Canine-Communication-Language-Sally-Gutteridge/dp/1794338578/ref=sr_1_3?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1549136919&sr=1-3&keywords=sally+gutteridge)

[Gutteridge/dp/1794338578/ref=sr_1_3?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1549136919&sr=1-3&keywords=sally+gutteridge](https://www.amazon.co.uk/Canine-Communication-Language-Sally-Gutteridge/dp/1794338578/ref=sr_1_3?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1549136919&sr=1-3&keywords=sally+gutteridge)

Good Dog Behaviour by Choice with Positive Canine Coaching (Mission Possible Solutions Book 2) https://www.amazon.co.uk/Behaviour-Positive-Coaching-Possible-Solutions-ebook/dp/B07KGHXWPY/ref=sr_1_10?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1549136919&sr=1-10&keywords=sally+gutteridge

The Other End Of The Leash Why We Do What We Do Around Dogs by Patricia B McConnell https://www.amazon.co.uk/Other-End-Leash-Patricia-McConnell/dp/034544678X/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1549137930&sr=1-1&keywords=the+other+end+of+the+leash

The Dog A Natural History by Adam Miklosi https://www.amazon.co.uk/Dog-Natural-History-%C3%81d%C3%A1m-Mikl%C3%B3si/dp/0691176930/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1549219115&sr=1-1&keywords=the+history+of+the+dog

Inexpensive helpful books for specific problems

The Senior Dog Wellness Guide by Sally Gutteridge https://www.amazon.co.uk/Senior-Dog-Wellness-Guide-ebook/dp/B07N8FJRL3/ref=sr_1_16?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1549136919&sr=1-16&keywords=sally+gutteridge

Help My Dog Doesn't Travel Well In The Car by Toni Shelbourne https://www.amazon.co.uk/Help-dog-doesnt-travel-well/dp/1533481725/ref=sr_1_6?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1549138012&sr=1-6&keywords=toni+shelbourne

Help My Dog is Scared Of Fireworks by Toni Shelbourne https://www.amazon.co.uk/Help-My-Dog-Scared-Fireworks/dp/1724559486/ref=pd_bxgy_img_2/258-5065772-0007226?encoding=UTF8&pd_rd_i=1724559486&pd_rd_r=293ee9c1-2726-11e9-bc3f-c119fe0d879a&pd_rd_w=D9KAb&pd_rd_wg=NFIV7&pf_rd_p=a0365e62-3353-40ad-91cf-d4ca762b18a7&pf_rd_r=WKQ17FG7030E4XH7YDXA&psc=1&refRID=WKQ17FG7030E4XH7YDXA

Help My Dog Is Destroying The Garden by Toni Shelbourne https://www.amazon.co.uk/Help-My-Dog-Destroying-Garden/dp/1976563313/ref=sr_1_5?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1549138012&sr=1-5&keywords=toni+shelbourne

How Many Dogs by Debby Mc Mullen https://www.amazon.co.uk/How-Many-Dogs-Debby-McMullen-ebook/dp/B004D9FGZI/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1549139068&sr=1-1&keywords=how+many+dogs

Useful Websites

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

<https://www.myitchydog.co.uk/>

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/canine-corner/201303/which-emotions-do-dogs-actually-experience>

<https://www.humanesociety.org/resources/stop-your-dogs-chewing>

Facebook

Canine Principles on line dog courses

<https://www.facebook.com/canineprinciples/>

Doggy Dilemma - Problem Solving for Canine Empowerment.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/239036620138974/>

Absolute Dogs Naughty but nice (for NBN dog owners)

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/610566119052717/>

Dogs in France

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/dogsinfrance/>

Langue dog

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/LangueDog/>

Helping homeless hounds

<https://www.facebook.com/Helping-Homeless-Hounds-563586680502236/>

Rehoming animals in the Midi Pyrenees

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1590635574541852/>

Figeac refuge

https://www.facebook.com/groups/Refuge.de.Figeac.46/?ref=br_rs