



RSPCA School for Dogs Information Sheet

My dog just wants to say hi!

Some of us are blessed with happy dogs who just love the opportunity to say hello to every dog they see. Some of us do not. It is important for all of us to understand the personalities of the dogs we meet when out of homes as well as understanding our own dogs.

The Happy Dog

For those of us with friendly dogs it is really important that we foster this happy nature and we should be careful to guide our dogs to say “hello” appropriately and safely, after all we don’t want our dogs on the receiving end of a dog who is not so happy to say hello.

How do we do this?

Firstly when ever our dog sees a dog they would like to meet, ask them to sit calmly, look closely at the other dog first.

- Is it with a human companion?
- Is it walking on a nice loose lead?
- Is it looking relaxed and calm? (ears, eyes, tail and body looking soft)
- Is my dog calm?

If the answer is NO to any of these questions then this is an interaction that may not go well, so don’t approach closer, reward your dog if they have remained calm and continue on your walk.

If the answer is YES to all of these questions then you may ask the other person if their dog would like to say hello. If all that is OK make sure the interaction proceeds with both dogs on loose leads, keep the initial interaction to about 5 seconds, and don’t allow either dog to jump on the other. If this happens use a treat or toy to lure the dog off **DON’T PULL ON THE LEAD.**



However we recommend to avoid on lead greetings in most cases, if the dog has a bad experience then dogs can develop lead aggression. When a dog is on lead, we take away their ability to flight so they can often revert to fight when they are uncomfortable.

The Shy Dog

This is the dog who take some time to warm up to other dogs, but will play appropriately after having the opportunity to observe other dogs, but can be funny if approached too quickly or by a boisterous, out of control dog.

Watch the shy dog closely and see if you can observe them, diverting their eyes, licking their lips, or turning their head.....these are all polite ways of decline to interact with the other dog.



RSPCA School for Dogs Information Sheet

Our recommendation for this dog is to give them time observing lots of other dogs and appropriate play. Try to discourage uncontrolled interaction by calling your dog away and rewarding when they pay you attention.

Often sitting outside a leash free area and rewarding for quiet calm behaviour is all the interaction that this dog needs. Be very careful about choosing a play partner for this dog, you may find that they have a select social circle of a few good friends rather than wanting to love the whole world.

The Boisterous Dog

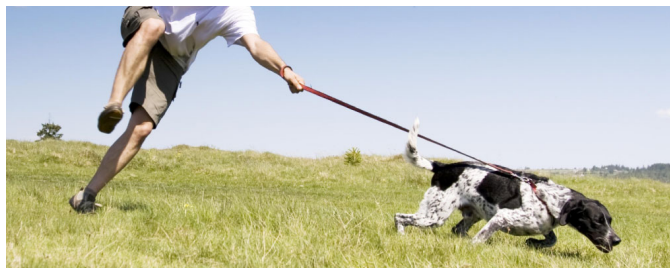
This is the dog who often jumps on or at other dogs in greeting. This is intimidating behaviour and will often set the rest of the interaction up badly.

Jumping on another dog when first saying hello is very RUDE, it is the equivalent of the person who comes up and meets you for the first time with a great big bear hug.

This dog needs to concentrate on learning to be calm in the presence of other dogs and should not approach another dog until this can be achieved on lead.

The sad truth is that allowing this dog to be “told off” usually backfires and creates a timid dog as they did not understand why the other dog reacted like that; or else it fires this dog up to be more over the top and possibly aggressive.

The boisterous dog is like a group of high school students on the last day of school, out for a great time with no thought about anyone else, and mostly their behaviour is not acceptable.



The Fearful Dog

This dog is obvious about telling us it doesn't like to say hello, they bark, and try to get away, they may back up or cringe when put into this situation. This is one dog that most definitely should not be pushed into situations where strange dogs may come within their comfort zone (which can be several hundred meters).

These dogs don't need to be kept at home they need to get out and learn that the world, people and other animals are not so scary, however they need to do it slowly and carefully at their own pace. They needed to be rewarded highly for every experience they have that they do not react to.



RSPCA School for Dogs Information Sheet

It will take a long time to make friends that this dog can play with and may only ever choose to play with a few dogs, be pleased when they do and reward amply. This dog will enjoy long walks in areas that are not very busy and will enjoy routine walks.

The Puppy

Puppies under the age of 16 weeks are able to get away with the most amazing rudeness, but once they pass that age other dogs will start demanding more appropriate behaviour from them. As a responsible owner, by 16 weeks we need to have instilled some basic behaviours, like sit, calm and come.

Puppies should be given opportunity for off lead interaction with other similar aged puppies and well socialised adults but be selective.

If your dog missed these opportunities be aware that their ability to be a social butterfly is limited and you need to be realistic about what they can tolerate.

Mouthing is an interspecies communication problem; we just don't play like puppies so we need to teach our puppies how to play appropriately with us.

The Offlead Park

Leash free parks can be great places for happy, well socialised dogs, however for the majority of dogs they are simply too much.

Pushing your dog through the gate and letting them 'go play' with strange dogs is not 'socialisation' - it is the equivalent of jumping into a pit of snakes - on unpleasant and highly arousing experience.



Be proactive about your own dog, if there is a rude dog present come back later or on another day. Watch your dog, and learn to recognise the subtle signs that they don't appreciate another dog, and intervene by choosing to leave before the situation can deteriorate. Quietly and quickly leave and reward your dog for his responsiveness to your request to go.

What to do

- Begin socialising your puppy the day you get him
- Be selective about the dogs you choose
- Enrol in a great reward based motivational training program with experienced trainers.
- Pay attention to you dog and learn his signals, be his leader and set him up for good experiences.
- Choose to prevent or end any interaction with a rude dog, or if your dog becomes rude.
- Don't put your dog into situations he cant handle
- Respect that your dog has their own personal space and that this is different for every dog.



RSPCA School for Dogs Information Sheet

- Practice calm behaviour daily.
- Learn to recognise that your dogs needs may not allow you to achieve your sporting goals immediately....
- Educate yourself and your dog about polite canine behaviour.

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