

**The Role of Safety & Management:** *Safety is the top priority when managing and modifying behavioral issues. Management is the first step in any behavior modification plan, but it is not a permanent solution. Avoidance can help prevent negative incidents, but it does not address the underlying causes of behavior. A combination of management and positive reinforcement training leads to long-term success.*

## Prevention Strategies

- For young dogs, early socialization (4–12 weeks of age) helps prevent behavioral issues. Enrolling in a positive reinforcement puppy class strengthens your bond and sets a foundation for success.
- Positive experiences with people, environments, and other animals build confidence.
- Prevent traumatic experiences by carefully managing socialization.

## Greeting Guests: Setting Your Dog Up for Success

- Avoid allowing your dog to rush the door—this can create stress for both your dog and guests.
- Use management tools such as baby gates, x-pens, or a leash to control interactions.
- Wait until your dog is calm before allowing greetings.
- Offer high-value treats to create positive associations with new visitors.
- Instruct guests on how to interact appropriately and avoid overwhelming your dog.

## What to Avoid:

- Do not allow guests to be assertive or threatening—this increases arousal and stress.
- Never approach a reactive dog; instead, allow them to come to you when ready.
- Avoid sudden movements, direct eye contact, or hovering/petting over a dog's head.
- Refrain from using punitive collars (e.g., prong, choke, e-collars), as they can worsen reactivity.

## Choosing the Right Equipment

Make sure that you are conditioning the dog to any new equipment by using treats, and slowly acclimating him to it. Putting new equipment on the dog without conditioning him to it can exacerbate their feelings of frustration/anxiety.

- Use a 6-ft nylon or leather leash for control.
- Ensure your dog wears a well-fitted flat or martingale collar to prevent slipping.
- Consider a harness for additional security and comfort.
- Avoid retractable leashes, as they limit control and can cause injury.

## Recognizing Body Language of Stress & Reactivity

- Lunging, growling, barking, snarling
- Tense body posture, freezing, stiff tail
- Whale eye (visible whites of eyes), hard stare
- Raised hackles, ears pinned back or pricked forward
- Attempting to escape or avoid interaction

*Proper management and training create a safer, more predictable environment for your dog. By setting clear boundaries, using positive reinforcement, and understanding your dog's body language, you can prevent issues and build trust.*