

# Leash Reactivity



Does your dog whine, bark, growl, or lunge when he sees another dog while he is on a leash? This unpleasant but common behavior can be caused by barrier frustration.

Barrier frustration/leash reactivity happens when a dog feels like he is being held back from doing things and interacting with other dogs. The dog gets so frustrated that he can't help his reaction.

Follow these tips to help your dog with leash reactivity.

*Information adapted with permission from San Francisco SPCA.*

- **Stay calm.** Use a happy tone when approaching on-leash dogs. Be ready to move away quickly if needed. Keep the leash loose if possible - if you seem tense or uneasy and tighten the leash, your dog will sense your uneasiness and think there might be a reason to feel threatened.
- **Use a humane training collar.** Tools like the Gentle Leader or Halti or a front buckle harness makes on-leash management much easier and doesn't hurt your dog. Do not use a retractable leash.
- **Play the "Find It" game.** Tell your dog "find it" and throw a treat in front of him. Continue to say "find it" and throw treats until you are safely past the other dog. This game distracts your dog by keeping him focused on treats. Soon your dog will associate the sight of other dogs with yummy treats.
- **Feed your dog at night.** Make it a habit to only feed your dog after you're inside for the evening. That way, you'll always go on leashed walks with a slightly hungry dog who is much more motivated to focus on you and the goodies in your treat bag.
- **Spay/neuter your dog.** Your dog will be much less interested in other dogs if hormones aren't involved.
- **Provide off-leash play with other dogs.** If your dog is friendly and social off-leash with other dogs, give him time to play with other dogs off-leash.

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