

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.