

Controlling your dog near fences

Signs of a nervous dog

Barking, whining, lunging, pacing, panting, and being super alert might mean your dog is anxious or frustrated. This often happens when they're on a leash or behind a fence and see something exciting they can't reach, like another dog. Yelling or punishing them actually makes things worse, because they might get scared and frustrated with you too.

We want to help your dog associate things like doors and fences with good things, not just being stuck. For example, if your dog barks at the door when deliveries come, teach them to sit quietly there instead and reward them with treats. This changes their whole view of the door. The same goes for the backyard fence and other 'barrier zones'.

Identifying and reducing triggers

1. Decode the clues: Before tackling reactivity, watch for subtle signs (ears perking, body stiffening) that precede your dog's reaction. This helps pinpoint the exact trigger: a passer-by, barking dog, or simply movement outside.
2. Create calm zones: Once you know the trigger, limit exposure. For fence frustration, try visual barriers like slats or tarps. If visitors are the issue, have your dog relax in another room during greetings. Reactivity thrives on practice. By eliminating exposure to triggers, you help your dog 'de-escalate' and avoid reinforcing unwanted behaviours. This sets them up for success in future training efforts.



Management vs training for fence reactivity

Sometimes simply blocking your dog's view of the fence can address their reactivity. However, if barking and lunging persist, counter-conditioning training can further change their emotional response.

The goal is to shift their perception of the trigger (people/dogs outside) from anxiety-provoking to positive. You achieve this by pairing their sight with desirable experiences like treats or playtime.

Remember, punishment is ineffective and harmful for anxious dogs. It reinforces their fear of the trigger and adds negativity to the situation.

Instead, be patient and understanding. Embrace management solutions and positive training to help your dog overcome their fear and enjoy a calmer outdoor experience.

Focus on basic commands to tame fence frustration

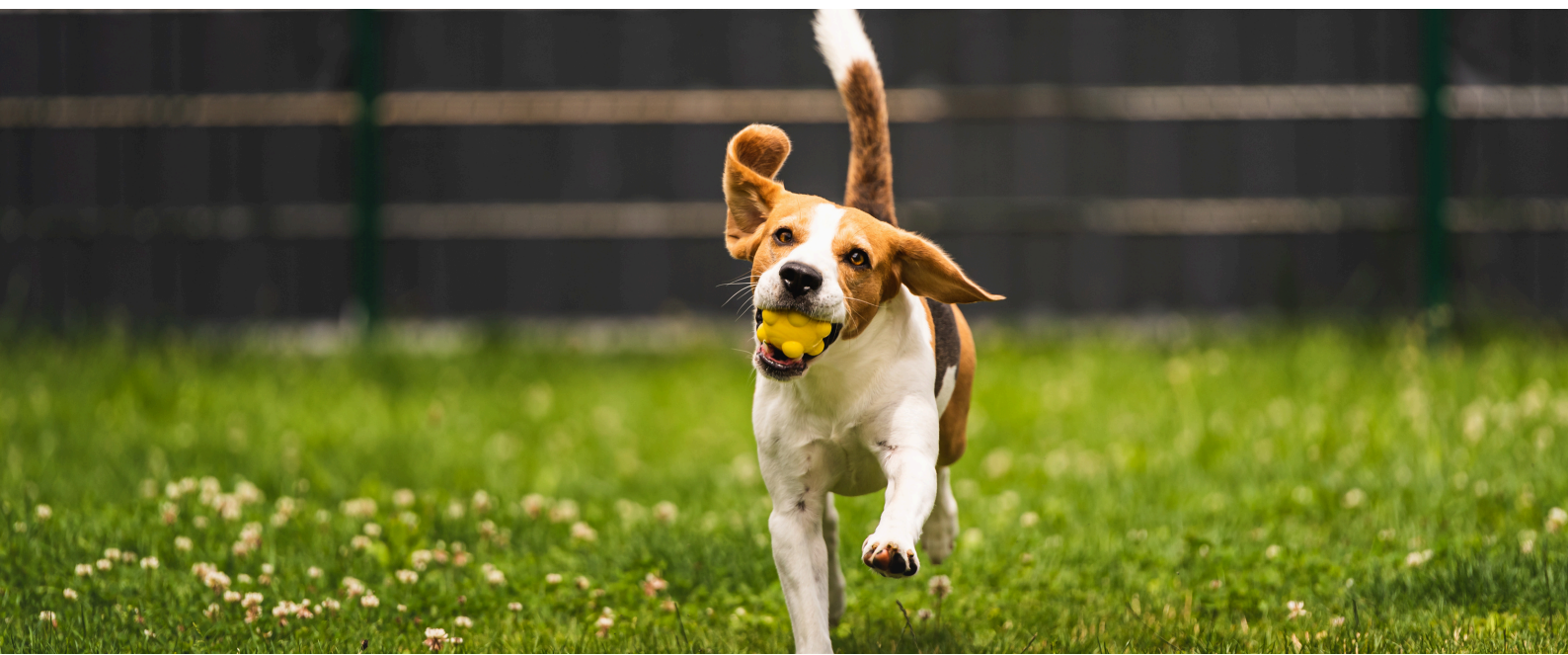
Fence-induced barking and reactivity can quickly dampen your outdoor enjoyment. Fortunately, implementing a few key commands offers a strategic solution.

Mastering commands such as 'sit', 'stay', and 'recall' empowers you to refocus your excited dog before triggers escalate. A strong 'recall' becomes your escape route from unwanted behaviours.

Maintain calm leadership; your composure facilitates redirection. Stay vigilant for early cues like staring or pacing. Before tension builds, calmly use 'sit' or 'stay' and reward obedience.

Engage in strategic redirection

Employ their favourite toy, initiate fetch, or offer any activity that effectively shifts their focus. Consistent, positive training sessions are key. Celebrate each success, and gradually your dog will transform from fence-fixated to relaxed yard companion.



Teaching 'place'

1. Set up a comfy mat or crate (with cosy blankets and toys inside!). Let your dog explore freely, without forcing them in. Just like their own little room!
2. Whenever your dog hangs out on the mat/crate, shower them with treats and praise. Make it a happy place.
3. Once your dog feels comfy, introduce a cue word like 'mat', 'crate', or 'bed'. Say it as they're already on their spot and reward them. This connects the word to the happy place feeling.
4. For crates, start with the door open. Let your dog get used to the cue and going in/out freely with treats. Be patient, no door slamming.
5. Once comfortable, try closing the door for short periods, slowly increasing the time. Treat them when they stay calm. Remember, it's their safe space.
6. Never force your dog in or out or touch them in their mat/crate. Use treats or toys to lure them out if needed. It's their haven.
7. Practice in different locations to make 'place' a universal command.

Teaching 'recall'

Start indoors and close by:

1. Grab some yummy treats like cheese, chicken, kangaroo jerky.
2. Let your dog wander a bit inside with a leash on.
3. Wait until they're a few steps away, then say their name in a happy, excited voice.
4. The moment they look at you, start clapping, whistling, or stomping your feet – anything fun to get their attention.
5. As they run towards you, say your recall word ("come!", "here!") once. Reward them with treats and praise.

Up the ante:

1. Repeat step 1, but gradually increase the distance.
2. Practice in different rooms and quiet outdoor areas.
3. Only use your recall word when your dog is already coming to you. This makes it a positive signal, not a warning.

Add distractions:

1. Start in familiar places with low distractions like toys or other dogs.
2. When your dog looks at you after your call, reward them.
3. Slowly increase distractions over time by going for walks in parks etc.



Remember:

- Always be positive and playful. No yelling or punishments!
- End training before your dog loses focus. Keep it short and sweet.
- Make recall training the best part of their day. Treats, praise, and cuddles go a long way.
- Don't worry if it takes time. Training is a journey, not a race.

Legal matters

Your dog's reaction to people walking past fences can be deemed a form of harassment. It has the potential to be investigated in the same way as a dog attack.

Under the Dog and Cat Management Act 1995 (sections 43, 44) an owner is guilty of an offence if their dog attacks, harasses, chases or otherwise endangers the health of a person.

Council can:

- Impose a \$315 expiation fee for an attack, harassment or being chased.
- Impose control orders.
- Take direct court action, which carries a maximum \$2,500 penalty if convicted.



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