

A calmer walk is not a perfect walk.

A field kit for the moments that usually go wrong.

For the dog who spots another dog before you do. For the walk that begins with a plan and ends with you gripping the lead. This kit gives you one decision to make early: create space before the moment gets hard.

THE RULE TO REMEMBER

Notice → make space → reward calm.

Inside

02 The before-you-go check

03 The space-first protocol

04 Three-walk pattern map

05 Notes and safety

Educational guidance, not a diagnosis or a substitute for a qualified behaviour professional. There is no universal safe distance or guaranteed timeline.

Make the easy walk easier.

01 Choose your exit

Pick a quieter route and a place where you can cross, turn or step behind a visual barrier. An easier route is not failure.

02 Bring something worth eating

Pack small treats your dog already enjoys. If your dog cannot take food, focus on leaving the situation, not on a training rep.

03 Check the day, not last week

Noise, unfamiliar places and a tense morning can change what your dog can handle. Start at a distance where your dog can move and respond.

04 Rehearse your turn

At home, say “this way,” turn together and reward your dog for following. Practice it when nothing scary is there.

PACK: comfortable gear / treats / water / an exit plan

The space-first protocol.

01 Notice early

Look for a change from your dog's usual loose behaviour: a freeze, a tense body, a hard stare, a closed mouth, or a shift forward. Signals differ by dog; one sign alone is not a diagnosis.

02 Make space

Cross the street, turn calmly, or put a parked car or tree between your dog and the trigger. Do not pull your dog toward it to "test" them.

03 Reward if your dog can engage

When your dog sees the trigger at a comfortable distance and can still turn or eat, calmly reward that moment. Keep it brief and leave before it gets harder.

04 If a reaction starts

Stop the drill. Create distance without a leash correction. When your dog settles, take the quieter route or go home. Then write down what happened.

A useful walk can be short. Safety beats a completed route.

THREE-WALK MAP

Find the pattern.

Use this sheet after three walks. Record only what you saw. The aim is to choose an easier route or earlier exit next time, not to find a fixed “safe distance.”

WALK 01

ROUTE / TIME

WHAT YOUR DOG SAW

FIRST BODY CHANGE / WHAT I DID

WHAT HELPED / EASIER NEXT TIME

WALK 02

ROUTE / TIME

WHAT YOUR DOG SAW

FIRST BODY CHANGE / WHAT I DID

WHAT HELPED / EASIER NEXT TIME

WALK 03

ROUTE / TIME

WHAT YOUR DOG SAW

FIRST BODY CHANGE / WHAT I DID

WHAT HELPED / EASIER NEXT TIME

WHAT TO KEEP

One better decision next walk.

Circle what worked: a quieter time • more space • a visual barrier • an earlier turn • a shorter walk. Choose just one change for the next outing.

THE POCKET VERSION

Spot a change. Turn early. Create space.

Know when to ask for help

If there is a bite risk, you cannot manage encounters safely, or behaviour changes suddenly, speak with a qualified reward-based behaviour professional or your veterinarian. Do not force close exposure.

READ MORE

AVSAB • Humane Dog Training position statement

AVSAB • Staying Safe: Management for Fearful Dogs

Battersea • Living with a reactive dog

Walks are not a test your dog has to pass. The next good decision is enough.