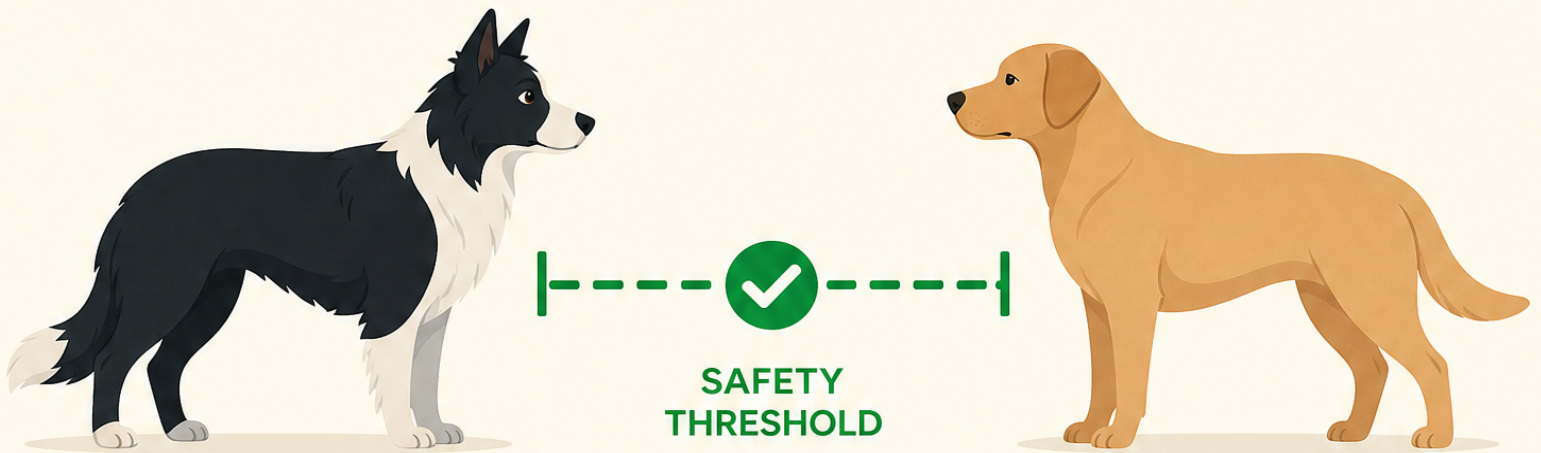


# REACTIVE DOG TRAINING

Step-by-Step Behavior Plan



# Reactivity Is Fixable. Here's How.

Reactive dogs aren't aggressive — they're scared, frustrated, or over-aroused dogs whose behavior LOOKS scary. Most 'aggressive' dogs are actually reactive, and reactivity is one of the most fixable behavior problems in dogs. The protocol in this PDF — threshold-based desensitization with counter-conditioning — is the gold standard used by certified veterinary behaviorists. Most dogs show meaningful improvement within 3-6 months.

## 3 truths every reactive dog owner needs

- **Reactivity is emotional, not bad behavior.** Punishing the bark/lunge makes the underlying fear or arousal worse. The protocol changes how the dog FEELS about the trigger.
- **Distance is the medicine.** Working below threshold (the distance at which your dog notices but doesn't react) is the entire game. If your dog is reacting, you're too close.
- **Consistency over weeks beats intensity for a day.** 3-5 short sessions per week (10-15 min each) outperforms one long stressful session.

### When to see a behaviorist

Get a certified veterinary behaviorist (DACVB credential) if your dog has bitten, broken skin, shown predatory aggression, or if 4-6 weeks of consistent counter-conditioning shows zero progress. The right credential is DACVB or CAAB — not 'dog trainer.'

### Want video demos of the protocol?

The Fast Dog Training program has step-by-step counter-conditioning videos. Used by 50,000+ owners including reactive dog cases.

→ [See the Training Program](#)

# Step 1: Find Your Dog's Threshold

Threshold is the distance at which your dog NOTICES the trigger but doesn't react. This is the only distance where learning happens. Closer than threshold, the dog is too aroused to learn. Farther than threshold, the dog doesn't notice the trigger at all.

## How to identify threshold

- Walk your dog toward a known trigger (another dog, a stranger, etc.).
- Stop the moment your dog notices the trigger (ear/head turn, eye fixation, stiffening).
- If your dog can still take treats and respond to your name → you're at or above threshold. Good.
- If your dog ignores treats, stares fixedly, or starts barking → you're below threshold. Move farther away.
- Mark the threshold distance. This is where ALL training begins.

### Threshold varies

Threshold changes by trigger (dog vs stranger), context (open vs enclosed space), the dog's day (tired vs aroused), and weather. Always assess threshold at the start of each session — don't assume yesterday's distance still works.

# Step 2: The 'Look At That' Game

Counter-conditioning teaches the dog that the trigger PREDICTS something good. The 'Look at That' (LAT) game is the simplest, most effective protocol. Here's the exact mechanic:

## The protocol

1. Position yourself at threshold distance from the trigger.
2. The dog notices the trigger. As soon as they look at it, you mark (clicker or 'yes!').
3. Immediately offer a high-value treat in your hand near your face.
4. The dog turns from the trigger to take the treat.
5. Repeat. After 5-10 reps, the dog will start volunteering looks AT the trigger followed by looks AT you (anticipating the treat).
6. Once the pattern is reliable, you can decrease distance by 1-2 feet. Repeat at the new distance.

### What it teaches

The trigger PREDICTS good things, not bad things. Over time, the dog's emotional response to the trigger shifts from fear/arousal to neutral or positive expectation. This is real, lasting change — not suppression.

### Stuck on the protocol?

The Fast Dog Training program has video demos of LAT, threshold work, and reactive dog rehab. Used by 50,000+ owners.

→ [See the Training Program](#)

# 12-Week Rehab Plan

Weeks	Goal	What to Do
1-2	Identify trigger & threshold	Test all known triggers; document threshold distance for each
3-4	Establish LAT pattern	Daily 10-min sessions at threshold; volunteer-looks reliable
5-6	Decrease distance by 25%	Reduce threshold distance gradually; consolidate at each new distance
7-8	Add movement	Trigger moving (walking by, not stationary); maintain LAT
9-10	Multiple triggers	Combine triggers (dog + stranger together); maintain calm
11-12	Real-world tests	Walks past triggers in normal environments; document progress

## Realistic timeline

Mild reactivity (small triggers, slow build-up): 6-12 weeks. Moderate (one or two specific triggers, manageable): 3-6 months. Severe (multiple triggers, escalation, history of bites): 6-18 months PLUS veterinary behaviorist + possible medication. Don't compare your timeline to anyone else's.

# Final Word: Stay Patient

Reactive dog rehab is the slowest, most rewarding training you'll ever do. The temptation to push too fast or use harsh corrections is enormous — and it sets you back weeks every time. Slow, consistent, sub-threshold work is the fastest path to a calm adult dog.

## Get Fast Dog Training

Comprehensive training program covering reactivity, counter-conditioning, and every other behavior protocol. Used by 50,000+ owners.

→ [See the Training Program](#)

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*For more free training resources, visit [dogtrainingbybreed.com](https://dogtrainingbybreed.com).*