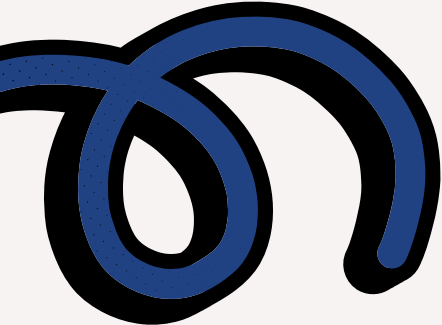


*Adoption Program Dog
Walkers*

Onboarding





Key Components of Your Successful Onboarding

Welcome and Orientation

Welcome and Thank you for taking the time to volunteer with Click County Animal Services as an Adopt-A-Dog Walker!



Job-Specific Training

After your training, you will work hands on with your instructor and practice what you have learned.

Asking Questions

Don't forget to ask questions. It's better you ask than assume you know an answer. Here at Click County Animal Services we are a team!





Why Onboarding Matters

01

Consistence for the Dogs

Ensures every volunteer uses the same approach, speeding up learning and reducing confusion.

02

Saftey for the Walkers & Dogs

Minimizes the risk of bites, escapes, or injury through clear, practiced handling techniques.

03

Better Adoption Outcomes

Reinforces good manners that make dogs more appealing to potential adopters.

04

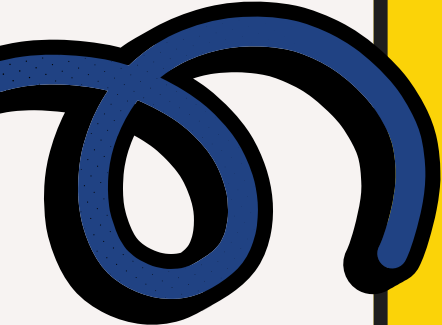
Confidence for Volunteers

Gives new walkers the skills and assurance to handle any dog calmly and effectively.





Volunteer Expectations



Follow Training Protocols

Use the “Approach, Pause, Reward” method every time you enter a kennel.

Prioritize Safety

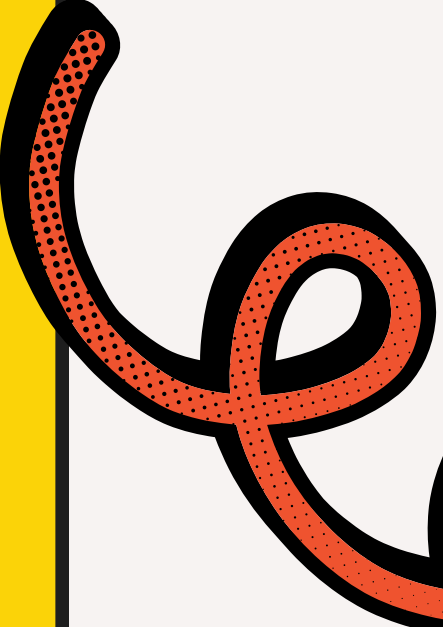
Handle all dogs with control, awareness, and respect for their space.

Be Consistent & Patient

Reinforce calm behavior, even if it takes extra time.

Communicate Concerns

Report any behavioral changes or safety issues to shelter staff immediately.



The “Approach, Pause, Reward” Method

Approach Calmly

Walk toward the kennel at a slow, steady pace, keeping your shoulders relaxed and avoiding rushed or exaggerated movements. Maintain soft eye contact to show the dog you are friendly and non-threatening.

Pause for Calm

If the dog begins barking, jumping, or spinning, stop moving immediately. Wait patiently until they offer calm behavior, such as all four paws on the ground or standing quietly, before proceeding.

Mark & Reward

The moment the dog shows calm behavior, say a clear marker word like “Yes!” or use a clicker, then immediately offer a treat or calm praise. This timing helps the dog connect the reward to their good behavior.

Leash Up

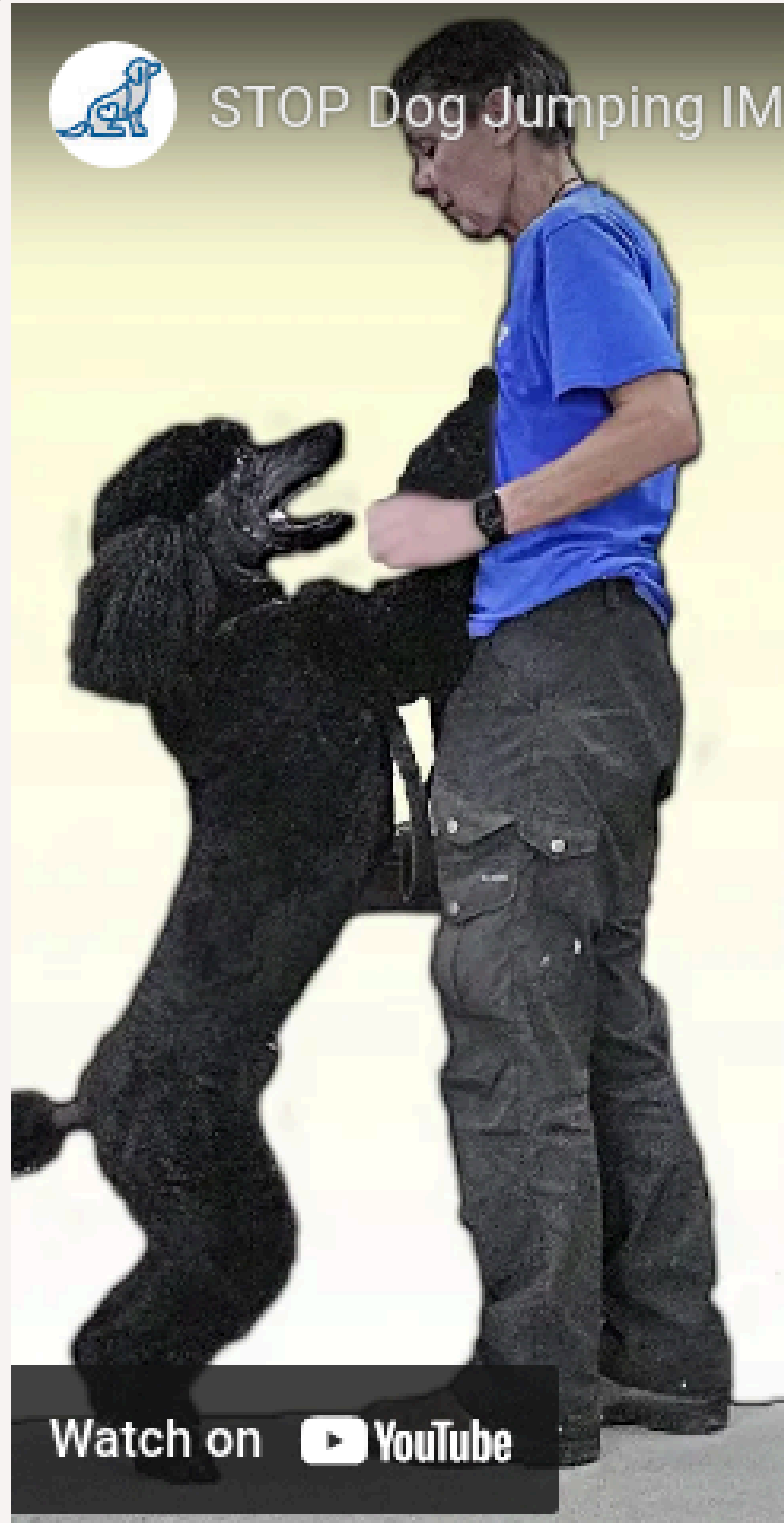
Once the dog remains calm as you reach the kennel, open the door slowly and attach the leash without rushing. Avoid speaking in an excited tone to keep the dog relaxed during this step.

Repeat

Use this method consistently with every dog on every walk. Repetition builds good habits quickly and helps all volunteers reinforce the same positive behaviors.



STOP Dog Jumping IMMEDIATELY With A DIFFERENT Approach!

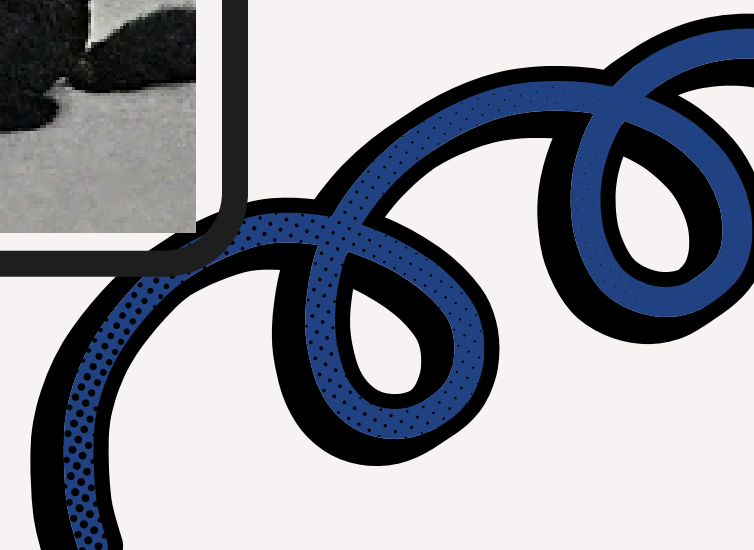
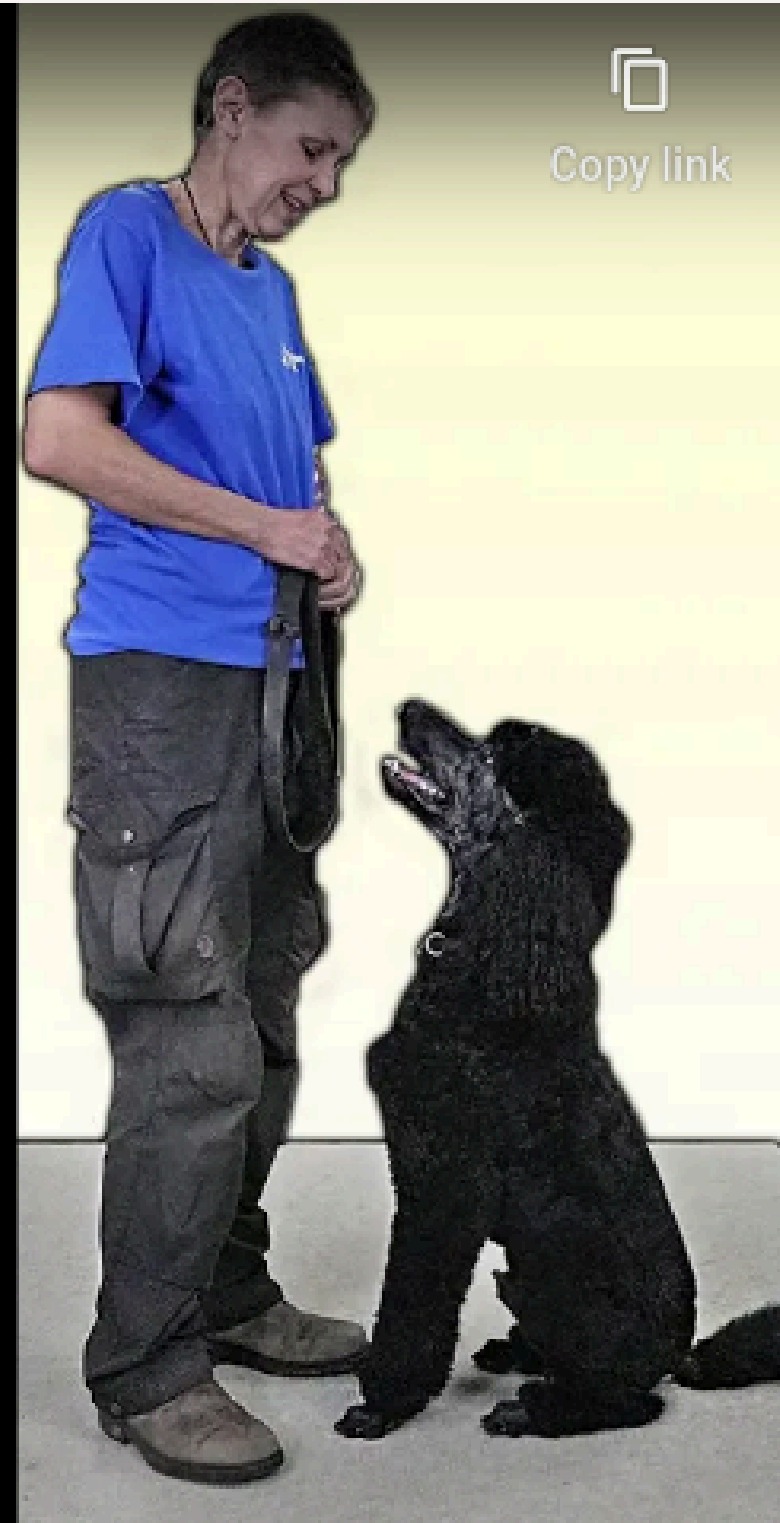


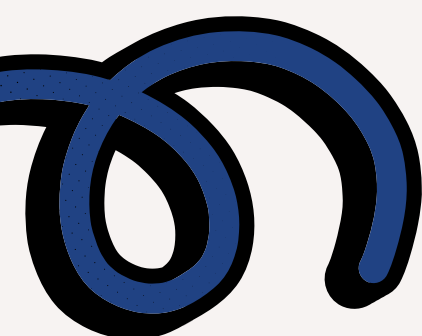
Watch on  YouTube

HAVE YOU TRIED THIS?



Copy link





Body Language Cues

Ready for You

Tail: Neutral position or gentle, loose wagging.

Eyes: Soft, blinking, or averting gaze slightly.

Body: Loose muscles, relaxed stance, weight evenly distributed.

Not Ready

Posture: Stiff, tense body; weight forward or bouncing.

Eyes & Face: Hard stare, wide eyes, or mouth tightly closed.

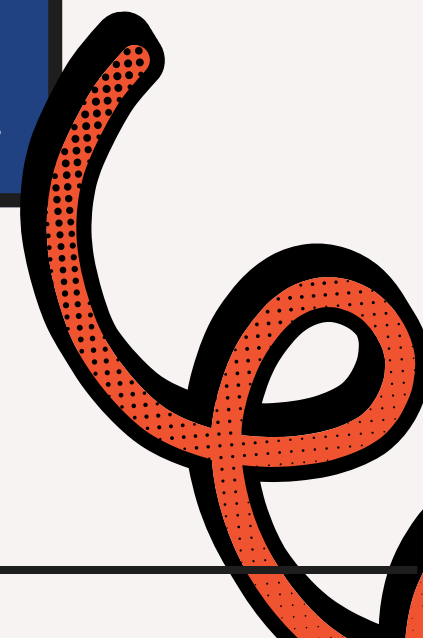
Vocalization/Movement: Barking, whining, spinning, or jumping at the door.

Caution Signs

Defensive Signals: Raised hackles, lip curl, growling, or baring teeth.

Avoidance: Turning head or body away, backing into kennel corner.

Stress Indicators: Excessive panting, tucked tail, yawning in a tense manner.





What to do if the dog is not ready?

01

Stop & Wait

Pause your approach if the dog is barking, jumping, or spinning. Stand still and keep your posture relaxed.

02

Reward Calm Moments

The instant the dog places all four paws on the floor or becomes quiet, mark the behavior ("Yes!" or click) and offer a treat or calm praise.

03

Resume Slowly

Once the dog maintains calm behavior for a few seconds, continue your approach at a slow pace, ready to pause again if excitement returns.



What to do if the dog has caution signs?

01

Pause & Create Space

Stop your approach, take a step back, and give the dog room to settle. Avoid direct eye contact and keep your body turned slightly sideways.

02

Observe & Offer Calm Interaction

Watch for signs of relaxation. If safe, gently toss a treat into the kennel without reaching in, allowing the dog to approach on their own.

03

Report to Staff

If caution signs persist, do not attempt to leash. Record what you saw and immediately inform a supervisor or behavior specialist.



Checking a Dog Out for a Walk

01

Locate the Dog's Profile

Find the dog in the shelter's volunteer check-out system using their kennel number, name, or ID tag.

02

Confirm Dog's Status

Check notes for any restrictions, behavior alerts, medical holds, or special handling instructions before proceeding.

03

Sign Out the Dog

Record your name, date, and start time in the system (digital or paper log) so staff know the dog is out for a walk.

04

Verify Gear & ID

Ensure the dog's collar, ID tag, and leash are secure before leaving the kennel area. Optional "Adopt Me" bandana.





Returning from Walk

01

Return to Kennel Safely

Guide the dog back into their kennel calmly, remove the leash, and ensure the door is securely latched.

02

Update System

Mark the dog as "Returned" in the check-in log or digital system, recording your name, date, and end time.

03

Add notes

Briefly note any behavior observations, training progress, or concerns from the walk.

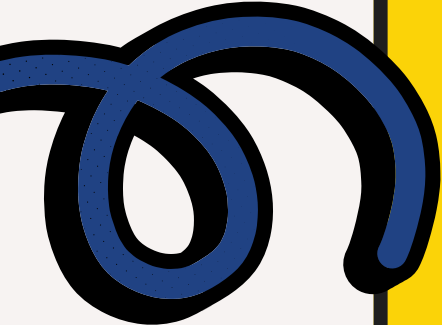
04

Confirm Readiness for Next Walker

Make sure the kennel is tidy, water is available, and any special instructions are posted or updated.

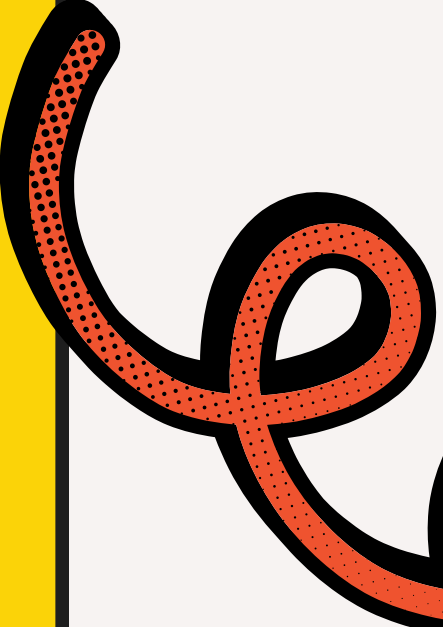


Someone on the Walk is interested in Adopting



If someone expresses interest in adopting the dog during your walk, respond warmly and thank them for their interest. Share a few friendly details about the dog's personality, such as favorite activities or endearing quirks, while keeping the tone positive. Let them know that all adoption questions and applications are handled by shelter staff, and direct them to an adoption counselor or the front desk. You may offer a business card, brochure, or the shelter's website information so they can begin the process on their own.

After the walk, record the potential adopter's name and contact information (if they provided it) and give it to shelter staff right away. This ensures the shelter can follow up promptly and that the adoption process moves forward smoothly.





What is next in my training?

01

Collect Your Quick-Action Card

Pick up the laminated “Approach, Pause, Reward” reference card to carry on all walks.

02

Meet with the Trainer

Review any questions from the session, clarify handling techniques, and confirm you understand safety protocols.

03

Tour Shelter Areas

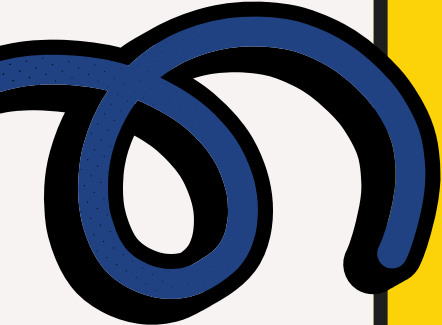
Walk through kennel rows, walking routes, supply stations, and designated play/exercise areas.

04

Confirm First Shift & Next Steps

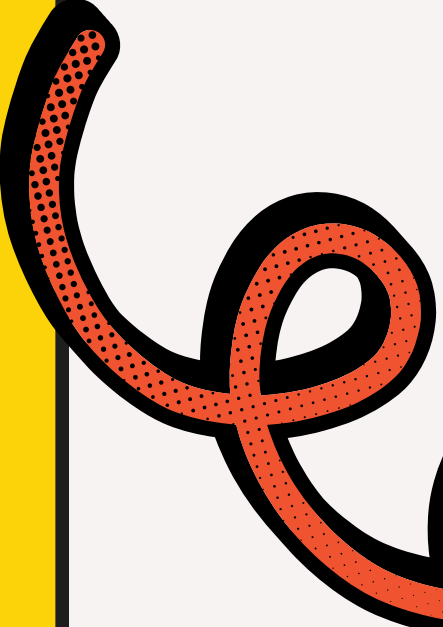
Schedule your first shadowed walk, review check-in/check-out procedures, and ensure you know who to contact with questions.





Check for Understanding!

Please write down your answers for the following slides and present them to your trainer for review.





If a dog is barking and jumping at the kennel door, what should you do first?

A

Open the kennel quickly to leash the dog

B

Pause your approach and wait for calm behavior

C

Call for another volunteer to handle it



What is the correct marker for rewarding calm behavior?

A

“No!” or “Stop!”

B

Snap your fingers

C

Say “Yes!” or use a clicker



**Which of these is a Ready for You
body language sign?**

A

Soft, blinking eyes and a loose tail wag

B

Hard stare and stiff posture

C

Growling and lip curling



If someone shows interest in adopting during your walk, what should you do?

A

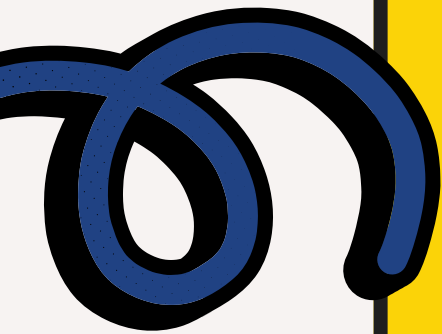
Give them the dog's leash so they can take them home

B

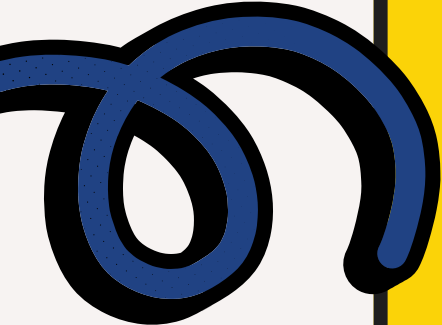
Direct them to shelter staff and share adoption contact info

C

Allow them to walk the dog while you contact the shelter for next steps.



Thank You!
**Please review your answers with
your trainer**



For Trainers Only

Answer key:

B

C

A

B

