



Bark Buddy Guide

About

Bark Buddy is a role where volunteers assist Kennel Staff in caring for, socializing, and promoting the dogs at our Adoption Center.

Training and Eligibility

To become a Bark Buddy, volunteers must go through a 3 part training and evaluation. Please note that you must pass the evaluation in order to advance into the role.

Kennel Cleaning Training

After completing 10 hours of Helping Hands service, volunteers that are interested in becoming a Bark Buddy should contact the Volunteer Coordinator to get access to sign up for a kennel cleaning shift. Cleaning is an important part of caring for the dogs at our Adoption Center. This shift will familiarize you with our cleaning procedures and the kennel environment. You will be paired with a staff member or other volunteer and assist/shadow them as they clean kennels during a round of dog walks.

Bark Buddy Class

If the Kennel Cleaning shift goes well, you will be given access to sign up for a Bark Buddy class. The Bark Buddy class covers dog body language, leashing and handling.

First Walk

After attending the Bark Buddy class, the final step is a one-on-one hands-on training and evaluation. To schedule your First Walk, contact the Volunteer Coordinator.

Duties and Opportunities

Bark Buddies assist kennel staff in providing direct care for dogs at the Adoption Center. Main duties and opportunities include:

1. Walks
2. Playgroups
3. Events
4. Socialization
5. Borrowed Buddies

1. Walks

Kennel staff walk the dogs at the Adoption Center 3 times a day. First walks begin at 8:00am, second walks begin at 10:30am, and third walks begin at 3:30pm. The purpose of walks is give the dogs a potty break and get a chance to clean their kennel while they are outside. During walks, one or two people will clean kennels while the others walk or yard dogs. This is a great opportunity for Bark Buddies to help care for the dogs, practice leashing/handling and get to know the dogs in our care.

When you arrive for your shift, sign in, gather any supplies needed (leash, poop bags, walkie) and meet kennel staff in the dog hallway. Kennel staff will designate who will walk and who will stay inside to clean kennels. Wait to get started until the person cleaning is ready. Ask a staff member which dog to take if you are not sure.

2. Playgroups

Playgroups are when dogs play together in a yard while dog staff supervises. We try to have playgroups every weekday. Bark Buddies can help by bringing dogs to/from the yard/kennels, cleaning kennels inside, walking dogs that aren't able to participate, or refereeing inside the yard with permission from staff.

3. Events

Taking dogs to events gets them out of the shelter, introduces them to potential adopters, and helps us learn how they do in different environments. It also helps us to engage people, share our mission and spread some joy. Events may be hosted by the community or by the SPCA, times and locations for events vary. The event location will be listed in the shift name and the address can be found by clicking the blue "description" link.

You will be assigned a dog to handle. You are responsible for picking that dog up at the shelter and transporting them to and from the event unless otherwise indicated. The shift times are the times that you are expected to be at the event with the dog, so please factor in travel time when signing up. If you are unable to provide transportation for the dog, we are sometimes able to make other arrangements, just check with the Volunteer Coordinator in advance.

Dogs are assigned to Bark Buddies based on their personality and handling difficulty, the event environment, and the handling ability of the volunteer. Bark Buddies will be notified which dog they are assigned to via email the day prior to the event. If there is a particular dog that you would like to take to an event, you are welcome to request them in advance, but we may not be able to send them due to any of the factors listed above.

Arrive at the shelter to pick up your assigned dog with enough time to transport them to the event for the shift. When you arrive at the shelter, sign in, and gather any supplies (leash, poop bags, adoption vest, treat bag, treats, etc.). Grab your assigned dog from their kennel, and head over to the event.

When you arrive at the event, make your way over to the Adoption Bus or other designated meeting location. We will always have water bowls set up for the dogs at the event.

Once you've checked in with staff, feel free to hang out around the SPCA bus/tent/table or walk around the event. Be sure to abide by all safety and handling rules and be cautious when allowing people to greet your dog. If you or your dog are tired/stressed, you are welcome to leave at any time and return the

dog to the shelter. Use your best judgment. Just let a staff member know that you are leaving.

4. Socialization

You can socialize dogs by taking them out for walks, into a yard to play/hang out, or to the confidence course. You don't have to sign up for a shift but please try to avoid this during walk times.

5. Borrowed Buddies

Bark Buddies can sign out a dog anytime during open hours and take them off-site. You can take them for a car ride, a hike, etc. The dogs love getting out of the shelter, whether it's for a day or just 15 minutes. Always check in with dog staff to make sure that what you're planning on doing is a good fit for the dog you will be signing out. You can also ask them for suggestions of dogs to take or things to do with them.

Dot System

All of the dogs on our adoption floor are assigned a colored dot (green, yellow, red or black). The dots are displayed on the dogs' kennel and on the board in the hallway. The colors indicate how difficult the dog is to handle and if/when volunteers are permitted to handle them.

- If a dog does not have a dot assigned to them, treat them as a staff only (black dot) dog and do not handle them unless you are told otherwise by a staff member.
- Always listen to staff members. They are looking out for your safety and the safety of others.
- The colors do not indicate anything about the dogs other than the criteria mentioned. Do not assume anything (good or bad) about a dog just because of their dot color and always follow all safety protocol.
- You do not have to walk any dog that you are not comfortable walking, regardless of color level.

Green

Green dots signify that the dog is "general population". The dog does not have any special handling protocol and may be an easy walker to moderate puller.

Yellow

Yellow dots are an indication to use caution. The dog may be scared, overly excited, reactive or pull significantly. Be sure to read/ask for more information and take it slow.

Red

Red dots indicate that the dog has a special handling protocol. A volunteer may only walk a red dot dog after being shown how to do so and receiving approval from a staff member. When handling a red dot dog, you must follow all staff member's instructions. Volunteers must be shown how to walk each red dot dog individually, being shown how to walk one does not give you permission to walk others.

Black

Black dots are used for STAFF ONLY dogs. These dogs may not be handled by volunteers.

Getting a Dog from the Kennel**Know the Dog**

- Read ALL signs on the dog's kennel
- Check their color level
- Ask staff for more info if needed
- Evaluate the dog's body language

Be prepared

- Make sure you have the equipment that you need (leash, poop bags, walkie, etc.)
- Get your leash ready
- Check for a clear exit, wait if you have to or ask for space

Leash up

- Open the latch on the kennel and push the door inwards
- Block the dogs' exit with your body
- Grab the dogs harness and attach the clip leash OR loop the slip lead over their head and slide the stopper down

Exit the Kennel

- Allow the dog to exit the kennel
- Keep the leash short and keep the dog away from other kennels

Walking a dog**Corners/Blindspots**

- Do not allow the dog to go head ahead of you
- Hold them close
- Look/yell ahead of yourself

Ask for space

- Don't be afraid to ask people to move aside
- Do not allow the dog that you are handling to greet other animals, keep a safe distance between them

Evaluate body language

- If the dog appears uncomfortable, remove them from the situation, even if this means taking them back to their kennel

Avoid questionable situations

- Is the dog a little strong for you? Choose even terrain
- See a squirrel before they do? Distract them
- Another dog walking in that area? Turn around and go a different way

Greeting and Interacting with Dogs

Always use caution when greeting dogs. Never force a dog to interact with you or others and be mindful of their body language. Use the infographic on page 6 as a guide.

Safety

- Do not allow a non-Bark Buddy to handle a dog
- If you feel that you do not have control of a dog, take them back to their kennel if you feel that you can safely do so or call for help and someone will come and assist you
- If a dog gets loose, yell for help so that others can assist
- In the event of a dog fight, do not intervene. Yell for help and follow directions from staff members
- Report ANY bites or concerning behavior to a staff member
 - Reporting a bite does not mean that anything bad will happen to the dog
 - We need to know the circumstances so we can prevent it from happening again

Disease Prevention

Dogs sometimes come to the shelter sick or get sick while they're here. Some illnesses are contagious to other animals and some are even contagious to humans. In order to keep the dogs at the shelter, your pets at home, and yourself healthy, be sure to wash or sanitize your hands after interacting with a dog. Do not touch any strays that are brought in or puppies, adhere to posted signs, and follow all instructions from staff members.

Cleaning

Keeping things clean is important for our dogs' health and comfort. Dishwashing areas are located in the dog runs for dirty dishes, Kongs, etc. Dirty blankets, towels, and toys should be taken to the laundry room and placed in the trash cans. Bark Buddies are always welcome to help out with cleaning, dishes, laundry, scooping yards, etc.

Body Language

The most important tool when working with dogs is knowledge of dog body language. Understanding, observing, and responding to dog body language can help keep you, others and the dog safe.

Ladder of Aggression

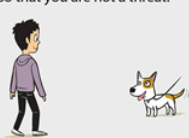
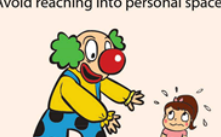
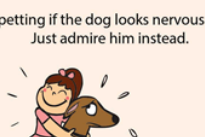
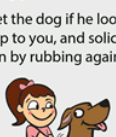
Check out the "Ladder of Aggression" infographic on page 7. The Ladder of Aggression depicts the idea that there are levels of body language signals that a dog will display in response to escalating levels of threat/stress/fear.

It is important to recognize that not all dogs will display all of these signals, they also may not display them in this order. If a dog is not well socialized, the threat is imminent, or if the dog has not had success using lower level signals, they may default to higher level signals or progress through the signals quickly. Dogs are

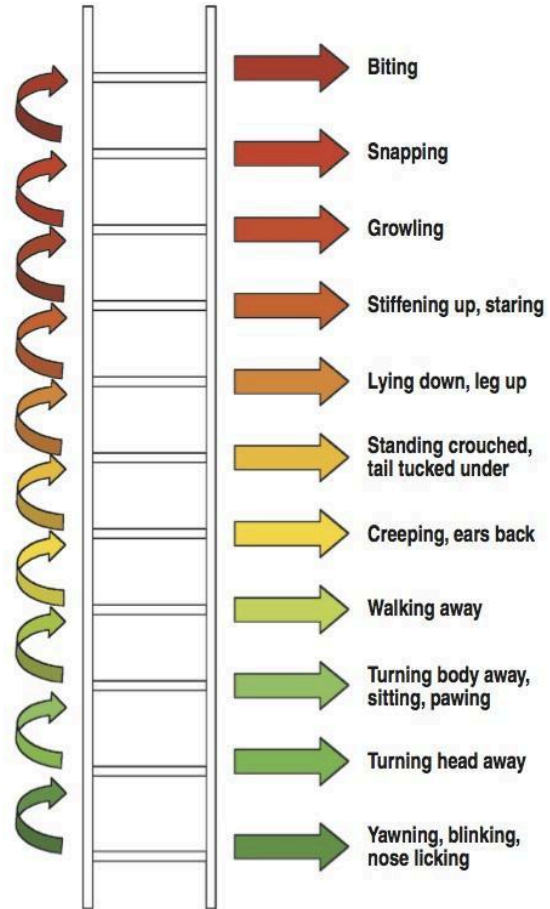
also individuals with their own. The most important takeaway is that we should always recognize and respond to lower-level signals and the escalation of signals. If we don't listen to a dog displaying lower-level signals, they may escalate to using higher-level signals and we might ultimately discourage them from using the lower signals in the future. It is important for dogs to use those lower-level signals because they give us and others time to recognize and react before they escalate. If a dog learns that those lower-level signals do not work and they stop using them, it is extremely difficult to train them to start using them again.

How to Greet a Dog (and What to Avoid)

Appropriate greetings are common sense. Imagine if someone greeted you the way many people greet dogs!

Human to Human INCORRECT	Human to Dog INCORRECT	Human to Dog CORRECT
 Avoid reaching into their safety zone.	 Avoid reaching in or towards the dog's car.	 Stand a safe distance away so that you are not a threat.
 Avoid rushing up.	 Avoid rushing up.	 Approach slowly (at a relaxed walk).
 Avoid interactions without asking.	 Avoid interacting with unfamiliar dogs, especially if they're tied up.	 Ask if you can interact first.
 Avoid staring at people. This is scary.	 Avoid staring at or approaching head-on.	 Approach sideways and look using your peripheral vision.
 Avoid looming over.	 Avoid leaning over or towards dogs even when you change position to squat or get up.	 Stay outside the dog's bubble and present your side to the dog.
 Avoid reaching into personal space.	 Avoid reaching your hand out for the dog to sniff.	 Let the dog approach at his own rate.
 Avoid close interaction if the person is afraid of you.	 Avoid petting if the dog looks nervous or tense. Just admire him instead.	 It's OK to pet the dog if he looks relaxed, comes up to you, and solicits your attention by rubbing against you.
 Avoid touching inappropriately.	 Avoid hugging, kissing, and patting roughly. This is too familiar and disliked by many dogs.	 Pet gently.

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Understanding dog behaviour

YOUR DOG'S BODY LANGUAGE CAN HELP YOU TO UNDERSTAND HOW THEY ARE FEELING

A happy dog

A dog who is happy will be relaxed.

1

Dog has a relaxed body posture, smooth hair, mouth open and relaxed, ears in natural position, wagging tail, eyes normal shape.



2

Dog is inviting play with bottom raised, smooth hair, high wagging tail, eyes normal shape, ears in natural position, may be barking excitedly.



3

Dog's weight is distributed across all four paws, smooth hair, tail wagging, face is interested and alert, relaxed and mouth open.



A worried dog

These dogs are telling you that they are uncomfortable and don't want you to go near them.

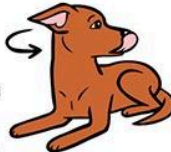
1

Dog is standing but body posture and head position is low. Tail is tucked under, ears are back and dog is yawning.



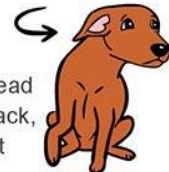
2

Dog is lying down and avoiding eye contact or turning head away from you and lip licking and ears are back.



3

Dog is sitting with head lowered, ears are back, tail tucked away, not making eye contact, yawning, raising a front paw.



An angry or very unhappy dog

These dogs are not happy and want you to stay away or go away.

1

Dog is standing with a stiffened body posture, weight forward, ears are up, hair raised, eyes looking at you – pupils dark and enlarged, tail is up and stiff, wrinkled nose.



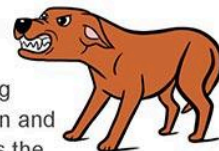
2

Dog is lying down cowering, ears flat, teeth showing, tail down between legs.



3

Dog is standing with body down and weight towards the back, head is tilted upwards, mouth tight, lips drawn back, teeth exposed, eyes staring, ears back and down, snarling.



Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

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The RSPCA helps animals in England and Wales. Registered charity no: 219099 The RSPCA only exists with the support of public donations.
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Body Language of Fear in Dogs



Slight Cowering



Major Cowering

More Subtle Signs of Fear & Anxiety



Licking Lips
when no food nearby



Panting
when not hot or thirsty



Brow Furrowed, Ears to Side



Moving in Slow Motion
walking slow on floor



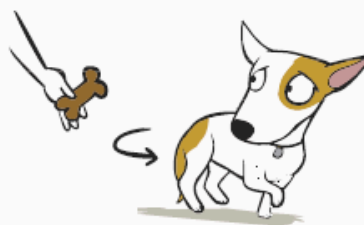
Acting Sleepy or Yawning
when they shouldn't be tired



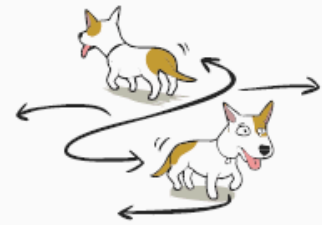
Hypervigilant
looking in many directions



Suddenly Won't Eat
but was hungry earlier



Moving Away



Pacing

