

Hallie Hill Dog Interaction Workshop

About the workshop: This is an opportunity to hone your interactive skills with the various, wonderful dogs at Hallie Hill Sanctuary. Whether it's for your own enjoyment, or for the enrichment of the dogs, your interactions with each dog can be a milestone toward its getting adopted by a loving family. This workshop will help us all toward achieving that very goal for each dog, by practicing the basic skills needed for even the calmest of dogs, every one of us will be helping these animals learn the skills they need to be good at home pets.

Why this matters: The dogs at Hallie Hill live outdoors and in their own space. This is an important difference when transferring to a forever home. By maintaining a consistent structure with each dog, and most importantly by doing so with various individuals, we will all instill the skills each dog will need when learning to be a part of family, and in so doing, reduce the rate at which they are rehomed back at Hallie Hill, or anywhere else.

The goal for this workshop is to establish a consistent method of interaction by volunteers with each dog. By practicing the following techniques, we will all contribute to the overall wellbeing and betterment of each dog we see, without restricting the enjoyment of these interactions. In fact, by all of us working on these same constants with each dog, we should all begin to see changes that will allow us to enjoy each of the dogs more than we already do.

Let's first discuss the importance of the workshop as a whole: By establishing a set of fundamentals, we will be able to provide one of the most important aspects in any family pet's life – consistency. This is the number one issue with dog behavior issues. When pets aren't provided a consistent structure to learn from, they begin to lash out or otherwise react with confusion, which can lead to worse behaviors as a result of stress, frustration, or simply a lack of direction. How we enter each pen, respond to each dog, walk, play, and leave each pen, even how we give treats, can have a significant impact on the long-term behavior of each dog.

Below is a general outline of what we wish to discuss in the workshop. I will be going over direct examples with some of the dogs to demonstrate what I can so we may all see how these fundamental practices can aide us all, and in turn, help each dog. Let's begin!

1. Body Language and why it matters:

To a dog, body language is the key to your interactions. From how you greet the dog to how you position yourself during your interactions, your body language can determine the outcome of many situations, good or bad.

Good vs Bad:

- Good body language is establishing dominance without resistance. By maintaining your confidence without eliminating your calm, your body language can put any dog at ease and create an opportunity to establish trust and control over any situation. For example: A jumping dog should be ignored, while a patient dog sitting on its hind quarters should be rewarded.
- Bad body language is relinquishing dominance and inviting a dog to establish its own level of control. Even a typically calm dog can be invited to act like a dominant one, if the wrong signals are given. An example of this can be making eye contact before establishing your space, or presenting yourself with nervousness before entering a pen.

2. Claiming your space:

This is perhaps the most important step in each interaction with each dog. Dogs are spatial creatures, and they respond to guidance more than discipline. The absolute worst behaviors in dogs are almost always created by a lack of boundaries. Before interacting with any dog (with perhaps the exception of your own at home), your personal boundaries must be made clear.

How to claim your space:

- Before entering a pen, petting a dog on a leash, or greeting a family member or friend's dog, you should always claim your space. This is best done with body language, and is a key step in setting the tone for a dog to not claim space over you, which in turn would create a dominance struggle. Claiming your space can eliminate simple things like a dog rushing doors, gates, or entryways, and more profound behaviors like jumping, mouthing, urination, chewing and so on.
- I will demonstrate the difference between claiming space and simply letting a dog claim their space, and how this can benefit all volunteers AND dogs if we all begin to follow this simple but important step.

3. Positive reinforcement and how to use it:

The biggest misconception with dogs, and most other pets, is that discipline will correct unwanted behaviors. As mentioned before, a simple establishment of boundaries, space, and consistency is all anyone needs to create the pet of their dreams. Striking a dog in any way will almost always have the opposite of the intended effect, along with several other irreversible consequences.

Dogs are among the most responsive creatures to direction, which is why they make excellent pets. It is for this reason that positive reinforcement is such a powerful tool when utilized correctly, but can work against the owner, the dog, or anyone interacting with one when used incorrectly.

We will demonstrate and discuss the following:

- **Timing:** timing is everything. When a dog is learning a new behavior, timing is the most critical aspect of any command, including treats.
- When to reinforce the behaviors we want, and when not to reinforce the ones we do not.
- Why punishment is counterproductive.

We all love to pamper the dogs with treats and we want them all to be happy, however we have a unique opportunity to provide a greater service to each dog by focusing on when and how we give these treats to better enrich their long-term lives, as well as their immediate pleasure in receiving your love and attention.

4. Establishing Dominance (How to always be a pack leader!):

For many dogs, this is a no-brainer. The innate desire for dogs to follow human commands is part of what makes them our best friends. It is important, however, to always reinforce this “hierarchy,” as it is also in a dog's innate nature to challenge or test the boundaries of this established relationship.

How to establish dominance:

- For many dogs, it is as simple as the first command you give them. For the dogs that are more dominant by nature, you need to establish your role as a dominant figure in their presence. This is essential to curb activities like mouthing, jumping, gate rushing, leash pulling and otherwise ignoring commands and disciplines.

We will demonstrate the difference between establishing dominance, and letting a dog to it for us.

5. The importance of a Leash, and how it can change the way you see a dog:

The key ingredient to any dog becoming a good house dog is a leash. Before any dog is taken into a new home, it is important that the new owner walk the dog around their new neighborhood. This establishes a sort of grounding for the dog in many ways, not least of which is learning that the person on the other end of the leash is in control, not the other way around.

We will go over the proper way to leash a dog, and why this is so critical for every dog at Hallie Hill.

- Leash types
- Leash vs harness

- Slip leash vs correction collar
- How to train a dog to obey a leash
- How to use a leash as a training tool

Walking a dog establishes the strongest bond between a person and a dog, and particularly with reluctant, anxious, or otherwise undisciplined dogs, the leash helps to establish confidence and better responses to behavior training. Using a leash is also the easiest way to establish dominance and build structure to create the dog's role in your pack, and often is the most practical tool for training.

6. Routine and Consistency:

This is the overall reason why we are here. This workshop and our contributions as volunteers coincide to reach one goal: consistency. By practicing what we covered today we will all establish a consistent structure for the dogs to follow, which in turn will create an understanding for them that should lead to more enriching interactions for you, and happier barks, waggier tails, and ultimately, more adoptable behaviors for them!

- The best thing for a dog (whether it is a puppy going to its forever home for the first time, a rescue finding a place to live, a dog that's been in the family since forever, or a dog that is in a home but is exhibiting unwanted behavior) is consistency, repetition, and routine. Dogs rely on their leaders for guidance, and when they have none, they act without knowing whether their behavior is good or bad, right or wrong. If we work to establish dominance, claim space, reward good behaviors and ignore the bad, utilize good body language, and continue to socialize each of these dogs with the mindset of consistency, we will all guarantee that every dog will be adoptable in the future, which in turn will make being here that much more rewarding!