

# REDIRECTING

## WHAT IT IS

When dogs become frustrated and aroused, their natural reaction is to put their mouths on objects. Redirecting usually happens when a dog becomes so aroused and frustrated by not being able to interact with a person, animal or object that the dog grabs whatever is nearest to him.

What the dog grabs could include a variety of options including another dog — even one he is bonded to — or the leg or arm of the person holding the leash. Redirecting is not personal, and the dog is not trying to harm you or another animal. He is simply not using any self-control. That said, redirecting is not a safe behavior, and it can cause discomfort and even harm to people and other animals.

## MANAGEMENT

If you have a dog with a history of redirecting, avoid situations that are likely to produce this behavior. Walking along a fence with a barking dog on the other side would be a common example. Getting too close to a person, dog or object that your dog finds exciting, or staying still and allowing your dog to stare at any of these can also cause frustration. Do not walk another dog while also handling a dog who may redirect.

For small dogs, if you see them becoming aroused, hold your leash tight and extend your arm so the dog cannot reach you, then trot as quickly as possible past whatever triggers the dog. For larger dogs, you may need additional help teaching the dog to wear a head halter so that you can have the most control possible if the dog becomes aroused while on a walk. Guardians of all dogs who struggle with redirecting behaviors may benefit from teaching the dog to wear a basket muzzle while on walks.

## TRAINING

We highly recommend you pursue reward-based (positive reinforcement) training with your dog to help him or her learn to control their frustration and arousal. You can also hire a behavior consultant to teach you specific exercises to help teach impulse control.

Any reactivity (frantic barking, growling or lunging) the dog displays before or along with redirecting should also be addressed.

## RESOURCES

[www.richmondspca.org/training](http://www.richmondspca.org/training)

[www.ispeakdog.org](http://www.ispeakdog.org)

[www.themuzzleupproject.com](http://www.themuzzleupproject.com)

*Feisty Fido* by Patricia McConnell

*Feeling Outnumbered* by Patricia McConnell and Karen B. London

If you need a consult to help with this behavior, please contact our behavior helpline at 804-643-7722 or [behaviorhelpline@richmondsca.org](mailto:behaviorhelpline@richmondsca.org).