



Volunteer Dog 2.0 Handbook

HSMC Dog Training 2.0

Advanced Handling, Equipment, and Behavior Awareness

Dog 2.0 builds on the skills learned in **Dog 101** and focuses on proper equipment use, safety tools, and a deeper understanding of dog behavior in the shelter environment. Volunteers in Dog 2.0 are expected to confidently and safely handle dogs while helping create a calmer, healthier shelter environment.

Program Requirements

Complete and submit a volunteer application (Level 1).

Attend the HSMC Basic Volunteer Orientation (Level 1).

Complete Dog 101 (Level 2)

Complete a total of no less than 150 hours in dog walking (Level 2).

Buy and maintain your own leash/slip lead and clicker

Minimum of 300 hours of total service time and age 18

Dog Paw Prints

	Dog - A level two volunteer has completed 10+ hours and must pass Dog or Cat 101 to advance. They have a moderate list of activities and may interact with certain animals. Green Collar Dogs
	Dog - (Age 18+) The level three volunteer has completed 300+ service hours and must pass Dog to advance. The Volunteer Coordinator must recommend a volunteer for advancement to this level. Eligible to take Dog 2.0. Given more activities. More than 50% of the time must be logged in dog-handling positions. Green & Blue-Collar Dogs with approval.
	Dog - (Age 18+) The level four volunteer has completed 1,000+ hours. Must pass Fear Free Shelter Training to advance. The Shelter Operations Manager must recommend a volunteer for advancement to this level. Given more activities. More than 50% of the time must be logged in dog-handling positions. Green, Blue & Red Collar Dogs with approval.
	Dog - (Age 18+) The level five volunteer has completed 2,000+ hours. Must pass specific ASPCA Pro classes to advance. The Executive Director must recommend a volunteer for advancement to this level. Given more activities. More than 50% of the time must be logged in dog-handling positions. Green, Blue & Red Collar Dogs, ISO with approval.
	Dog - (Age 18+) The level-five volunteer has completed 2,000+ hours. Must pass specific Maddie's University classes to advance. The Executive Director must recommend a volunteer for advancement to this level. Given more activities. More than 50% of the time must be logged in dog-handling positions.

	Green, Blue & Red Collar Dogs, ISO.
	All Volunteers – (Loyalty Paw) This paw is for volunteers who have served the HSMC for 1 year or more. 1 star per year.

Equipment Basics

Volunteers must become familiar with all dog-handling equipment used at the shelter. Proper equipment use helps **prevent escapes, reduce stress, and protect both dogs and volunteers.** Before removing any dog from a kennel, always ensure the dog is **properly fitted with the correct equipment.**

Flat Collars

Some dogs wear **flat collars** for identification and color coding within the shelter.

These collars indicate **medical status, handling level, or special notes**

Flat or prong collars are **not typically used for leash attachment** unless instructed by staff.

Martingale Collars

Most shelter dogs wear **martingale collars** while in the shelter.

Martingales:

- Tighten slightly when pressure is applied
- Prevent dogs from **backing out of their collar**
- Provide **safe control without choking**

All leashes must be attached to the martingale collar unless staff instructs otherwise, or if you are using a harness loop.

Always check that the martingale:

- Is not too loose
- Is not twisted
- Sits high on the dog's neck

Slip Leads

A **slip lead** is a rope leash that forms a loop placed over the dog's head.

Slip leads are especially helpful when:

- Removing a dog from the kennel
- Working with excited dogs
- Handling dogs you do not yet have a relationship with

Slip leads allow volunteers to **maintain distance** while safely gaining control.

When using a slip lead:

- Place the loop **high on the neck behind the ears**
- Keep the leash snug but not tight
- Maintain calm and steady control

Clip Leashes

Clip leashes are **traditional leashes with a metal clasp**.

They can be attached to:

- Martingale collars
- Harnesses

Always double-check the clip is **fully secured before exiting the kennel area**.

Harnesses

A **harness** wraps around the dog's chest and body behind the front legs.

Harnesses are helpful for:

- Dogs that **pull strongly**
- **Red level dogs**
- Dogs that are difficult to control using only a collar

Harnesses distribute pressure across the body rather than the neck.

Some harnesses are:

- Standard strap harnesses
- Temporary harnesses made from a **slip lead**

Always ensure the harness is **properly fitted and secure before walking the dog**.

"Adopt Me" Vests or Bandanas

Adopt Me gear helps the public **identify shelter dogs and promote adoptions**.

These items also:

- Distinguish shelter dogs from the public's pets
- Help identify volunteers when worn over jackets

Guidelines:

- Vests and bandanas **must be signed out**
 - Must be **returned after use**
 - Should only be used with **shelter dogs**
-

Air Horns

Air horns are used **only for safety purposes**.

They may be used to:

- Break up dog fights
- Alert staff to a situation
- Signal emergencies

Usage levels:

- **One quick tap**

Used to distract dogs or interrupt escalating behavior.

- **One steady horn blow**

Signals a **dog fight** and alerts staff that assistance is needed.

- **Multiple steady horn blows**

Signals a **serious emergency**.

Important rule:

Volunteers should NEVER respond to a horn by running toward the situation.

Instead, volunteers can help by:

- Alerting nearby staff
- Securing the dog they are handling
- Remaining calm and aware of surroundings

Spray Bottles

Spray bottles are a **training and redirection tool**.

They can help interrupt unwanted behaviors such as:

- Jumping
- Excessive barking
- Mild aggressive displays

A quick spray can redirect the dog's attention and allow the volunteer to **reinforce a more appropriate behavior**.

Shaker Bottles

Shaker bottles are simple but effective training tools.

They contain objects that make noise when shaken and are used to **interrupt unwanted behaviors**, such as:

- Jumping
- Barking
- Fixating on other dogs

The noise helps **break the dog's focus**, allowing the handler to redirect the dog toward a calmer behavior.

Clickers

As discussed in **Dog 101**, HSMC uses clickers as part of the **"Calm in the Kennel" training program**.

Volunteers help kennel staff create a **quieter, less stressful environment** by reinforcing calm behaviors.

The goal is to condition dogs to:

- Sit quietly
- Remain calm
- Focus on people calmly rather than barking or jumping

When walking through the kennel area:

1. Wait for the dog to **sit or pause barking**
2. **Click**
3. Reward the calm behavior with attention or praise

Over time, this helps reduce noise and stress in the shelter.

THE SPECTRUM OF FEAR, ANXIETY & STRESS

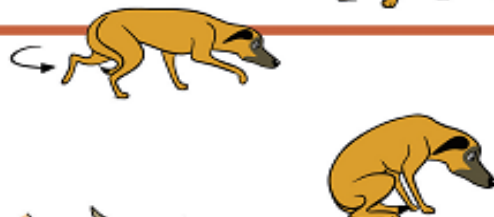
RED: SEVERE SIGNS - FIGHT/AGGRESSION (FAS 5)

- Offensive aggression: lunging forward, ears forward, tail up, hair may be up on the shoulders, rump, and tail, showing only the front teeth, lip pucker - lips pulled forward, tongue tight and thin, pupils possibly dilated or constricted.
- Defensive aggression: hair may be up on the back and rump, dilated pupils, direct eye contact, showing all teeth including molars, body crouched and retreating, tail tucked, ears back.



RED: SEVERE SIGNS - FLIGHT/FREEZE/FRET (FAS 4)

- Flight: ears back, tail tucked, actively trying to escape - slinking away or running, mouth closed or excessive panting - tongue tight instead of loose out of mouth, showing whites of eyes, brow furrowed, pupils dilated.
- Freeze/Fret: tonic immobility, pupils dilated, increased respiratory rate, trembling, tense closed mouth, ears back, tail tucked, body hunched.



YELLOW: MODERATE SIGNS (FAS 3)

- Similar to FAS 2 but turning head away, may refuse treats for brief moments or take treats roughly, may be hesitant to interact but not completely avoiding interaction.



YELLOW: MODERATE SIGNS (FAS 2)

- Ears slightly back or to the side, tail down but not necessarily completely tucked, furrowed brow, slow movements or unable to settle, fidgeting, attention seeking to owner, panting with a tighter mouth, moderate pupil dilation.



GREEN: MILD/SUBTLE SIGNS (FAS 1)

- Lip licking, avoids eye contact, turns head away without moving away, lifts paw, partially dilated pupils, slight panting but commissures of lips are relaxed.



GREEN: ALERT/EXCITED/ANXIOUS? (FAS 0-1)

- Tail up higher, looking directly, mouth closed, eyes more intense, more pupil dilation, brow tense, hair may be just slightly up on the back and tail, may be expectant and excited or highly aroused.



GREEN: PERKED/INTERESTED/ANXIOUS? (FAS 0-1)

- Looking directly but not intensely, tail up slightly, mouth open slightly but loose lips, ears perked forward, slight pupil dilation.



GREEN: RELAXED (FAS 0)

- Sleeping.
- Neutral: ears in neutral position, not perked forward, brow soft, eyes soft, mouth closed but lips relaxed, body loose, tail carriage neutral, pupils normal dilation.
- Friendly greeting: slow back and forth tail and butt wag, ears just slightly back, relaxed brow and eyes, may have mouth slightly open with relaxed lips and loose tongue.



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Temperament

Temperament refers to how a dog is likely to behave in different situations.

HSMC performs **temperament testing** to evaluate how each dog may respond to:

- Handling
- Walking
- New environments
- Other dogs or people

This information helps staff and volunteers:

- Match dogs with the right adopters
- Provide appropriate training and enrichment
- Manage behavioral challenges while dogs are in the shelter

Reading Kennel Information

Before taking any dog out of its kennel, volunteers **must review the dog's information**.

Always check:

- Temperament profile
- Behavior notes
- Kennel signage
- Handling level or warnings

These details are located on the **front of each kennel**.

This information is critical for **safe handling and proper training support**.

Reporting Behavior Concerns

If a dog shows concerning behavior, volunteers must notify staff.

Examples include:

- Growling
- Resource guarding
- Extreme tenseness
- Snapping or aggressive behavior

Reporting concerns allows staff to **address issues early and create training plans**.

Volunteers should complete a **Behavior Evaluation Form** for dogs displaying these behaviors.

Emotional State of Shelter Dogs

Shelter environments can be extremely stressful for dogs.

Many dogs experience:

- Anxiety
- Fear
- Frustration
- Loneliness
- Depression

Dogs in the shelter have **very little control over their environment**, which can lead to emotional distress.

Signs of Stress

Common signs of stress in dogs include:

- Ears pinned back
- Low body posture
- Dilated pupils
- Avoiding eye contact
- Whining or moaning
- Spinning in circles
- Tail beating against kennel walls

If volunteers observe these behaviors, they should **complete a Behavior Evaluation Form and notify staff.**

Supporting Shelter Dogs

Volunteers play a critical role in improving the well-being of shelter dogs.

Activities that help reduce stress include:

- Walking
- Socialization
- Training
- Enrichment activities
- Calm interaction

These activities help improve the **psychological and physical well-being** of dogs while they wait for their forever homes.

How Volunteers Help Dogs Get Adopted

Every interaction a volunteer has with a dog can help that dog find a home.

Teach Basic Manners

Dogs who walk politely and respond to simple commands are much more appealing to potential adopters.

Help Dogs Relax

Stress can make dogs appear hyperactive or anxious. Calm walks and quiet bonding time help dogs show their true personality.

Promote Positive Experiences

Friendly interactions with volunteers help dogs develop **trust and confidence with people.**

Be an Advocate for the Dog

Volunteers often know dogs better than anyone. If you discover a dog's favorite activity, toy, or personality traits, share that information with staff so it can be used to promote the dog.

A calm, well-mannered dog who enjoys human interaction is **much more likely to be adopted quickly.**



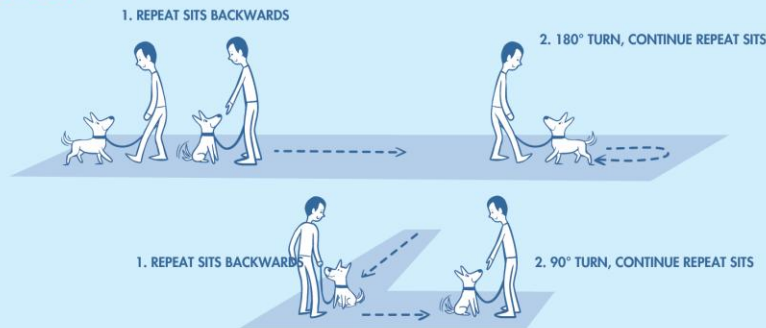
Focus Exercises

If your dog barks and lunges at distractions or just drags you on walks, one helpful strategy is to perform fun exercises that help your dog focus on you. These exercises work best if you adopt quick, precise treat delivery and movement speed as well as posture and arm positions that make your signals clear.

The following is a set of patterns for combining simple exercises:

REPEAT SITS BACKWARDS, HEELING, REPEAT SITS ON THE SIDE and CHANGES IN PACE in ways that make focusing on you fun.

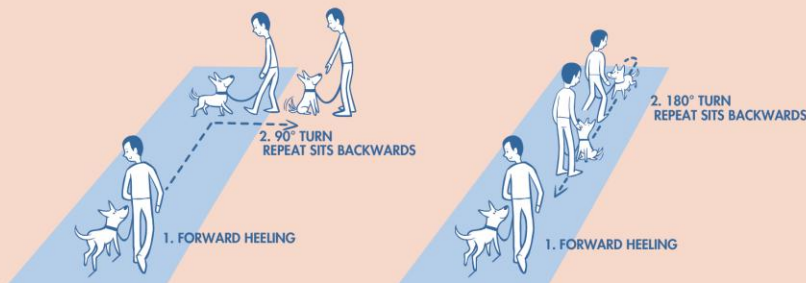
A. Repeat sit backwards: change directions by turning 90° or 180° (backwards U-turn) and continuing with repeat sits backwards.



B. Repeat sit backwards: change directions by turning 90°, 180°, 270°, or 360° and heeling forwards.



C. Heel forward: change direction, switching to repeat sit backwards 90° (L-pattern) or 180°.



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Common Mistakes Dog Walking Volunteers Make

Even experienced volunteers can accidentally reinforce behaviors we are trying to reduce. Being aware of these common mistakes helps keep both dogs and volunteers safe.

Allowing Dogs to Pull on the Leash

If a dog is allowed to pull even occasionally, the behavior will continue. Always use the “**Be a Tree**” or direction-change techniques to reinforce loose-leash walking.

Moving Too Quickly

Many shelter dogs need time to settle. Moving too quickly can overwhelm fearful dogs or increase excitement in high-energy dogs.

Ignoring Early Stress Signals

Dogs communicate discomfort through body language. If volunteers miss early signals, the dog may escalate to barking, lunging, or growling.

Allowing Dogs to Greet Other Dogs

Shelter dogs may react unpredictably. Volunteers should **never allow dog-to-dog greetings** unless directed by staff.

Talking on the Phone While Walking

Dog walking requires **full attention**. Volunteers must remain aware of surroundings at all times.

Letting Dogs Jump on People

Jumping may seem friendly but can knock people down or reinforce bad habits. Always redirect jumping behavior.

Walking Dogs That Are Too Strong

If a dog is too strong for you to control safely, return the dog to their kennel and choose another dog.

Remember: **Safety and consistency are the volunteer’s responsibility.**

Martingale Collar Color Key

GREEN: Must complete 10 hours minimum & DOG 101

A **GREEN** dog is a dog that walks well on a leash and is easily handled. These dogs typically have a low bite risk and are usually good with most people.

BLUE: Must complete 300 hours in dog walking, approval from the Operations Manager, DOG 101 & DOG 2.0

A **BLUE** dog is typically a little more challenging to handle. They may pull on a leash and need more work with their basic obedience. These dogs can be good with other dogs but are labeled **BLUE** to ensure understanding that they have more quirks than a **GREEN** dog. Unless the volunteer has already received the Shelter Operation Manager's clearance to walk **BLUE** dogs alone, these dogs should be walked with TWO volunteers.

RED: Must complete 1000 hours in dog walking, Approval from Eddie Leedy, and DOG 101 & DOG 2.0

A **RED** dog is usually a tricky dog to handle. They are generally heavy pullers on a leash and are strong. They need much more work than a blue dog. These dogs are typically more reactive to strangers and dog-aggressive. Unless the volunteer has already gotten clearance from the Executive Director to walk **RED** dogs alone, they should be walked with TWO volunteers.

BLACK: A **BLACK** dog is a **STAFF-ONLY** dog. These dogs are more reactive to strangers, usually dog aggressive, and are a handful on leash. Unless the volunteer has already received the Executive Director's clearance to walk **BLACK** dogs alone, these dogs should be walked with TWO volunteers.

Training Commands and Techniques

Volunteers play an important role in reinforcing **basic training skills** for shelter dogs. These simple commands improve manners, reduce stress, and increase adoption potential. Consistency between volunteers is critical. Always use the **same commands and training techniques** described below.

Jumping

For most dogs, jumping is rewarding because it gains attention.

To discourage jumping:

1. When the dog jumps, **turn 180° away** from the dog.
2. Completely **ignore the dog**.
3. As soon as **all four paws are on the ground**, reward the dog with praise, petting, or a small treat.

The goal is to teach the dog that **attention only happens when they are calm and not jumping**.

Sit

Sit is one of the most useful commands for shelter dogs.

1. Begin with several treats in your hand.
2. Allow the dog to smell the treats.
3. Slowly move the treat **up and slightly back** over the dog's head.

As the dog lifts their head, their body should naturally move into a **sitting position**.

When the dog sits:

- Say **"Sit."**
- Immediately reward with a treat.

If the Dog Does Not Sit

Try adjusting the technique:

- Move the treat slower or faster
- Start the dog near a **wall or corner** to prevent backing up

Once the dog understands the command (about **90% reliability**):

Begin using "Sit" before rewards such as:

- Petting
- Going outside
- Throwing a toy

This teaches the dog that **good things happen when they sit politely**.

Practice the command in **different locations and with distractions** to help the dog generalize the behavior.

Down

The "Down" command can sometimes be difficult for shelter dogs because lying down is a **submissive position**.

Several training methods can help.

Watch (Focus Command)

The “Watch” command teaches the dog to **focus on the handler**.

1. Stand or kneel in front of the dog.
2. Hold a treat between your thumb and forefinger.
3. Bring the treat to the **bridge of your nose** and say “**Watch.**”
4. As soon as the dog makes **eye contact**, reward with the treat.

Repeat **5–10 times**.

As the dog improves:

- Gradually move the treat away from your face
- The dog should continue to focus on your eyes

This teaches the dog to **look to the handler for guidance**.

Leave It

“Leave It” teaches the dog to **ignore something they want**.

1. Place treats in a closed hand and allow the dog to smell them.
2. The dog will try to get the treats.

Say “**Leave It.**”

Wait patiently until the dog **moves their nose away**.

As soon as they disengage, reward with a treat.

Progression:

1. Open your hand with the treat visible.
2. If the dog tries to grab it, close your hand and say “**Leave It.**”
3. When the dog moves away, say “**Take It**” and reward.

Continue by placing the treat on the **floor** and covering it with your hand.

Slowly increase the time the dog must ignore the treat before being rewarded.

Practice with different objects so the dog understands the command in many situations.

Stay

“Stay” teaches patience and impulse control.

1. Ask the dog to **Sit**.
2. Say “**Stay.**”
3. Wait **one second**.
4. Say the release word “**Free.**”
5. Reward with a treat.

Repeat several times.

Gradually increase the duration:

- 2 seconds
- 3 seconds
- 5 seconds

If the dog breaks the stay, simply restart the exercise.

Once the dog can stay for **5–10 seconds**, begin adding distance.

1. Say “**Stay.**”
2. Take **one small step backward**.
3. Return and release with “**Free.**”

Slowly increase both **distance and duration**.

Practice the same exercise with the dog in the **Down position**.

Recall Commands

Recall teaches dogs to return to the handler.

Targeted Recall

1. Hold a treat between your **index and middle finger**.
2. Present your hand to the dog.

When the dog touches the hand, release the treat.

Repeat several times.

Then add the command:

“Here.”

As the dog improves, remove the visible treat but continue rewarding the behavior.

Come

1. Start with the dog in a **sit position**.
2. Hold the **end of the leash**.
3. Step backward a few steps while saying **“Come.”**

When the dog reaches you:

- Reward with a treat
- Use an excited voice and relaxed posture

Dogs naturally follow movement, so **moving away encourages them to follow**.

Quiet Time and Socialization

Exercise alone is not enough for shelter dogs.

Dogs also need time to **relax, decompress, and bond with people**.

After walking the dog, volunteers are encouraged to spend **quiet time** together.

Good locations include:

- Sitting in the grass
- The gazebo
- Benches around the property

Dogs should remain out of their kennels for **at least 20 minutes when possible**.

It often takes **15–20 minutes for a shelter dog to truly relax**.

Returning a dog to their kennel too quickly may increase stress and agitation.

Quiet bonding time helps dogs:

- Lower stress levels
- Build trust with humans
- Show their true personality

These calm interactions can make a **huge difference in a dog’s adoptability and emotional well-being**.

Exercise 1 – Lure Forward

1. Start with the dog in a **sit position**.
2. Hold a treat in a closed hand near the dog's nose.
3. Lower your hand to the floor in front of the dog.

The dog's nose should follow the treat.

4. Move the treat slightly forward.

To reach it, the dog will stretch forward and lie down.

As soon as the dog's **belly touches the floor**, reward with a treat.

Once the dog understands the motion, add the command:

"Down."

Exercise 2 – Between the Paws

1. Start with the dog in a **sit**.
2. Lower the treat toward the floor.
3. Move the treat **between the dog's front legs**.

The dog will slide forward into a lying position.

Reward immediately when the dog lies down and begin adding the command **"Down."**

Exercise 3 – The Leg Tunnel

1. Sit on the ground with legs bent to create a small **tunnel**.
2. Lure the dog under your legs using a treat.

Your legs should be low enough that the dog must **lie down** to go under.

Reward the dog when their belly touches the ground.

After several successful attempts, begin adding the command **"Down."**

Exercise 4 – Capture the Behavior

Watch for moments when the dog naturally lies down.

As the dog begins to lie down:

- Say **"Down."**
- Reward when the belly touches the floor.

Repeating this helps the dog associate the command with the behavior.
