

Barrier Reactivity



Barrier Reactivity may be the most common form of reactivity. Please read the [Reactivity Overview](#) page before proceeding with any training techniques. Barriers can include; fences (also known as fence fighting), through windows, or through any type of barrier that restricts a dog's visual field and/or movement. This document will cover how to work with barrier reactivity in your backyard, through windows, and on walks. When your dog is fence fighting or showing barrier reactivity, that can be a form of [trigger stacking](#). Allowing this to continue might set your pup up for future altercations due to rehearsal of behaviors.

Remember that reactivity usually comes from a place of anxiety and/or fear, so adding any punishment to your training is more likely to make the reactions worse than better. **It is best to work with a certified dog trainer for any reactivity issues.** These guides below are only meant to be used if you need assistance until you can schedule a meeting with a training professional. For more information on how to find a trustworthy trainer, follow this link [here](#).

Backyard Barrier Reactivity

The key to improving your dog's behaviors concerning fence fighting in your backyard is to spend time with him/her while they are outside. Before working on training your dog's barrier reactivity, assess the enrichment and routine of your dog. Dogs are more likely to excessively react to fences if there is no enrichment present. Sometimes, dog fence fight as a form of enrichment due to lack of other activities available. Also, if your dog is reacting to a trigger that has a consistent routine (i.e. neighbor dog who is consistently let out at the same time as your dog), then it may be better to let your dog have yard access during times that the trigger is not present.

Window Barrier Reactivity

Excessive reactions to triggers through a window is fairly similar to fence fighting. As with backyard barrier reactivity, it is important to assess your dog's enrichment and routine in order to mitigate any boredom factors or to manage around consistent triggers- such as a mailman dropping off the mail at the same time each day.

Training guide for Backyard/Window Barrier Reactivity:

1. Try to stand in an area that is a safe distance from your dog, to decrease chances to any redirection biting. Never stand between your dog and the barrier they are reactive to.

Please consider holding a 20-foot leash. This is an added layer of protection if there is a risk for escape or breaking of the fence/barrier.

2. Pay attention to your dog's body language. Any hints of alert-type behaviors like; fixation, tense body postures, tail being held high and stiff, etc. should be observed. For help on identifying dog body language, follow this [link](#).
3. If your dog does show signs of above-mentioned body language, call your dog away from the barrier. Reward any relaxed body language. It is important to always give a positive reinforcement to your dog when they come away from the barrier and/or look towards you. This helps break the hyper-focus that is normally followed by excessive reactions.
4. If your dog starts to excessively react (i.e. barking/lunging/growling) attempt to call the dog away from the fence as quickly as possible. This can be in conjunction with a high-value treat, clapping your hands to get their attention for recall, or calling them to come back inside or to a different room. *Never try to interrupt their reaction with body handling (grabbing or lifting the dog) as this puts you at a great risk of bite and/or injury.
5. If your dog is reactive to a certain window in your home, consider ways to make the window less visually rewarding. You can do this by buying curtains or even apply some frosted or opaque window clings so your pup can't see as well outside anymore.
6. Even though your dog is reactive to certain barriers, it may also be a source of enrichment for them. When working with reactive dogs, it's always good idea to add extra enrichment to your pup's routine, to help decrease those unwanted behaviors. For ideas on enrichment options, click [here](#).

Barrier Reactivity On Leash

Sometimes the most reactivity we see is when we are walking our dogs on leash past fenced areas. This may or may not be due to a dog/dogs that are on the other side of the fence. Always bring easily accessible treats or a high value toy when taking a dog with reactive tendencies on a walk. Also, try to plan your walk route so that fenced areas are predictable and you can anticipate any reactions.

Training Guide for Leash Barrier Reactivity:

1. Try to walk your dog at the furthest distance from the leash area. This distance can be decreased over time, but it is important to work at the most comfortable level for your dog. Dogs, as with humans, have a lot of difficulty learning when excessive reactions are taking place. So, creating space for learning is all about making sure your dog is showing relaxed body language as consistent as possible.
2. Pay attention to your dog's body language as you get closer to the fenced area. Reward for relaxed body language and looking at you instead of the fenced area.
3. If your dog shows any signs of fixation, tense body postures, tail being held high and stiff, etc- walk further away from the fenced area by getting your dog's attention and switching direction. This helps break the hyper-focus that is normal followed by excessive reactions.
4. If your dog starts to excessively react (i.e. barking/lunging/growling) attempt to call the dog away from the fence as quickly as possible. This can be in conjunction with a high-value treat, clapping your hands to get their attention for recall, or calling them to come back inside or to a different room. *Never try to interrupt their reaction with body handling (grabbing or lifting the dog) as this puts you at a great risk of bite and/or injury.

5. Even though your dog is reactive to certain barriers, it may also be a source of enrichment for them. When working with reactive dogs, it's always good idea to add extra enrichment to your pup's routine, to help decrease those unwanted behaviors. For ideas on enrichment options, click [here](#).
6. For more information on leash reactivity, visit <https://www.calmcanineacademy.com/webinars>.

*If any bite, injury, or other emergency happens while working with your dog. Please separate and contain the dog as quickly and safely as possible. If appropriate, call 9-1-1 for medical assistance and call Animal Law Enforcement at 719-302-8798 for assistance with a dangerous dog.