

# Patience At Doorways

We love enthusiasm however doorway dashing isn't safe as we don't always know what might be on the other side! By teaching our dogs to go through doors calmly, we can keep everyone safe and have dogs who are attentive to us, regardless of where they might be going and how exciting it might be.

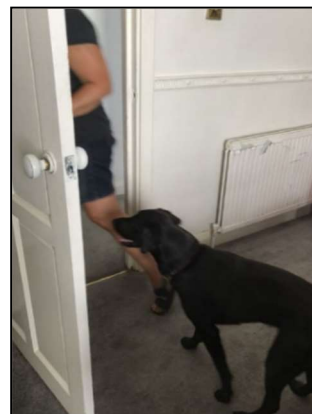
When going through any doorway, including getting in and out of the car, it's incredibly useful for dogs to learn to wait patiently until we open the door and invite them through, without pulling ahead. The key is being consistent and giving our dogs a clear message that this is what we expect from them. Plus their calmness and patience will always be rewarded by getting to go through the door!

## Teaching your dog to calmly go through doorways

Practise using a door that doesn't have much meaning to your dog. For example, use an internal door within the home rather than the front door, as this may be too exciting for them to begin with!

You can practise with your dog on lead, however if this gets them very excited you can start without the lead. Then when your dog has got the hang of it, start again from the beginning but with the lead on. Your dog might find this a little harder because the lead usually predicts walkies. So if you need to, use tasty treats to reward them for calmness, and be patient while they work out what they need to do.

- ❃ **Step 1:** Stand in front of the door, ready to go through, and wait for your dog to show calm behaviour. You are looking for them to be still with all feet on the floor - standing is fine if sitting is too challenging for them.
- ❃ **Step 2:** When your dog is calm, gently open the door a little way. If they try to rush through, simply close the door and wait for calm behaviour again. Timing is crucial, as your dog will be learning that sitting and being calm is what magically makes the door open, but that trying to rush through only makes it close again!
- ❃ **Step 3:** Repeat this until you can open the door fully and your dog remains calmly by your side.
- ❃ **Step 4:** At this point you can practise walking through the door, encouraging your dog to follow you. Once on the other side, reward your dog with a treat when they are looking at you.
- ❃ **Step 5:** When your dog has got the hang of it, put their lead on at the front door and practise again right from the beginning to help them get it right now it's more exciting. You'll end up outside the house but with a calm, relaxed dog who hasn't rushed out ahead of you!



## Extra help for dogs who are finding it difficult

Some dogs, especially those who are used to running straight through as soon as we open a door, are likely to become frustrated when the door no longer opens. They might initially become confused and try harder to get through. You might see some barking and bouncing as they don't immediately understand why you aren't opening the door as usual!

- ✿ Start by approaching the door and asking your dog to sit. Reward them with a tasty treat.
- ✿ Put your hand on the door handle. If your dog remains sitting, reward them with another treat.
- ✿ If your dog gets excited and gets up, simply try again. If they struggle three times in a row, make it easier for them by only moving your hand slightly towards the door, instead of touching it. Reward your dog with a treat for sitting still as you reach out with your hand. Repeat this stage of the training for a while longer.
- ✿ Once your dog can remain sitting whilst you put your hand towards and eventually on the door, try to open it a fraction. You may only be able to rattle the handle to begin with. If your dog remains sitting, reward them with a treat.
- ✿ Gradually open the door a little more each time. Reward your dog if they remain seated. If they get up, close the door calmly, and try again.
- ✿ When you get to the stage where you can open the door fully and your dog remains sitting, you can wait for your dog to offer you a sit when you approach the door instead of you asking for it. Then go back to **Step 4** of the training plan.

## Top training tip

The closed door itself will eventually signal to your dog that they should be calm and patient. Reward their good choices and they should choose to do the same behaviour next time, without the need for any instruction!

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**Your nearest Dogs Trust Dog School Team are also happy to help and can be contacted via: [www.dogstrustdogschool.org.uk](http://www.dogstrustdogschool.org.uk)**

The advice contained in this handout is of a general nature and is no substitute for specific behavioural or veterinary advice. If you are worried about your dog, then do consult your vet.