**Which dogs can I walk & general rules**

To help volunteers chose the most appropriate dogs to walk we have created a dot system similar to a traffic light. New dog walkers may only walk the dogs that are on the adoption floor. The dot is located on their pet portfolio. To be walked the dog needs both a dot ***and*** a walk sheet.

**Green Dot** – Go Dog Go! All trained dog walkers may walk.

**Yellow Dot** – slow down, do a double take. Are you up to walking me? Check my pet portfolio as I may be energetic/strong or shy.

**Red Dot** – **Experienced** Dog Walkers Only.

* Please don’t judge a dog based on its breed; get to know their individual personality and energy level. Only walk who you’re able to handle and comfortable with. All dogs are individuals!
* Wear proper shoes (closed toe) and clothing when you arrive to walk dogs.
* **No** talking or texting on a cellphone while you are in the process of walking a dog.
* Read the pet portfolios – check for “no \_\_\_ icon.” Volunteers often write valuable opinions on the walk sheets.
* Pay attention to the times the dogs may or may not have been out already that day. Also, look for “I’m Housetrained” signs as these dogs need to go out more often.
* Read the dog’s body language – please see the Sophia Yin handouts that are provided. Be respectful of a new dog’s space; greet the dogs the way you would want to be greeted by a stranger.
* When passing other dogs on the trail do not let the dogs meet; distract your dog with treats, find it, etc. Also, be mindful of other small animals on the trail – groundhogs, squirrels, cats at the old shelter.
* Only walk one dog at a time – they enjoy the one on one time with you.
* Dogs should never be in any of the cat areas – never take a dog into the kitten hallway (unless necessary), the cat rows or the Scratching Post.
* Read **ALL** the signs – even if you have walked that dog before, please take the time to read signs as there may be new ones.
* If a member of the public wants to walk a dog, politely direct them to the front desk.

**Understanding Shelter Dogs**

* + It’s important to know that a shelter environment is not the same as a home environment. Often while dogs are in our care at the SPCA they are stressed and frustrated. It is common that a lot of these dogs will have behavior challenges while being here. Some dogs will fence fight with one another even though they do like other dogs, they will bark constantly and may jump and mouth those who enter their kennels to walk them. Please be mindful of this while interaction with the dogs here at the SPCA.
	+ In a stressful environment, dogs view volunteers and staff as a high value resource. The kennel environment can stressful – imagine not being able to see anything but what’s right in front of you, but being able to hear and smell things 23 hours a day. It’s frustrating and upsetting and can lead to pent up frustration. Don’t always let their kennel behavior fool you! A lot of dogs are confused – why are they here, how did they get here, why do they have to go back in their kennels?
	+ Just like humans, every dog has a different personality. It is important to pay attention to the dog’s body language while you are interacting with them. We don’t always know the dog’s past or may not have accurate information on their past, but we always look towards their present and future.
	+ It’s okay for dogs to be picky about their canine friends – we don’t like everyone we meet! It’s incredibly rare for dogs to like EVERY dog they meet; even very social dogs don’t like everyone – that’s okay!
	+ All dogs have a **behavior evaluation** performed by two trained staff members. This helps us get a feel for that particular dog’s temperament, however, these assessments are not always 100% accurate and sometimes the dog’s behavior will change during their stay here at the SPCA, or when they go to their new homes. It is important that volunteers never attempt to do a “BE” or meet and greet with others dogs or cats.

**Signs And What They Mean**

**You MUST pay attention to all signs on and around each dog’s kennel. Please read all signage before you walk a dog, even if the dog isn’t ‘new’, as behavior/medical changes can occur while at the shelter.**

· *“Housetrained”* – indicates that this dog prefers to use the bathroom outside. Please make sure these dogs get walked often.

· “*Do not over exert*” – indicates that this dog has a medical condition (i.e. heartworm positive or injury) and can only go for short walks and should not be put in playgroups.

· “*I’m shy*” – indicates that this dog needs extra attention and socialization.

· “*Do not walk*” – means that this dog cannot be walked by anyone due to medical, behavioral or legal reasons.

· “*Staff walks only*” – indicates that this dog can only be walked by staff due to either behavioral or medical reasons.

· “*Use a harness*” – means this dog is strong and a puller. Having a harness on will make it a more enjoyable walk for both of you.

· “*I <3 my experienced dog walkers*” – indicates that this dog can only be walked or socialized by experienced dog walkers regardless of pet portfolio color.

· “I’m out walking with a volunteer” – means that the dog is with a volunteer and is accounted for. Please place one of these signs on a dog’s clipboard during every walk.

· “*Special diet*” – indicates that this dog can only have a certain type of food due to food allergies or other medical reasons. Please do not feed these dogs regular treats.

· “*Bite quarantine*” – means that this dog has bitten someone and is on a 10 day bite confinement. It is required by law that these dogs are only handled by certain people to avoid possible rabies exposure.

· “*No treats when I’m with my buddy*” – means there are two or more dogs in the kennel and they should not be given treats. Treats are a resource that dogs may guard from one another and this can cause fights.

· “*I’m athletic! I have a gold medal in fence climbing!” OR “Fence Climber”* – indicates that the dog has climbed out of kennels before and should not be left out unattended.

**DOG WALKING AND PLAY PARK PROCEDURES**

**Safety First, but Have Fun!**

Ideally, we need dog-walkers to sign-up for a two-hour shift each week. We’ll be counting on you, and so will the dogs. If you can’t make it or need to change your shift, please inform the Volunteer Coordinator. If you can’t commit to a shift, or are more flexible, please try to come in times and days when we are lacking volunteers.

* Every dog and puppy has a white kennel card and a white pet portfolio. This card has information such as the dog’s id number, when the dog came to the SPCA, where the dog was found or why it was surrendered or returned, and the dog’s weight, color, and sex.
* Please follow all the rules, and let us know of any questions or ways you think we can improve.

1) Sign in, put on your nametag, and get a kennel key upstairs at the Volunteer Station. Grab a clicker if clicker training.

2) Go to the main dog walking volunteer station on the left side to get an apron, plastic bags for scooping poop, a pencil, dog treats, and an “I am walking with a volunteer” sign.

3) Leashes are on the left side just inside the door on the wall between the puppy porches in the small dog room and halfway up the right side kennels on the wall.

4) Make a lap of all the kennel areas (left side, right side and the small dog room) and check walk sheets to see who hasn’t been walked, then make a plan for who you will walk, making sure to select dogs that both need a walk (haven’t been walked yet, or high energy, or housetrained) and that are appropriate for your level of experience. If there is a dog that is new to you, read the pet portfolio and walk sheet notes. Work with other volunteers if any.

5) If most of the dogs have not been out, try and walk eight dogs in a two-hour shift. If most of the dogs have been out once already and you feel you can be more useful working with high energy, shy, or headstrong dogs to make them more adoptable, that is great.

6) Getting dogs out of the kennel to go on a walk:

**a.** Mark time of walk on walk record sheet before getting the dog.

**b.** Hang “I am walking with a volunteer” sign before opening the kennel.

**c.** Grab the harness if there is one and you want to use it.

**d.** Unlock the kennel. Try to get the dog to calm down, by being calm and assertive yourself. Go inside and shut the door behind you.

**e.** Put the leash or leash and harness on and exit the kennel when you have the dog securely leashed. Be CERTAIN the collar is on tight (the 2 finger rule) before leaving the kennel!

7) Only walk one dog at a time. Only dog walkers who have passed the experienced dog walker test may walk two dogs at a time.

8) If there are two dogs in a kennel, you can separate them by lowering the door between the inside and outside portions of the kennel. If it is difficult to separate them, get help from staff or another volunteer. Do not throw treats into a kennel with more than one dog.

9) Keep a short, tight leash until you exit the kennels. Then you can relax the leash and let the dog enjoy the walk.

10) Clean up all poop!

11) Take the dog to a play park if he or she enjoys it. Some dogs like to walk, and some dogs like to run and play. Some dogs like a little of both.

12) Always close the outside gate before opening the inside gate. Always close the inside gate before unleashing the dog. Never put two dogs in a play park if they are not kenneled together, unless you have approval and have gone through the appropriate training in order to run playgroups.

13) While walking, keep dogs away from all fences. Otherwise, even great dogs can fence fight and re-direct on you or another dog passing by if the barking or cage aggression is too frustrating for them. The best way to stop a dog fight is to prevent one from happening. Try and bring a toy for these dogs to distract them.

14) Approaching other dogs or people while walking: This is tricky and requires some judgment. You need to balance the need to keep your dog safe and out of trouble with the need to help it become socialized and have fun. It is always best to keep dogs apart. Be careful not to let the leashes cross, that way you can pull your dog away if there is any trouble. Do not let children approach your dog without parental supervision. Some dogs are nervous around young children, and some children don’t know how to behave with dogs. Use your judgment, but make sure to keep the dog out of trouble and the child safe.

15) If a member of the public asks to walk your dog or to have you get a dog for them, please send them to the Front Desk for assistance.

16) If your dog gets loose, don’t panic! Let someone at the front desk know ASAP, and we’ll help you safely catch him. It’s happened before, and it will happen again! Mistakes happen to all of us.

17) After your walk, return the dog to his or her kennel, retrieve your “I am walking with a volunteer” sign, give a treat (if the dog is kenneled alone,) and then lock the kennel.

18) When you have finished volunteering, return supplies and key. Then, sign out.

19) Mark any health issues on the vet clinic board. If the issue is an irregular stool, please get a sample to the clinic.

**IF YOU ARE EVER IN DOUBT, ASK! WE’RE ALL HERE TO HELP THE ANIMALS!!!**