

Spatial Pressure 101

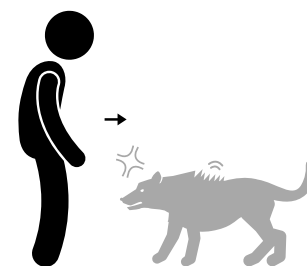
What It Is

To use physical space to influence a dog's behavior. This technique involves the trainer or handler moving their body or positioning themselves in a way that encourages the dog to move, stop, or change their behavior. Spatial pressure is a non-verbal form of communication that can be very effective in guiding and managing a dog's actions. Depending on the genetics of your dog they will require different levels & uses of spatial pressure. Talk to your trainer if you are ever unsure!

How It Works:

Taking Space

By stepping towards a dog or encroaching on their space, you can gently encourage the dog to move away from you. This technique is particularly useful when you need the dog to back up or change direction, such as when they become overstimulated by a distraction. Studies show that by taking a dog's space, you calmly assert yourself, effectively de-escalating the situation and communicating your intentions clearly.



Blocking Movement

Positioning yourself in the path of a dog can effectively prevent them from moving forward. This technique is helpful for stopping a dog from rushing out the door or approaching something they shouldn't. The more directly you face the dog, the greater the spatial pressure, allowing for clearer communication.



Giving Space

Moving away or turning away from the dog and creating distance can encourage them to follow you. This can be useful for recall training or getting a dog to come towards you.



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Why It's Useful

Spatial pressure is a subtle yet powerful tool that taps into a dog's natural understanding of body language and social cues. Dogs naturally respond to the movements and positions of others in their environment, making this technique intuitive for them. It can be especially useful in:

Managing Behaviour

- Controlling a dog's movements in a calm and controlled manner without the need for physical restraint eliminating potential for barrier frustration.

Building Trust and Respect

- Using spatial pressure effectively can help establish leadership and build a respectful relationship between you and your dog by being able to enforce boundaries, rules and limitations effectively.

Training Commands

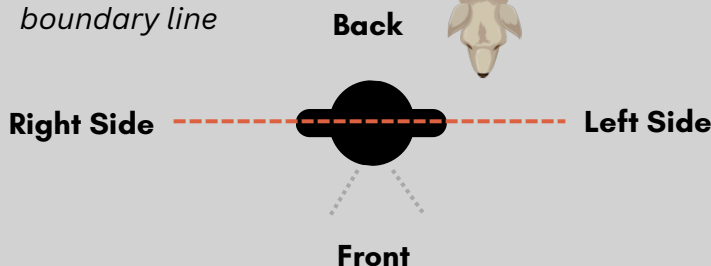
- Reinforcing commands like "back up," "stay," "leave it," or "come" by using your body position to guide the dog and help them follow through.

What to Expect

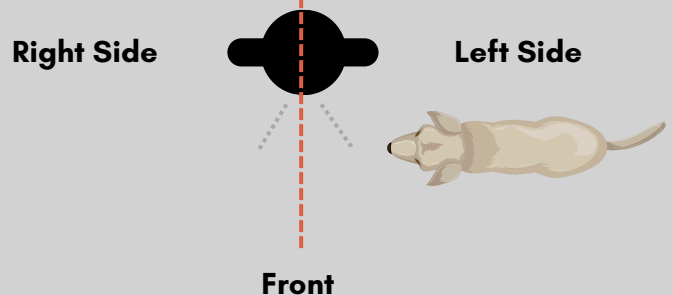
Visualize four boundaries that you can enforce with your dog.

Birds Eye View

When your dog is in this position enforce that your dog not pass your left & right side boundary

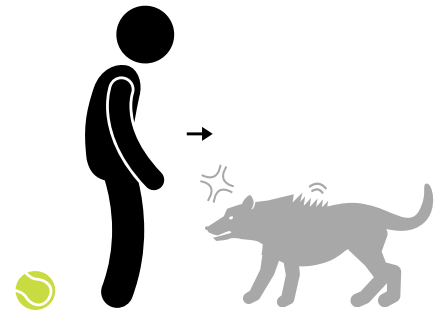


When your dog is in this position enforce that your dog not pass your front & back boundary



THE CLAIM GAME

The goal of the game is to be able to recall your dog past the distraction without them accessing the distraction



1. Start with your dog on a short leash and a distraction ready.
2. Toss the distraction (like food or a toy) behind you — something your dog really wants.
3. Step into your dog's space to block them from going toward the distraction.
4. Walk calmly but firmly into your dog's path, using your body to take space. Keep the leash short so they can't pull around you, but try not to use it much — the goal is for your dog to respond to you, not just the leash.
5. It's normal if you have to walk your dog several feet away from the distraction at first — keep going until they turn away and stop trying to get past you.
6. Give your dog space as soon as they turn away from the distraction.
7. Back up a few steps while facing your dog. This is their "reward" for respecting your space.
8. Then, start slowly walking toward the distraction — still facing your dog. If they try to rush past you, stop and block again like in step 2.
9. Practice until your dog can stay calm and walk near the distraction.
10. Once your dog can walk with you calmly within 3–4 feet of the distraction, or can recall past it without trying to grab it, reward them!
11. Use your release word like "Break!" and let them go get the distraction.

Tips & Tricks

- Keep the leash short to prevent your dog from circling behind you or slipping past.
- Start with an easy distraction and gradually work up to more challenging ones.
- Focus on using your voice and body language rather than relying on leash pressure.
- When done effectively, your dog will begin to disengage from distractions more quickly in response to your spatial pressure.
- Use the least amount of pressure necessary to achieve the desired response.
- If your dog attempts to go behind you, block their path or use your voice to guide them back to position.
- Practice at least 3-5 times with a controlled distraction (food, toy, family member) before relying on it during your walks.