

Off Lead Dogs

I've been training dogs, as a Bark Busters trainer, for over 16 years. I have come across all kinds of breeds and all kinds of issues. Dog owners who call on me for help want their dog to be well behaved both at home and in public, whilst retaining their spirit and love of life. They want to be able to walk their dogs without fear of embarrassing or dangerous incidents. This means that they will be working hard to train their dogs in public spaces. Much of the outdoor work they do will involve their dog being on a lead whilst they perfect their training. What I find is that their attempts to practise are often disrupted by a situation beyond their control.

Without doubt, the most serious challenge to owners and their dogs comes from approaches by off-lead dogs. It is the number-one frustration for many dog owners. They ask me how to handle approaches by dogs off-lead, who persist at encroaching into theirs, and their dog's personal space causing, at best, chaos or, at worst, a confrontation or fight. My advice to them is to remain calm and to call to the other dog's owner to "come and get your dog!". Expletives are tempting but not to be advised if an owner-confrontation is to be avoided! Clearly, I want my customers to be able to get themselves out of a difficult situation with the minimum of stress and confrontation possible, but they may well be panicking as their dog is reacting to the unwelcome approach from an uncontrolled dog. An adrenalized owner trying to control an adrenalized dog is the last thing that a dog trainer wants. It can be a recipe for disaster, set training back by weeks and undo lots of hard work!

When you see a dog on lead in a public space, the chances are that the dog is on his lead for a reason. You must remember that not all dogs are sociable. Some may be nervous or even fearful of other dogs, and these are states of mind that can cause aggression. I rarely see aggression from a well-balanced, confident dog – they don't feel the need to protect themselves. I can also state with absolute certainty that a dog off-lead is far more likely to be attacked when approaching a dog on-lead. This is because the dog on the lead cannot escape. He has lost the ability to run away, his 'flight' option, and only has the 'fight' option available to remove the perceived threat!

You may cheerfully call out that your dog is "friendly", "only wants to play", or "just wants to say hello". I can say with certainty that the people on the receiving end of this unwanted approach, don't care about your dog's friendly personality; they simply want him out of their space to avoid conflicts.

If your dog won't listen to you when off-lead, and rushes up to any dog he sees, then he should not be off-lead. With new legislation in the UK, your dog is "out of control" and consequences could be dire for both you and especially for your dog. You must have control of your dog in public spaces at all times. As a good dog owner, not only is this your moral responsibility, in consideration of other people and their dogs, it is now also your legal responsibility. If either you or the other dog owner were to be injured during a dog fight, inadvertently or not, the consequences can be catastrophic both legally and financially.



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I understand that you want your dog to enjoy time off the lead, and to have exercise, but you must train your dog, ensure that you are always in control and ensure that he will come to you when called, no matter what the temptation. Responsible dog owners that are out and about doing this very training don't deserve their hard work to be undone by those who allow their dogs to be out of control. If you need help it's important to call a trainer.

Until you have complete control, if you see a dog on a lead, please be considerate and put your dog on a lead too and help to ensure that all dog owners and their dogs, whatever their temperament, or however far along with their training, can enjoy public spaces.

If you feel I can help you with this, you can call my team on 0808 100 4071 who will discuss your needs and explain my service without obligation.

Alternatively, please do visit my website <http://www.barkbusters.co.uk/dog-training-derby> where you will also find lots of helpful training tips and information.