

MDL DOG SOCIALIZATION PROGRAM BEHAVIOR MANUAL

VIRGINIA-MARYLAND REGIONAL COLLEGE OF VETERINARY MEDICINE



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College of **Veterinary Medicine**

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What is socialization? Why is it important?

The socialization period, or the process of learning to behave in an acceptable manner in society, is a critical part of a dog's life. Socialization is typically implemented around 3 weeks to 3 months of age. However, regardless of the dog's age, it is imperative to take advantage of socialization to promote safety and overall health, alleviate stress and reduce aggression to humans and other animals. According to the American Veterinary Society of Animal Behavior, a poorly socialized dog can lead to behavior issues later in life. Exposing your dog to different people, animals and environments will make a permanent difference in their temperament and aid in comfort in different types of interactions.

WHAT IS THE MDL DOG SOCIALIZATION PROGRAM?

Every year, the first year students are granted a unique opportunity to work with a group of dogs that have been hand-selected from animal shelters and rescue organizations in the surrounding Blacksburg area. These dogs are still owned by their respective organizations, but live and are cared for at the veterinary college. The students are split into groups of four and each group is assigned a dog for 8-12 weeks.

WHAT ARE THE STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES?

1. Every student walks, trains and socializes their dog **twice a week** for 30 minutes or more.

It is most effective to do 10 minutes of walking, 10 minutes of training and 10 minutes of socializing.

2. One member of each group must fill out a **daily emotional assessment form**.

3. Every student documents a **weekly** video demonstrating the progress his or her dog is making during the program.

At the end of the program, students host a community event where the "graduating" dogs display their new found skills to community members in hopes of finding a perfect match and forever home.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS AND THE DOGS

One of the biggest differences between human and veterinary medicine is that animals cannot tell their doctors precisely what hurts, or what is wrong. But is that true? Behavior is the animal's way of talking with people, and as their doctors, it is important that we study the language of our patients. And, like any language, the meaning is not always straight forward, but if we watch and note subtle changes, we can understand a great deal about the state of an animal. A recent study revealed a relationship between noise sensitivity in dogs, and musculoskeletal pain. The findings from this research helps us recognize that when an owner complains of noise sensitivity to their dog, this should prompt further evaluation for musculoskeletal problems. Understanding the relationship between health and behavior provides you the tools to support the overall welfare of the animals under your care, while preserving the animal-human relationship that they and their owners enjoy.

A unique quality of the program is that it offers students the opportunity to work with different breeds of dogs that exhibit different behaviors. From evaluating behaviors and personalities to learning how to teach your dog basic commands, this program can offer extensive hands-on training that provides you with real-life experience.

Another unique opportunity in this program is experiencing the human-animal bond. The human-animal bond is influenced by the well being of both parties, including emotional, psychological and physical health. Understanding the depth of the bond is not only rewarding, but also helps us as veterinary professionals better integrate the bond into a clinical setting.

Educating yourself in animal behavior, veterinary care, and basic training will not only be beneficial to your career in veterinary medicine and public health, but will also give these dogs the chance they deserve at finding a permanent home.

THE MDL DOGS:

WHERE DO WE ACQUIRE THE DOGS FROM?

The veterinary college acquires dogs from shelters and rescue organizations in the surrounding Blacksburg area. The dogs have been previously selected from the Pulaski County Animal Shelter, the Mercer County Animal Shelter and the Regional Center for Animal Care and Protection (RCACP).

WHY DO WE CHOOSE THESE DOGS?

It is our hope that we relieve overcrowding in shelters, and provide excellent veterinary care and basic training to the dogs selected for this program.

HOW DO WE SELECT DOGS FOR THE PROGRAM?

The process in which the veterinary college selects dogs for the socialization program is multifactorial. The staff at the shelters do an initial evaluation, selecting dogs that are in good health and that interact with humans and other dogs without demonstrating aggressive behavior. A second evaluation is performed by a behavioral specialist to confirm the initial assessment by the staff. Every effort is made to select dogs that can benefit from their time with new people at a new location while making progress towards mastering the skill set that improves their adoptability into a forever home.

The behavior assessment is a comprehensive tool that attempts to fairly evaluate a dog's behavior through a series of interactions. These interactions assess how they handle restraint during blood draws, vaccines, and a physical exam that includes a rectal temperature. They also evaluate play behavior (i.e. playing fetch), food aggression, and dog-to-dog aggression. In addition, some facilities have the option to assess interactions with cats. Since these dogs will be handled and cared for by students, dogs that are easily restrained and display proper behavior are chosen. You will learn more about behavior and emotional assessments in the subsequent section of this manual.

Next, overall health and age are considered. It is important that we consider the health, safety, and biosecurity of our community when selecting dogs for the program. In general, we do not accept sick animals into the program, however we will occasionally select animals that have problems, like a flea infestation, that are easily resolved by the care they receive while in the program. Age is another factor that is considered during the selection process. There are multiple student labs that include sedation and anesthesia protocols, thus we typically do not select dogs over the age of five years old for their health and safety.

ASSESSING BEHAVIOR AND EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING:

WHAT IS A BEHAVIOR ASSESSMENT?

A standardized behavior assessment is a tool that is mostly used in animal shelters to assess a dog's behavior in a snapshot of time. Dogs are exposed to certain stimuli in an attempt to mimic real life situations. Unfortunately, behavior assessments have proven to be inconsistent and are falling out of favor.

Studies have shown that certain interactions during the assessment are not reliable or predictive of the behavior. For example, testing a dog for food aggression in the shelter does not necessarily predict that behavior in a home setting. Other studies have examined using a fake dog in replace of a real dog to assess dog-to-dog aggression. This was also not a valid indicator of this behavior in the home setting. These assessments have exposed many false positives, meaning many dogs exhibiting aggression during the test do not do so in a home setting.

The ASPCA recommends that shelters should only consider the assessment valid if performed in multiple settings and environments, unless aggressive behavior during the assessment is "egregious" (i.e. bite causing injury, biting without warning, repeated injurious biting). Personalities are multifaceted and we must consider other factors that determine behavior traits, such as stress level, environment, and the dog's overall welfare.

For your own interest, here are some commonly used standardized behavioral assessments:

1. SAFER
2. Match-Up II
3. Assess-A-Pet

For the purposes of this program, we will not be performing these assessments, but rather collect our own data on behavior.

BEHAVIOR DATA COLLECTION:

It is important to collect all the information we can when assessing behavior to identify dogs that are eligible for adoption. This includes information from previous owners, from the person who found the dog, medical information, daily observations from staff/volunteers, socialization sessions, playtime, and walks.

1. Previous History

Considering that 60% of the dogs we acquire are strays, there is limited history on their behavior. Owners that surrender their dog can still provide valuable information when it comes to their dog's personality. People that have found the dog, despite their limited experience, may possess important information about their encounter such as handling, aggression, how well they handle car rides, etc. All this information may be limited, but is still considered an important piece to the puzzle when assessing behavior profiles.

ASSESSING BEHAVIOR AND EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING:

BEHAVIOR DATA COLLECTION *(continued)*

You can also find previous medical history and information collected during our animal behaviorist's initial assessment in your dog's file. It is important to note that a dog's behavior during one particular exam does not reflect their normal behavior, nor does it predict how they will act for future exams. These dogs will be put into stressful situations that may cause them discomfort, so always consider your safety when handling your dog. This is still important information to have on hand, but aggression or fearful responses may be situation-specific.

Accurate behavioral assessment is multifactorial, with the previous history and reports from shelter staff providing part of the picture. Before introducing yourself to your dog, you should become familiar with this information in your dog's file.

2. Data Collection By The Student and ACE Staff

One-on-one time, socialization sessions, playgroups and walks are all essential forms of enrichment, but also provide important information regarding your dog's behavior and overall emotional well-being.

Sessions of socialization are important in order to expose your dogs to different people, dogs and environments. These dogs are hopefully going to be adopted at the

crucial to know if they enjoy the presence of people. You should be keeping note of how your dogs responds to your presence, strangers, and other dogs they interact with. Does your dog obey your commands? How does your dog approach other dogs? Other people? Is your dog willing to earn a reward for obeying a command? How does your dog react to different stimuli outside?

How a dog participates in playgroups can teach us a lot about their personalities. Is the dog motivated to interact with other dogs? Does the dog seem anxious when placed in a group setting? It is also important to observe how dogs respond to behaviors that other dogs display. Is your dog the submissive or dominant type when interacting with other dogs? How does your dog respond when a person intervenes (i.e. physical restraint, verbal commands)? A student or ACE staff should always supervise group playtime.

Recent literature suggests observers, whether they are trained or not, tend to withhold or leave out information in fear the dog will be in trouble. Thus, it is important to include both positive and negative feedback in your assessments. To avoid this bias, an emotional assessment chart has been created for students to complete daily. It is your responsibility as students to discuss who will be performing the assessment on a day-to-day basis.

DAILY EMOTIONAL ASSESSMENT FORM

Below is an example of how to fill out the daily emotional assessment form. Try to be as thorough as possible. You are encouraged to write comments about important interactions you had with your dog that day.

Emotional Assessment Form:

Your Name and Group Number: Taglar Ellis

Dog's Name: Riley

Date: 11/07/19

1. Emotional State: Circle All That Apply

- Playful, cheerful, excited, showing play-related behavior, inviting others to play
- Friendly, amiable towards humans and dogs, fits well in its environment
- Confident, handles stress well, fearless
- Nervous/Anxious: uneasy, highly excitable, signs of distress, unable to cope with environment
- Alert/vigilant, attentive to outside stimuli
- Quiet: unresponsive, vaguely depressed, unwilling to interact with environment
- Bizarre: noisy, unrestrained, excessive barking

Comments:
 1. Riley was excited to get out of his crate for a walk.
 2. Riley seemed very interested in other dogs at playtime.

2. Physical Parameters

- Temperature: 101.1 F
- Pulse: 111 bpm
- Respiration: 25 bpm
- Abnormalities/Concerns For The Veterinarian:
 1. No concerns today.

3. Exercise and Enrichment

- = 10 minutes of walking
- = 15 minutes of training and socialization
- = _____ minutes of group play
- = Other: 10:00-11:00 AM for (1 hour)

4. Feeding

- Ate all of their food
- Ate half their food
- Has not eaten their food

Why is training important?

Out of the 6-8 million dogs that enter a shelter or rescue program every year, 3-4 million are euthanized due to overcrowding and behavior issues. Consequently, it is crucial that we properly train and socialize these dogs to battle this statistic and increase adoption rates. Studies that evaluated the effects of basic obedience training and environmental changes have shown to increase adoption rates by 1.4x, making them a useful tool. Not only that, but proper obedience training gives a dog the chance to live peacefully among humans and other animals, alleviates stress, prevents destructive behaviors, promotes safety and strengthens the human-animal bond.

TIPS AND TOOLS FOR BASIC TRAINING

There are a variety of ways to train dogs, but one technique that is proven to be effective is positive reinforcement. Positive reinforcement training refers to introducing a reward (i.e. treats) to encourage a desired behavior. Studies have shown that dogs trained with positive reinforcement are more obedient than dogs that are trained with punishment or negative reinforcement. It is recommended that you use positive reinforcement with your dogs. Here are a few tips to consider when teaching your dog a new behavior with a reward.

1. Choose a treat your dog likes. You can find a variety of training treats in the ACE hallway. If you would like to bring your own treats, they must be pre-approved by the MDL staff. Some dogs are more food-motivated than others; consequently some dogs may do better with praise or toys.
2. Distractions in the environment (i.e. other dogs or animals, cars, smells) can pose as "rewards" and cause confusion for your dog. Unless your dog has acclimated to these distractions in the environment, the rate of reinforcement (how often you give a treat) should be frequent enough to keep their attention. At the beginning of your training, it may be wise to start in a quiet environment free of distractions.
3. Timing of the reward is critical during positive reinforcement. Taking too long to offer a reward can be confusing to dogs. Be sure to offer the reward as soon as the desired behavior is performed.
4. It is not wrong to offer a reward every time your dog looks into your eyes. This behavior means they are most likely paying attention to you rather than what's going on around them. After a few repetitions of this, your dog will start paying more attention to you.

Skills that are found to be most useful to owners are commands like sit, down, teaching a dog their name, and teaching a dog not to jump.

In addition, the sit to "say please" program has been viewed as a beneficial tactic for teaching dogs manners and etiquette.

The training approach for each of these skills will be provided in the following sections.

Training your dog can be fun, rewarding and builds the human-animal bond. Remember to always bring a good attitude and to be patient with your dog.

HOW TO APPLY A DOG HARNESS:

The Standard Harness

Orient yourself with the harness. Standard harnesses have one loop that goes around the ribs, one loop that goes around the neck and a D-ring to attach the leash to.

<p>1.</p> <p>Have your dog sit or stand in front of you.</p>	<p>2.</p> <p>Making sure the D-ring is positioned on the top of your dog's back, slip the harness over your dog's head.</p>
<p>3.</p> <p>The bigger loop with the buckle goes on first, with the smaller loop attaching second. Place your dog's leg into the first leg hole of the harness. The leg should now be between the loop that goes around the ribs and the loop that goes around the neck.</p>	<p>4.</p> <p>Buckle the harness on the back of the dog near the D-ring.</p>
<p>5.</p> <p>You may need to adjust the harness based on the size of your dog. You should be able to slip two fingers under the straps.</p>	

Instructional video for applying different types of harnesses, including a standard or dual-strap harness:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DeDcWpvtEVw&t=245s>

The Front Clip Harness

A front clip harness is used in dogs that exhibit leash reactivity. The leash clip that attaches to the leash is positioned at the front over the dog's chest to prevent excessive pulling.

Your front clip harness should have a loop going around the ribs and a strap going around the chest.

<p>1.</p> <p>Have your dog sit or stand in front of you.</p>	<p>2.</p> <p>Orient the harness so that the front clip is positioned towards your dog's chest. Put the upper loop around your dog's head.</p>
<p>3.</p> <p>Buckle the harness around your dog's abdomen.</p>	<p>4.</p> <p>You may need to adjust the harness depending on your dog's size.</p>

Instructional videos for applying a front clip harness:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7P3GjsnbBgQ>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dwR1o6nfSgM>

The Gentle-Leader

The Gentle-Leader is another type of lead that discourages excessive pulling in dogs with leash reactivity. Common issues seen with these leads are dogs pawing at it or rubbing their nose into the ground. The four parts of a Gentle-Leader include the nose loop, the two straps that buckle around the back of the head, and the O-ring that connects to the leash. There is also an adjustable buckle that can tighten or loosen the nose loop.

<p>1.</p> <p>Hold the nose loop open and allow your dog to place his or her nose into the loop. You make to use training treats to coax your dog. Immediately give your dog a treat once they position their nose into the loop.</p>	<p>2.</p> <p>It may take a few tries for your dog to acclimate to the nosepiece. If your dog refuses, take a break and try again. Applying a Gentle-Leader is a slow process.</p>
<p>3.</p> <p>Once your dog's nose is in the loop, buckle the straps behind your dog's head directly behind the ears.</p>	<p>4.</p> <p>You can now adjust the nose loop as needed with the adjustable buckle. Your dog should be able to open their mouth, as if they wanted to eat a treat.</p>
<p>5.</p> <p>Attach the leash to the O-ring resting in front of the dog's trachea. This gives you more control of your dog when walking.</p>	

Instructional videos for acclimating your dog to the Gentle-Leader:
<https://www.petsafe.net/learn/how-to-fit-a-gentle-leader-headcollar>
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JW_KVUglozY&t=28s

How to Handle Your Dog on a Leash

Walking your dog is not only safe for your dog and other dogs in the community, but it's also a great way to manage and train your dog. Every dog needs managed on a leash. Before you start leash training, apply a properly fitted harness. Positive reinforcement is encouraged during leash training so have training treats on hand.

<p>1.</p> <p>Choose a leash that is 4-6 feet in length. Keep both hands on the leash at all times. Secure one hand farther down the leash so that you have more control of your dog.</p>	<p>2.</p> <p>Allow your dog to go to the bathroom before you start leash training. Next, find an area outside with the least distractions.</p>	<p>3.</p> <p>Stand on one side of your dog and keep the leash loose. Allow him or her to start walking. Reward your dog with treats for walking beside you, not in front of you.</p>
<p>4.</p> <p>If your dog starts walking in front of you, release the hand closest to the dog and walk in the opposite direction. When your dog walks beside you facing the same direction and not pulling, reward him or her with a treat. This may take a few repetitions.</p>	<p>5.</p> <p>When walking by other people or dogs, shorten the leash to keep your dog closer to you.</p>	<p>6.</p> <p>Don't let your dog engage in distractions. If your dog pulls toward a distraction, turn and walk in the opposite direction. If your dog follows you, reward him or her with a treat. If your dog crosses in front of you, do the same thing. Stop, turn and walk in the opposite direction.</p>
<p>7.</p> <p>Remember to always be calm and assertive when leash training your dog.</p>		

For more tools and guidance on leash training, Emily Larlham (KikoPup) is a renowned dog trainer that provides professional dog training videos. Emily breaks training down into smaller steps and is a great resource to use if you are having issues teaching your dog to properly walk on a leash.

<https://www.youtube.com/user/kikopup/featured>

BASIC COMMANDS AND BEHAVIORS

Here are training suggestions from the American Kennel Club (AKC).

Teaching Your Dog Their Name

<p>1.</p> <p>With treats in hand, get eye level with your dog and say "come" or their name.</p>	<p>2.</p> <p>Each time you say "come/name", give them a treat. Repeat this several times. They do not need to acknowledge you just yet.</p>
<p>3.</p> <p>Drop a treat on the floor near you. Once they finish eating the treat, say their name. When they look at you, give another treat. Repeat this several times.</p>	<p>4.</p> <p>Work on tossing the treat further and further away from you. Again, once they finish the treat, say his name. When they look at you, give them another treat.</p>

Teaching Your Dog To Sit Using The "Luring" Method

<p>1.</p> <p>Get down to eye level with your dog with treats in your hand as a lure.</p>	<p>2.</p> <p>Hold the treat above the dog's nose and slowly raise the food above their head. They will typically sit as they eat the treat.</p>
<p>3.</p> <p>Again, timing is important during positive reinforcement training. Make sure you reward your dog with a treat as soon as their bottom touches the ground.</p>	<p>4.</p> <p>Repeat this a few times, then remove food as the reward and use just your hand. Continue to reward the puppy with treats AFTER they sit.</p>
<p>5.</p> <p>Once they learn the hand gesture, you can then say "sit" before giving the hand signal.</p>	

From "Sit" to "Down" Using The Luring Method:

<p>1.</p> <p>Once you have lured your dog into the sit position as outlined above, do not reward with a treat just yet. Slowly bring the treat down to the floor.</p>	<p>2.</p> <p>Once your dog's elbows have touched the ground, offer the treat.</p>
<p>3.</p> <p>After a few repetitions, remove the reward and use a hand gesture only. Offer the treat AFTER they lie down.</p>	<p>4.</p> <p>Once they learn the hand gesture, you can then say "down" before giving the hand signal.</p>

Teaching Your Dog Not To Jump:

<p>1.</p> <p>Work with a partner that your dog likes and wants to greet.</p>	<p>2.</p> <p>Command your dog to "sit" before the greeter approaches the dog.</p>	<p>3.</p> <p>Allow the greeter to approach the dog slowly. If your dog stands up, the greeter should immediately turn and walk in the opposite direction.</p>
<p>4.</p> <p>Try again and repeat until your dog remains in the "sit" position when approached by the greeter.</p>	<p>5.</p> <p>Once your dog stays in the "sit" position, the greeter may reward them with a treat.</p>	<p>6.</p> <p>If you walking your dog outside and a stranger is approaching, ask them to stop and if they are willing to reward your dog with a treat for good behavior.</p>
<p>7.</p> <p>Ask your dog to "sit".</p>		<p>8.</p> <p>As long as your dog remains in the "sit" position, the stranger may reward them with a treat and praise.</p>

SIT TO "SAY PLEASE" PROGRAM

What is Sit to "Say Please"?

Sit to "Say Please" is a tactic that uses a dog's body language to get something they want. By sitting, dog's can control their impulses and politely ask, "please" before getting a reward such as being fed, putting a leash on, going outside or receiving attention from a person. Treats do not need to be given in these circumstances since they are still receiving a "reward" they want.

Goals of Sit to "Say Please"

The goal of this method is to teach dogs self-control and etiquette. Teaching manners not only allows them to practice behaviors for a multitude of rewards, but also asks them to use their brain instead of using unnecessary force. This approach is especially useful for dogs in a shelter or rescue setting as another tool we can use during obedience training to increase likability and adoption rates.

- DO'S AND DONT'S -

DO'S

Teach your dog to "sit".

Your dog should sit before getting what they want (i.e. bowl of food, putting on leash, going outside).

Ignore unwanted behavior.

Eye contact is key.

DONT'S

This method does not pertain to things dogs do not want to do.

Do not ask your dog to sit before baths, nail trims, coming back inside, etc.

Do not force older dogs to sit for everything they want, especially if they are calm.

Do not force fearful dogs to do things that might scare them more (i.e. making them sit to get pet by a stranger).

OTHER TRAINING RESOURCES:

Dog Training Books:

- o "Dog Friendly Dog Training" by Andrea Arden
- o "Don't Shoot The Dog! The New Art of Teaching and Training" by Karen Pryor
- o "Pet Behavior Protocols" by Suzanne Hetts

The Canine Good Citizen

http://images.akc.org/pdf/ebook/CGC2.pdf?utm_source=content&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=ebook-cgctestItems

ASPCA Pro Training Webinars

<https://www.aspcapro.org/training/webinar-series>

Maddie's Fund Training Guide

<https://www.maddiesfund.org/ways-to-train-your-dog.htm>

Behavior Modification Resources:

Solving 8 common behaviors that happen in shelters:

<https://www.maddiesfund.org/solving-eight-common-dog-behaviors-that-happen-in-shelters.htm?p-topic1005>

Reducing stress during handling:

<https://www.maddiesfund.org/reduce-stress-during-handling-dogs.htm?p-topic1005>

Approaching a fearful dog:

<https://www.aspcapro.org/resource/6-tips-winning-over-shy-dogs>
<https://resources.bestfriends.org/article/how-approach-scared-nervous-or-worried-dog>

When your dog is aggressive:

<https://www.maddiesfund.org/what-to-do-if-your-new-dog-is-aggressive.htm?p-topic1005>
<https://resources.bestfriends.org/article/dog-barrier-frustration-and-aggression>

Leash Reactivity:

<https://resources.bestfriends.org/article/dog-pulling-leash>
<https://www.akc.org/expert-advice/training/reactivity-vs-aggression/>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sFgtqgIAKoQ>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r7Kf9pwAks>

Barking problems:

https://apdt.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/APDT_Barking_2014.pdf
<https://resources.bestfriends.org/article/stop-dog-barking>

DOCUMENTING PROGRESS WITH YOUR DOG:

WHY TRACKING PROGRESS IS IMPORTANT

Tracking your dog's progress is an invaluable tool for you, your dog and the future family of your dog. Not only is it a great way to see what behavioral progress they've made, but it can also show you trends in their behavior. Having evidence on hand will allow you to observe these trends, re-evaluate your training plan, and ultimately yield faster progress. If other classmates are struggling with training, your data can be used to show them what worked best when teaching your dog a command or behavior. Again, getting these dogs adopted at the end of the program is the long-term goal, so strictly tracking your progress with them will be an efficient method to analyze what's working best and what may need to be changed in order for your dog to be ready for adoption.

SETTING GOALS

Before tracking your progress, it is important to set measurable and realistic goals for your dog. This is important for your motivation, but also allows you to tangibly track the progress you make with your dog. If you are unsure what goals you want to set for your dog, connect with your classmates and develop goals together. Making plans to meet and train together can make this experience fun and rewarding.

All dogs learn differently, thus goals and training plans may need to be adjusted. If you notice your dog is not progressing, stop training and think about how you are executing the training. It is okay to re-evaluate your goals. Ways to get back on track include breaking down steps into smaller steps, a change of scenery, or try a new training plan with the endless resources provided in the "Other Training Resources" section of this manual.

HOW TO DOCUMENT YOUR PROGRESS

Today's society is a very mobile and visual one. Most people, if not everyone, has a smart phone they use to capture memorable moments. When we accomplish a goal or meet a milestone, we want to share it with our friends and family. Similarly, you want to keep a record of your dog's progress during socialization and training in order to learn from your mistakes, see trends in behavior, and motivate yourself to keep trying.

Students are required to take weekly videos of their progression. Start with smaller accomplishments, working your way up to bigger feats. For example, record videos of yourself teaching your dog how to sit. It may take a couple weeks for your dog to learn how to sit on command with and without training treats. You should then work your way towards the Sit to "Say Please" method, where you ask your dog to sit before getting a reward, such as putting on their harness before going outside.

Things that are important to include in your weekly videos are exposure to a variety of settings (i.e. outside vs. inside), tasks, people and dogs. Proving that you are properly socializing your dog can be beneficial evidence if they aren't adapting.

Once you record your video for the week, you can upload it to YouTube with your name and group number, your dog's name and what your dog is demonstrating in the video. Other things to include in the video are types of treats or rewards your dog likes, undesirable behaviors your dog exhibits, a task your dog is struggling to accomplish, or anything you believe is important to know. Mel Kegley MUST approve your videos before posting.

If you are having a difficult time making progress with your dog, don't be afraid to ask for help. You are learning in this program. Being in a veterinary teaching program, you have a variety of resources at the tip of your fingers. From this manual and the vet library, to the MDL staff and our animal behaviorist, Dr. Virginia Edwards, your resources are endless.

About the Author

Taylor Ellis - Public Corporate Clerkship

Writing a behavior manual for the MDL dog socialization program has been an eye-opening and rewarding experience for me. In researching animal behavior and psychology, I gained more knowledge on integrating behavior into both shelter and clinical settings. It is my hope that creating this manual provides students with the tools they need to put them up for success when training and socializing their dogs. In addition, I hope the college can build on the manual and continue to create a more structured behavior program so we can improve the quality of life of animals in our care and increase adoption rates.

I would like to give a special thanks to my friend, Courtney Andrews, for helping me design the behavior manual in Illustrator. Courtney is a content creator for ESPN and is clearly talented at what she does.

I always knew I wanted to work with animals. It was not until I took an animal pathology course at West Virginia University that I knew I wanted to be a veterinarian. During my time and experience at WVU, I found my passion for helping people and providing quality care to animals. I am now in my final year of veterinary school at VMCVM and anticipate accepting an offer at either an ER hospital or a GP/ER practice out west. I look forward to applying what I've learned about behavior and using that to assess a dog's health, internal state, and overall well-being.

