Where is the reactivity coming from?

Reactive behavior usually has multiple causes. This worksheet sorts what you describe into four buckets: decisions you make, expectations you hold, your dog's own temperament and history, and signs that a vet should take a look.

Answer for a typical week, based on what actually happens rather than what you wish happened. There are no wrong answers. Mark one box in each row, then add up your scores at the end of each section.

> **If your dog has broken skin, or anyone is at risk of being hurt,** contact a qualified trainer or veterinary behaviorist now. This worksheet is a starting point, not a substitute.

Dog's name		**Owner**	
Date		**Completed with**	

Part 1. The questions

A. On walks and outings

Think about the routes, times, and routines you choose.

#	Statement	Not true (0)	Sometimes (1)	Mostly true (2)
D1	We walk at busy times or on narrow routes where I can't give other dogs or people much space.	☐	☐	☐
D2	I let other dogs or people come up to say hello while my dog is on leash.	☐	☐	☐
D3	When we see a trigger, there is not much I can do to redirect my dog.	☐	☐	☐
D4	I shorten or tighten the leash when I spot a trigger.	☐	☐	☐
D5	When my dog reacts, I scold, correct with the leash, or pull them away quickly.	☐	☐	☐
D6	When my dog reacts, I correct with an e-device.	☐	☐	☐
D7	My dog comes along to crowded places (patios, events, stores, the dog park) mostly because I want them with me.	☐	☐	☐
D8	People in my household handle the leash, greetings, and corrections differently.	☐	☐	☐
D9	My dog needs more than five minutes to recover from a reactivity episode.	☐	☐	☐
	Section total (add the scores):			

© Two Dads Dog Training 2026

B. What you hope and expect

Be honest about what goes through your mind.

#	Statement	Not true (0)	Sometimes (1)	Mostly true (2)
E1	I expect others to move and give me space when I walk my dog.	☐	☐	☐
E2	I walk my dog the same distance and for the same duration every time.	☐	☐	☐
E3	I bring my dog everywhere, even though I'm aware they're reactive to dogs, movement, sounds, and people.	☐	☐	☐
E4	Sometimes it feels like my dog reacts in a stubborn, dominant, or spiteful way.	☐	☐	☐
E5	I expect my dog to bark at someone at the door but not at the delivery truck.	☐	☐	☐
E6	I let my dog bark at passersby on the other side of the window.	☐	☐	☐
E7	I feel embarrassed when my dog reacts, and I want it fixed quickly.	☐	☐	☐
	Section total (add the scores):			

© Two Dads Dog Training 2026

C. Your dog's history and wiring

Think about what you know of their past and how they handle the world now.

#	Statement	Not true (0)	Sometimes (1)	Mostly true (2)
T1	I know little about my dog's first months, or my dog had limited exposure to other dogs and people early on.	☐	☐	☐
T2	My dog had a frightening experience with a dog or person, such as an attack or a rough encounter, before the reactivity began.	☐	☐	☐
T3	My dog reacts from a distance and seems fearful: backing away, tucking the tail, or barking and lunging to make the trigger go away.	☐	☐	☐
T4	My dog also struggles with other things: noises, new places, being left alone, or being handled.	☐	☐	☐
T5	My dog has been wary or reactive since puppyhood, even when I've handled things carefully.	☐	☐	☐
T6	Reactions look like guarding, herding, or chasing, staring, stalking, circling, or nipping at heels.	☐	☐	☐
	Section total (add the scores):			

D. Your dog's body

Think about the last few months. Starred items (*) are medical flags.

#	Statement	Not true (0)	Sometimes (1)	Mostly true (2)
V1*	The reactivity started suddenly or clearly worsened over a few weeks, without a change in routine.	☐	☐	☐
V2*	My dog flinches, yelps, or snaps when touched or approached, especially around the back, hips, neck, ears, or paws.	☐	☐	☐
V3	My dog is stiff, slow to get up, limps, or avoids stairs and jumping.	☐	☐	☐
V4	I've noticed changes in appetite, thirst, bathroom habits, or sleep, such as restless nights or pacing.	☐	☐	☐
V5	My dog has recurring itching, ear, skin, tooth, or stomach problems.	☐	☐	☐
V6*	My dog has odd episodes: staring, a glazed look, outbursts with no clear trigger, or new confusion.	☐	☐	☐
	Section total (add the scores):			

Part 2. Your scores

Copy each section total into the table. Divide your total by the maximum and multiply by 100 to get the percent. Then use the thresholds below to find the level.

Bucket	Questions	Your total	Maximum	Percent	Level
Decisions you make	D1–D9		18		Low / Mod / High
Expectations you hold	E1–E7		14		Low / Mod / High
Temperament and history	T1–T6		12		Low / Mod / High
Signs for a vet assessment	V1–V6		12		See rule below

Level thresholds

Bucket	Low	Moderate	High
Decisions (max 18)	0–3	4–10	11–18
Expectations (max 14)	0–3	4–8	9–14
Temperament (max 12)	0–2	3–7	8–12
Vet signs (max 12)	**Check first:** any starred item (V1, V2, V6) marked Mostly true. **Worth a check:** no starred item, but a total of 3 or more. **No strong signs:** a total of 0–2.		

Part 3. Where to start

Work down the table and stop at the first row that matches. If two buckets tie, go in this order: Decisions, then Expectations, then Temperament. If your vet total is 3 or more but no starred item is marked Mostly true, still follow the row that matches, and schedule a vet visit too.

If your results show	Start here	What it means
1. Any starred item (V1, V2, V6) marked Mostly true	**Start with a vet exam.**	Your answers include signs that your dog could be in pain or unwell. Book an exam before changing anything else, and keep giving your dog extra space while you wait. Your routines, expectations, and history still matter and are summarized in your results.
2. Decisions, Expectations, and Temperament are all Low	**No single driver stands out.**	Nothing in your answers points strongly in one direction. A qualified trainer or behavior professional can help you look closer at what's behind your dog's reactions.
3. Decisions has the highest percent	**Start with your routines.**	The biggest share of what you described comes from the situations your dog is put in. Changing those is the fastest thing you can do, and it costs nothing.
4. Expectations has the highest percent	**Start with your expectations.**	The biggest share of what you described comes from the gap between what you hope for and where your dog is now. Closing that gap changes how you handle every walk.
5. Temperament has the highest percent	**Work with a professional on temperament and history.**	The biggest share of what you described comes from your dog's history and natural tendencies. Your routines and expectations still help, but a qualified trainer or behavior professional should guide the plan.

Part 4. What each level means

Decisions you make

Low. Your routines seem to be keeping your dog out of hard situations. Decisions are probably not the main driver.

Moderate. A few routines are putting your dog in situations that are hard to handle. Changing these could noticeably reduce reactions.

High. Many of your routines place your dog in situations they can't cope with yet. Changing these first is likely to make the biggest difference.

Expectations you hold

Low. Your expectations look realistic for a reactive dog.

Moderate. Some expectations are ahead of where your dog is right now. Adjusting them will lower the pressure on both of you.

High. Several expectations are well ahead of where your dog is. That gap adds pressure and tends to lead to choices that make reactions worse.

Temperament and history

Low. Nothing in your dog's history or natural tendencies stands out as a major factor.

Moderate. Some of your dog's history or natural tendencies likely play a part. Management and patience help, and a trainer can tailor the plan.

High. Your dog's temperament or history likely plays a large role. Expect slower progress and work with a qualified trainer or behavior professional.

Signs for a vet assessment

Check first. One or more answers point to a possible medical cause. Pain, illness, or a neurological problem can look exactly like reactivity. Rule these out before making training changes.

Worth a check. Some answers could have a medical explanation. Mention them at your next visit, and sooner if they worsen.

No strong signs. Your answers don't show strong medical signals. If anything changes, especially suddenly, check with your vet.

Part 5. Two-week plans

Pick the plan that matches your "Start here" result. If you were sent to the vet first, begin with that plan and run a two-week test afterward.

Two-week test: change the setup

1. Walk at quiet times and on wide, open routes for two weeks.
2. Spot triggers early, then turn away or cross over before your dog reacts.
3. No greetings on leash. Let other dogs and people pass.
4. Keep the leash loose, stay calm, and skip corrections.
5. Count reactions each day in the tally on the last page.

How to read it: If reactions drop clearly by week two, your decisions were a big part of the picture. If they don't change, tell your trainer or vet.

Two-week test: change the goal

1. Replace outcome goals (“say hi nicely”) with behavior goals (“notice the dog, then look back at me”).
2. Write down one small win each day.
3. Track how long your dog takes to settle after a trigger, not just whether they react.
4. Skip comparisons to other dogs for two weeks.
5. Count reactions each day in the tally on the last page.

How to read it: If settling time shortens and you feel less pressure by week two, expectations were a big part of the picture. If not, tell your trainer or vet.

Two-week test: map the pattern

1. Keep giving your dog generous distance from triggers. With this history, space comes before any training.
2. Note what your dog does just before reacting (stiffening, staring, backing away) and what was nearby.
3. Ask your vet whether a referral to a veterinary behaviorist makes sense.
4. Look for a trainer or behavior consultant who uses reward-based methods and has formal credentials.
5. Count reactions each day in the tally on the last page.

How to read it: Bring your tally and notes to the first appointment. Progress with this kind of reactivity is usually measured in months, not weeks.

Before the vet visit

1. Book an exam and say you want pain and general health ruled out as a cause of reactivity.
2. Write down when the behavior started and what changed around then.
3. Bring short videos of the behavior.
4. Ask what the vet would check, such as joint or spine pain, teeth, ears and skin, thyroid, or neurological causes.
5. Keep giving your dog extra distance from triggers while you wait.

How to read it: Once the vet has cleared your dog, or treatment is underway, run the two-week test to track routines and expectations.

Two-week tally

Each day, write the number of reactions. If you're running the expectations test, also note how long your dog took to settle after a trigger.

Day	Reactions	Time to settle	Notes (where, what trigger, what worked)
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			
11			
12			
13			
14			

This worksheet sorts what you and a vet can act on first. It isn't a diagnosis. The temperament and history section relies on your observations, and a qualified trainer or behavior professional can assess them more closely.