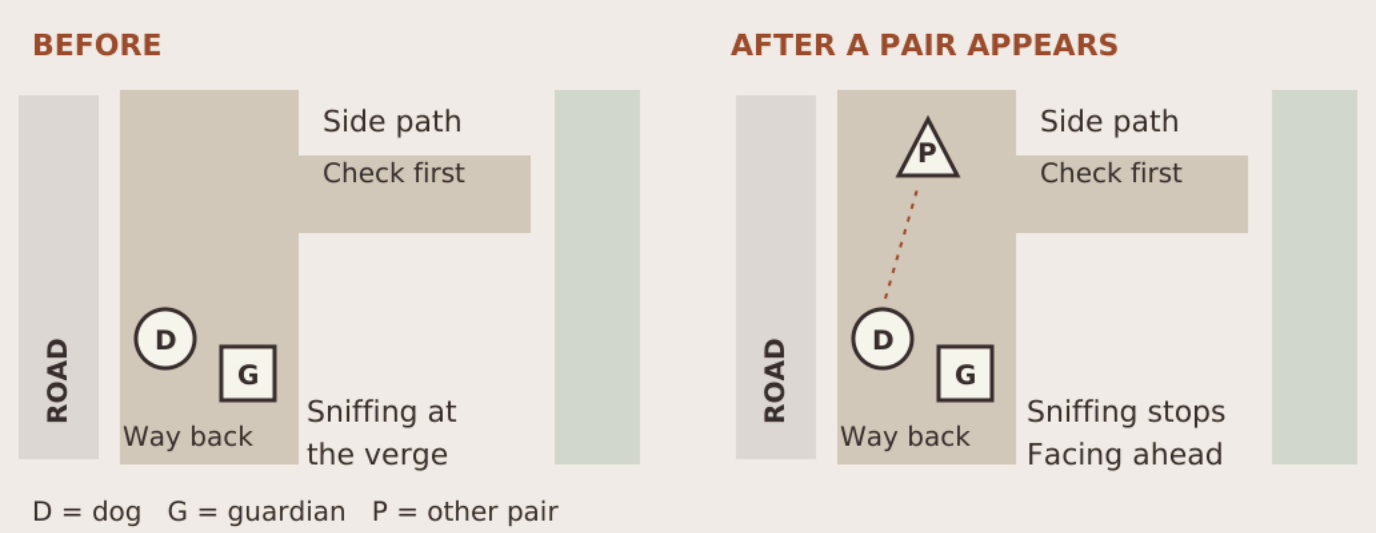
Before the Reaction

Phase One Lesson One Visual Field Guide

A walk can change while you are still trying to understand what your dog noticed. A dog appears ahead. Sniffing stops. Your dog stays facing the other pair, and you find yourself deciding whether to keep walking, call their name or turn. Sometimes the barking arrives before you have chosen.



Schematic, not to scale or a safe-distance guide. D = dog, G = guardian, P = other pair.

We are going to slow down a fictional outing so you can practice noticing and choosing without putting your dog into a difficult situation. You do not need to identify every feeling correctly. You need a useful picture of what is happening and room to reconsider.

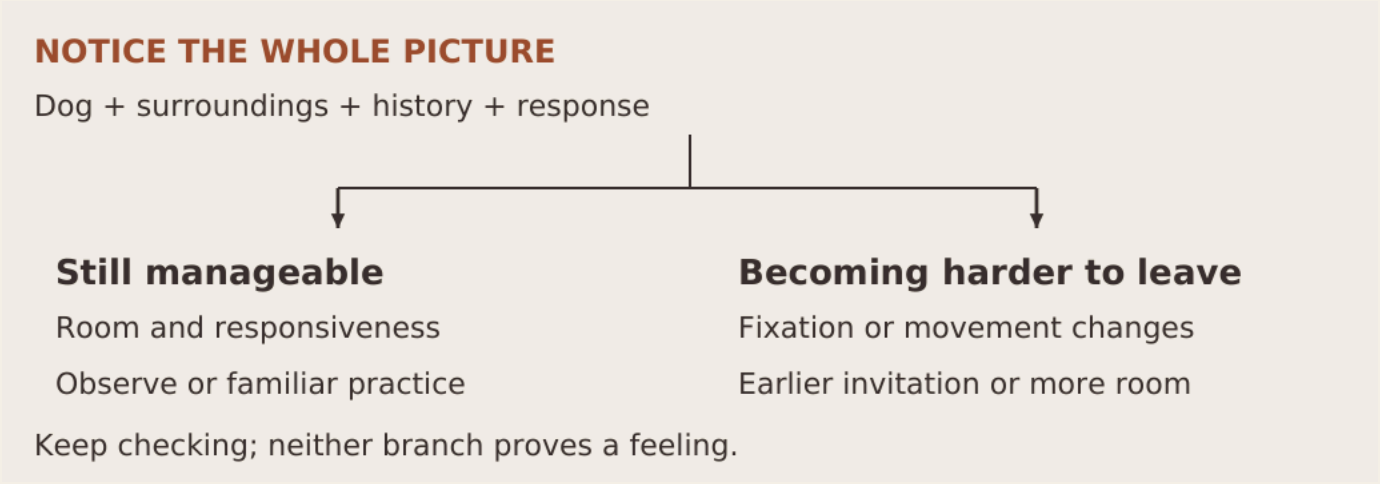
Start with what changed

"My dog stopped sniffing and stayed facing the other dog" gives you something to work with. "My dog is being difficult" tells you much less about the moment. One posture can occur in different situations. What happened just before it, what is happening nearby and what happens next all matter.

Look beyond the dog

Consider the approaching pair, the road, the space behind you and any accessible quieter route. A path on a map is only an option after you know it is open and usable. If the situation is already unsafe, use your established safety plan and seek appropriate help. You do not have to finish an observation exercise first.

Interest and the next workable step



A look does not always need an interruption

A dog may notice another dog and still be able to look away, sniff, respond to a familiar invitation and move comfortably with you. In a manageable setting with room available, allow time to observe. There is no required number of seconds. Watch your dog and the changing surroundings together, rather than fixing your attention on the other dog.

If a familiar position alongside the shoulder is comfortable and safe for both of you, stand quietly without crowding, blocking or leaning over your dog. **Do not move into that position** where handling or redirected-bite risk makes it unsafe. A gentle, elongated “good” can be familiar encouragement if your dog already knows it that way. Keep observing the response. **Your voice cannot certify** that the situation is safe or that your dog feels safe.

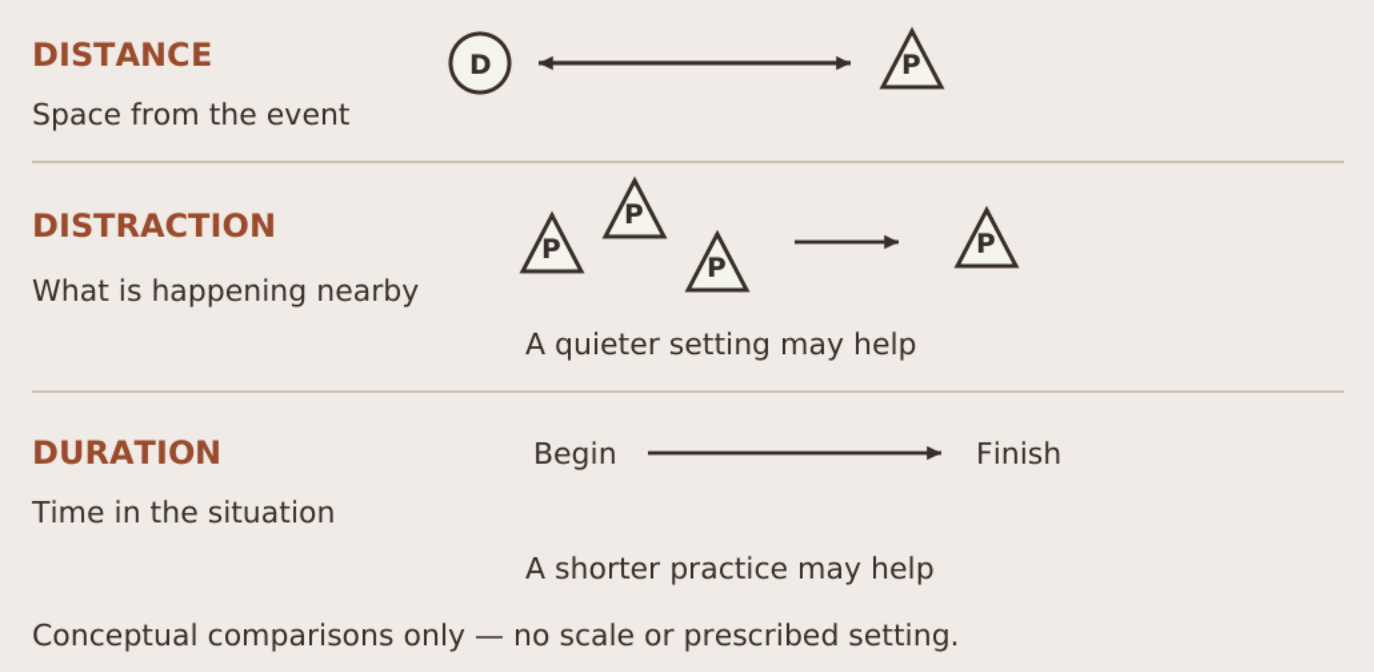
When interest becomes harder to leave

Watch for change across the whole picture: attention that becomes more fixed, a body that grows stiffer, repeated lunging, difficulty turning with you, or recovery that takes longer. **No single sign tells the whole story.** A dog with a history of strong reactions may need an earlier, gentle interruption and more room. You do not need to wait until curiosity seems satisfied or barking begins.

Choose for this dog, today

PIR means Playfully Interrupt and Redirect: a familiar, low-pressure invitation to disengage and move with you, followed by a useful next activity. The separate refresher explains its purpose and limits. If your dog cannot respond, **do not make the cue sharper** or pull through the exercise. Create space or end the practice using the individual safety plan you can carry out safely.

Three ways to adjust the setup



For a dog already doing manageable three-D work, the next choice may be to continue that established practice. The three Ds are Distance, Distraction and Duration. **In planned practice, change one at a time;** making it easier is valid. Unexpected encounters may require several safety adjustments. **A previous distance is context, not permission to get closer today.** Fifty, ten, five or three feet are examples of past records, never targets for this class. Getting closer is not the measure of success.

Keep useful information

Use the three-D log to note the setup, what you changed, the response and recovery. If your dog struggles to orient, move or recover, create room and stop making the setup harder. Record that information without treating it as failure or a reason for firmer correction.

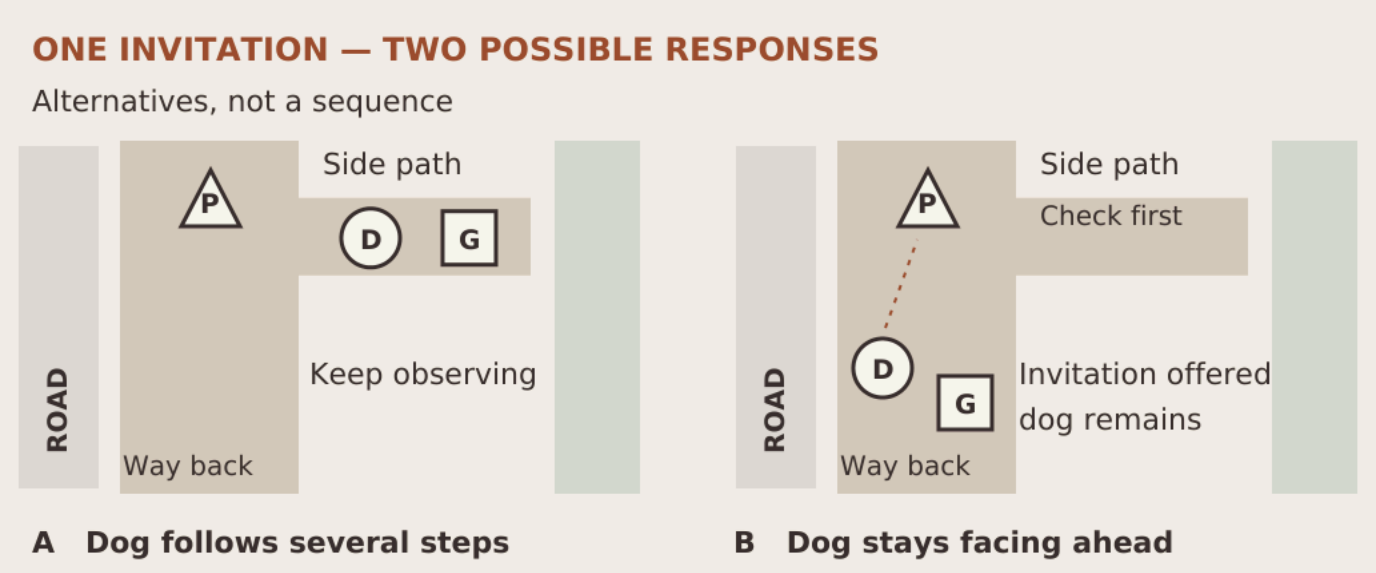
Your personal Three Ds Log has room for the setting, each D, what was manageable before, what you changed, the response, recovery and your next thought. Estimates and “not known” are useful; the log is not another send-in form.

You can use the samples

The separate worksheet gives you one unfolding scene, space to consider a choice and sample answers with reasons at the end. **You are welcome to look at those answers first.** There may be more than one reasonable choice.

An invitation is followed by a response

In our example, a side path has been checked and is empty, away from the road and open beyond the bend. The way back is also clear. You might invite your dog toward the path, return the way you came or finish the outing. What makes the choice useful is how it fits the facts, not whether it matches somebody else's favorite technique.



Schematic, not to scale or a safe-distance guide. D = dog, G = guardian, P = other pair.

Leave room for the dog's part

If you move your own marker on the map, leave the dog's marker where it is until the next part of the story tells you what happens. That small pause matters. **Your intention and your dog's response are separate pieces of information.**

In one version, the dog takes several steps with you. You can keep observing without turning back toward the approaching pair to test the result. In another version, the dog remains facing ahead. Repeating the same cue may not make the option easier. Reconsider the surroundings and what help or safe exit is available.

When the picture changes

Suppose the side path is occupied. The plan that fitted an empty path no longer fits this one. You can revise your choice. Ending an outing can be a thoughtful decision. **A quiet dog is not automatically comfortable**, and a bark does not prove that every earlier decision was wrong.

Keep safety practical



Plan the route and keep the information

Choose routes with places to turn away. Wider paths, quieter times or a shorter outing may be useful. Keep your dog securely attached with fitted equipment you can handle safely; check traffic and footing before changing direction. Leash tension can add pressure, but reactivity has many influences. **Do not sacrifice control** to manufacture a loose leash.

Close greetings are not this lesson's exercise. Do not approach to test progress or step between aroused dogs. Any later greeting needs appropriate individual guidance, both handlers' agreement and a suitable situation; declining it is always an option.

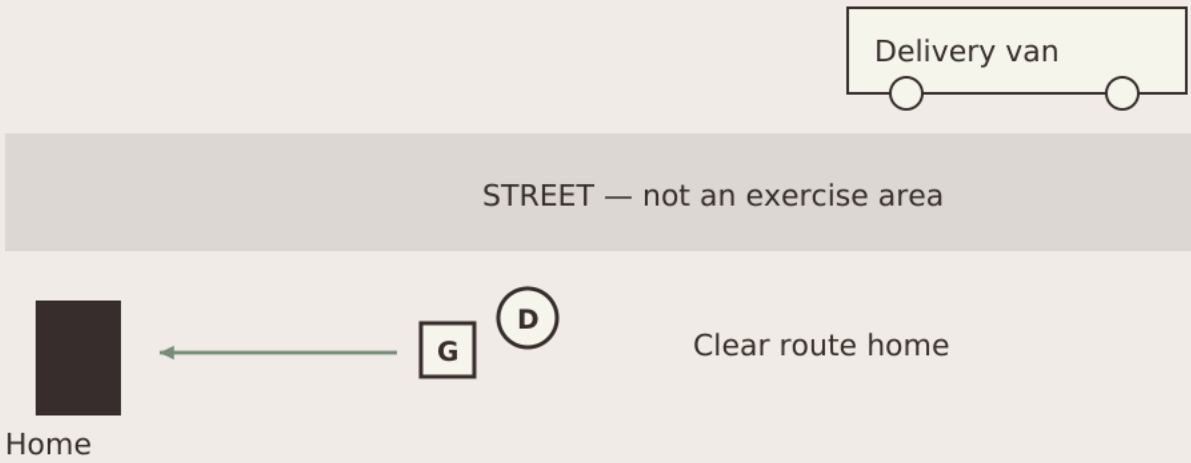
If you do not yet have an individual safety plan for reactions you cannot manage safely, stay with the fictional examples and arrange individual guidance before attempting a real situation you cannot manage safely. Ordinary safe observation does not require completing a formal plan. Keep the leash and equipment used in your individual safety plan. This lesson does not teach emergency handling from a diagram or ask you to pull, lift or force your dog through an exercise. If reactions create a risk of injury, get individual guidance. A sudden or unexplained behavior change, or signs of pain or illness, deserves veterinary attention.

Carry one observation home

There is no need to arrange an encounter or wait for a reaction. During an ordinary, manageable moment, notice one change from what your dog was doing before. Perhaps sniffing stops, movement changes or attention stays in one direction. Describe what you see before deciding what it means.

A DIFFERENT EVENT — THE SAME WAY OF THINKING

The driver has not stepped out. The next response is still unknown.



A small example

"The delivery van stopped. My dog stopped sniffing and stayed facing it. Our route home was clear, so I considered heading back rather than waiting at the curb."

This is an adapted teaching example, not a guaranteed outcome. What happens after your choice matters too. If your dog cannot participate, or the route changes, reconsider rather than making the same request more insistently.

A question worth keeping

What changed, what option is workable here, and what response would make me change my mind? You can hold those questions loosely. They are a way to think, not a checklist to race through while something unsafe is happening.

A place to begin again

You do not need to become a person who never misses a signal. Begin with one moment you can see a little more clearly. That is something you can build on with your dog. To continue with Lorrie's teaching, ask about Canine Sensory Connection, independently or with accountability. It is **an optional next step, not a requirement for this class.**