



## Leader Skills Improvement Challenge

**Objective:** Troubleshoot problem areas for your staff in performing key leadership exercises.

**Content:** Renew the focus of your staff on leadership exercises and improving their skill level. Spend time discussing common trouble areas and provide troubleshooting tips. Compile a list of the challenging dogs and assign Advanced Leaders to work with them consistently as a challenge. Intermediate and Novice Leaders will set goals to improve their skill levels and everyone will celebrate at the end of the four week challenge.

### Challenging Dogs

- Before the Lunch n Learn Session – ask each team member to make a list of the dogs that challenge them in being successful in each of the leadership exercises:
  - Recall
  - Group Sit
  - Gate Boundary
- During the Lunch n Learn Session – Compile a master list of “challenging dogs” by exercise. Try to get consensus and majority agreement that each dog should be included on the list. There is a balance between a dog being a true challenge and staff members elevating their own skills to manage more difficult dogs. For this exercise you want the “hard dogs” that even Advanced Leaders find challenging. This challenge will be the focus of your Advanced Leaders during the next four weeks.
- Create a Dog Challenge – Using the form at end of this handout, print a copy for each “challenging dog” to use as a progress log this month. You can ask Advanced Leaders to volunteer to work with a specific dog and exercise or encourage them to work with a variety of dogs and exercises. Each time a staff member works with a Challenge Dog and makes positive progress they will update the form and notes. Encourage them to include tips and specific skills used to make progress.
- Executing the Challenge - After an Advanced Leader has 3 successful exercises with the dog, continue to work with the dog in this recommended order:
  - A second Advanced Leader achieves 3 successes
  - Intermediate Leader 1 achieves 3 successes
  - Intermediate Leader 2 achieves 3 successes

### Leadership Skills Challenge

- Before the Lunch n Learn Session – Have each staff member log their best performance in each of the Leadership Exercises to create their baseline score.

- During the Lunch n Learn Session – Ask each staff member to set a goal that they want to achieve in four weeks for each exercise. Have them share the actions they will take to meet the goal.
- Executing the Challenge – Create a visual chart to post starting scores and goals for each staff member. Leave a space for weekly updates on their progress.

#### Leadership Exercises Troubleshooting Tips

- Review leader posture attributes
- Demonstrate effective body blocking skills
- Discuss importance of energy and tone of voice for successful recalls
- Go small – reduce number of dogs and only add more as success is achieved
- More praise – Vocal and touch in every shift working with the dogs, not just during leadership exercises
- Schedule practice sessions – start at low key times of day and practice during every shift
- Use the Skills – at every opportunity (e.g., every open gate, use sit at each doorway walking through facility, recall for daily physical checks)

#### Staff Rewards

Be sure to plan fun rewards for your staff as they work through the challenge and at the end. Praise all progress noted and plan small rewards for achieving their goals. One fun reward idea is to have many small dollar gift cards posted on a board. The top winner gets to select the first card with second place choosing next, etc. In the event all staff achieve goals you could have a drawing on the order of selecting gift cards. You can also plan a special team meal or sweet treat if all staff achieve at least one of their goals. The key is to make it fun as they improve their skills.

**Supporting Education Articles/Tools:** The article listed and linked below provide additional information on the lunch n learn topic that can be introduced or refreshed as part of your training.

Teaching Your Staff to Train the Dogs Article with Video Examples

<https://www.thedoggurus.com/teaching-staff-train-dogs/>

Daycare Games (<https://www.thedoggurus.com/the-daycare-games/>)

What Benevolent Leadership Looks Like & Leadership Exercises PDF

<https://www.thedoggurus.com/benevolent-leadership-looks-like/>

Is Daycare Counselor the Right Job for You & Daycare Counselor Performance Checklist (new & existing employee versions)

<https://www.thedoggurus.com/daycare-counselor-right-job/>

**The Dog Guru Course Supporting Lessons:** Lessons from our books or courses that relate to the lunch n learn topic that can be used as refresher training.

Knowing Dogs 201, Module 3 – Leader Skills Assessment Activity (workbook page 1)

Knowing Dogs 201, Module 4 & Leadership Skills Improvement Plan Handout

Off-Leash Dog Play: A Complete Guide to Safety & Fun, Chapter 7

**Challenging Dog Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Exercise:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Goal:** \_\_\_\_\_

| Date | Leader Name | Progress Notes |
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