

THE STEP UP Hack

One of the top priorities for all beings is safety. Our dogs are no different. It is our job as their caregivers to protect and advocate for them when they are confronted with social and environmental stressors.



WHEN to use it

In this modern world, many of our dogs are consistently put into positions that they are ill-equipped to handle. They have lots of questions about their physical and social environment and it is our duty to answer these questions while instilling a sense of safety in our pups rather than asking them to figure it out on their own.

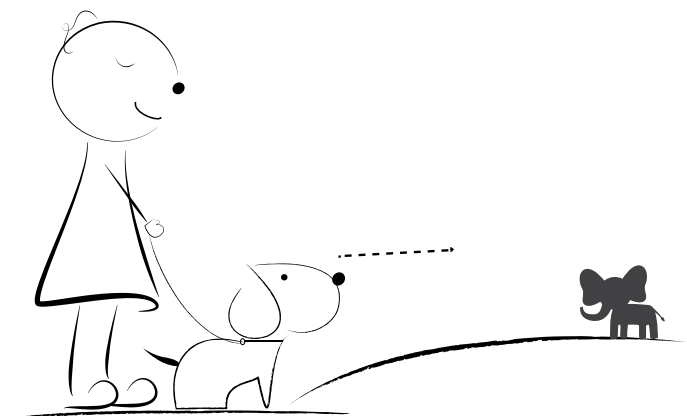
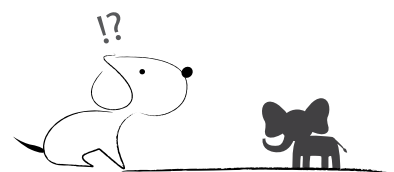
Many of the measures that human beings have put into place to keep dogs safe have diminished their ability to effectively communicate and interact in social situations.

= This can lead to
confusion
frustration

or fear (in all cases, stress) for many of our dogs and can sometimes manifest in

nervous

or reactive behavior.



✓ We use the **Step-Up Hack** to walk our dogs through these stressful situations, helping to diffuse tension and instill in them the confidence that we are managing the environment.

When a stressor is present or our dog seems overwhelmed, we step up and “hold their hand” through the situation rather than have them hanging out ahead of us feeling pressure to handle the situation on their own.

= **The Step-Up Hack** can ease tension and allow dogs the time and space to process their surroundings and make better assessments of what is actually happening, which leads to calmer nervous systems and clearer thinking.

Equipment

6 foot leash and collar, harness, or head-halter

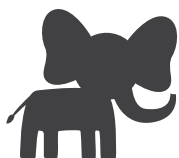


THE STEP UP *Hack*

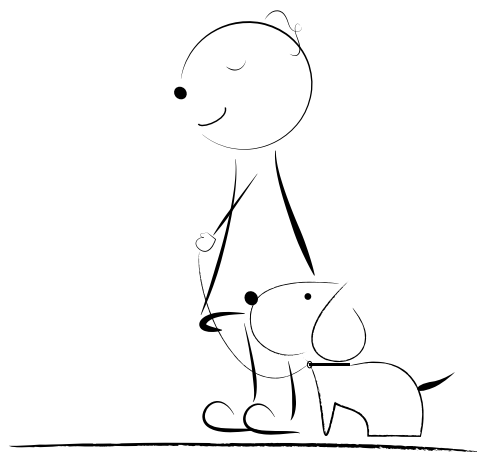
HOW to use it

As our dog's protector and advocate, we are employing the **"Mom arm"** to say **"I got it"**, **"I got you"**

We're literally **"stepping up"** to the conditions so they don't have to. Demonstrating initiative towards potentially scary stimuli the dog doesn't already have a point of reference in knowing how to navigate.



This can look like sliding your hand down your dog's leash so that your toes are just in front of their nose— this is social signaling that says: **"I got this, it's not on you to figure this out!"**



You can also implement this by physically placing your body in between your dog and the stressor to intermedate the social interaction. Dogs do this with each other all of the time.

01 If a stressor presents itself (*always maintaining a comfortable distance from the trigger for the dog*), you want to gently slide your hand down the leash and place your body weight just ahead of your dog's (usually lining the dog's shoulder with your hip and placing your foot opposite the dog just slightly in front of their nose).

✿ Be aware that you are actually sliding your hand down the leash and stepping up and not jerking back on the leash to pull your dog's body toward you.

✿ If you are standing or sitting with your dog and they see something concerning or arousing, you want to be sure that they are not out in front of you wondering what to do, but rather beside you with just a little bit of your body weight ahead of them (this usually looks like you placing your foot out an inch or so beyond their nose).

02 Anytime they look at the trigger and remain calm, you can give them a treat and/or praise them explaining what it is. You are demonstrating to them that you are going to take care of anything that upsets them and so those environmental triggers are not their concern. They can move through the world feeling safer, calmer and more secure.

