

K9 WADE FIELD MANUAL

THE RESCUE WALK

The 10-minute loose-leash protocol
that turns pullers into partners.



WADE RICHTER

THE LAST-CHANCE PROTOCOLS

ONE MISSION. FOUR MANUALS.

I pull dogs off the euthanasia list — dogs surrendered for problems that were never their fault. Pulling. Bolting. Reactivity. Every manual in this series is a protocol I run on real rescue dogs, written down in plain English so your dog never ends up on that list.

FM 01	THE RESCUE WALK	loose-leash protocol YOU ARE HERE
FM 02	COME WHEN IT COUNTS	recall that saves lives
FM 03	THE BAD DAY BOOK	reactivity & first-hour plan
FM 04	THE FUEL PROTOCOL	feeding working dogs

TRAIN HIM. — FEED HIM. — KEEP HIM.

K9 WADE FIELD MANUAL 01 — THE RESCUE WALK. For training purposes. Nothing in this manual replaces veterinary or professional behavioral advice for aggression cases. Train at your dog's pace; when in doubt, slow down.

► HANDLER & BEHAVIORAL SAFETY NOTICE — WADE RICHTER (K9 WADE)

Wade Richter (K9 Wade) is a former military K9 handler and rescue shelter operator, not a licensed veterinarian or board-certified veterinary behaviorist (DACVB). This manual provides educational handler mechanics and reward-based training protocols for general loose-leash walking. It does not replace a veterinary exam or in-person professional guidance for severe aggression or bite cases.

FIELD MANUAL 01

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FIELD TESTED

RESCUE APPROVED

10 MIN / DAY

CHAPTER 1 // MISSION BRIEF

WHY THIS WALK SAVES DOGS

This is not a walking manual. This is a rescue protocol. "Unmanageable on leash" is one of the top reasons dogs get surrendered — and a surrendered, untrained dog is a dog running out of time.



FIELD TESTED

CHAPTER 1 — MISSION BRIEF

THE WALK THAT DECIDES EVERYTHING

Two years ago I got the call. Ninety-pound shepherd mix, owner surrender. The paperwork said "unmanageable, dangerous on leash." Forty-eight hours left on the clock.

One assessment walk told me everything. He wasn't dangerous. He was untrained. A classic puller — zero guidance, choking himself at the end of the leash, dragging whoever held it. Sweet as pie otherwise.

Ten days. Ten minutes, twice a day, one protocol. Day eleven, he walked a full block on a loose leash, past another dog, without a sound. He was adopted the following week — by a family with kids.

That dog was never dangerous. He was never trained. There's a difference. And that difference is why this manual exists.

"Unmanageable on leash" is one of the top reasons dogs get surrendered to shelters. A fixable training problem becomes a death sentence for dogs that did nothing wrong.

THE SURRENDER PIPELINE

Here's how it goes. The dog pulls. The walk becomes a chore — shoulder aching, dog gasping, owner getting dragged down the sidewalk like a water skier. So the owner walks less. The dog gets less exercise. The dog gets more hyper. The dog pulls harder.

Owners start dreading their own dog. The relationship rots from the walk outward. Then come the words on the surrender form: unmanageable on leash. Too much energy. Can't handle him. And a healthy dog sleeps in a kennel for the last time — not because he's aggressive, but because nobody ever showed his owner how to fix a leash.

I've pulled dogs off the euthanasia list for this. Dogs that were hours away from being put down because nobody taught them to walk on a leash. Remember that. It's the reason every drill in this manual is ten minutes long and starts in your driveway.

WADE'S ORDERS

- ☐ **Read this manual once, all the way through,** before you run a single drill.
- ☐ **Run the drills in order.** Step 1 before Step 2. No skipping ahead.
- ☐ **Log every session** on the tracker in Chapter 14. What gets measured gets fixed.

WHO I AM AND WHY YOU SHOULD LISTEN

My name is Wade. I handled military K9s — dogs trained to work under gunfire, seventy-pound working dogs that could drag a grown man. These days my mission is simpler, and honestly, bigger.

I rescue dogs. Dogs that were surrendered, abandoned, hours from euthanasia — most of them for problems that were never their fault. Pulling. Jumping. "Too much energy." Things a few weeks of proper training would have fixed.

Everything in this manual is a protocol I run on real rescue dogs. Plain English. No theory. Just the work. If it can turn around a ninety-pound shelter puller in ten days, it can fix your dog's walk.

DEBRIEF

Loose-leash walking is not about obedience. It's about **keeping the dog in the home.** Every drill in this manual serves one mission: make the walk easy enough that the owner keeps walking, the dog keeps exercising, and nobody ever fills out a surrender form. Train him — that's pillar one of three. The walk is where it starts.

WHAT THIS MANUAL WILL GIVE YOU

By the last page you will have: the exact ten-minute loose-leash protocol, the equipment that helps and the one tool that secretly trains your dog to pull harder, the three mistakes that keep owners stuck for years, the variants for puppies, giant breeds, and reactive dogs, a troubleshooting table for when it goes sideways, a 14-day mission plan, and a printable tracker so you can watch your check-ins climb.

No prong collar required. No strength contest. No shouting. Ten minutes a day, in your driveway, with a dog that wants to learn — he just needs you to speak his language.

Let's go.

YOU'RE NOT FIGHTING ATTITUDE

Your dog isn't disobeying you. He's doing physics. It's called the opposition reflex — wiring, not attitude. And pulling WORKS, because every forward step pays him in the only currency that matters: forward motion.



CHAPTER 2 — THE REFRAME

THE OPPOSITION REFLEX

Before we touch a leash, we need to kill some bad advice — because most of what's sold to pullers is built on a lie about what's actually happening.

KILL THE BAD ADVICE FIRST

"Just get a prong collar." A prong collar without training is a pain shortcut, not a solution. It suppresses the symptom and teaches the dog nothing about what you actually want.

"Just yank him back." You're starting a strength contest you will lose against a forty-kilo dog. Every yank is also a deposit into the exact reflex that's causing the problem.

"He'll grow out of it." No. He won't. Pulling is a trained behavior. Every walk where he pulls and gets where he wants is a training session — and right now, he's training you.

Your dog isn't disobeying you. He's doing physics.

WIRING, NOT ATTITUDE

It's called the **opposition reflex**. When something pushes a dog, the dog pushes back. When the leash pulls him backward, his body automatically drives forward. It's a reflex — the same family as your knee jerking when the doctor taps it. No decision. No defiance. Just wiring.

That reframes everything. You're not fighting stubbornness. You're not fighting dominance, or disrespect, or a "bad" dog. You're fighting a reflex — and you do not beat a reflex by overpowering it. You beat it by making it pointless.

WHY PULLING WORKS (FOR THE DOG)

Here's the second half of the reframe, and it's the one that stings: **pulling WORKS**.

Every time your dog lunges forward and you stumble after him, he learns a clean, simple lesson: pull = we go where I want. You have been paying him for pulling, in the only currency that matters to him — forward motion. Not treats. Not praise. Motion. The walk is the reward, and he's been collecting it every single day.

A dog's brain is basically a slot machine looking for patterns. Pull, move forward. Pull, move forward. Pull, move forward. After a few hundred repetitions, the pattern is set in concrete. He's not being stubborn. He's cashing a check you've been writing for months.

DEBRIEF

This is why yanking, shouting, and pain tools fail long-term: they fight the **reflex** while leaving the **paycheck** intact. The dog still gets where he wants to go — he just gets dragged, choked, or pinched on the way there. The protocol in this manual does the opposite: it leaves the reflex alone and **removes the paycheck**. Tight leash never, ever produces forward motion again. Slack leash becomes the only currency that buys a walk. The slot machine re-patterns itself within days.

THE NEW RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

From this page forward, the leash is not a steering wheel. It's a telephone line. It carries information in two directions:

- **Tight leash = the world stops.** No forward motion. No exceptions. Not once.
- **Slack leash = everything moves.** Forward motion, praise, treats, the good stuff.

That's the whole war plan. Five steps, ten minutes a day. The dog's brain does the rest — because brains, canine or human, always follow the money.

WADE'S ORDERS

- ☐ **Stop correcting the pull.** From today, a tight leash buys exactly zero steps forward.
- ☐ **Start paying the slack.** Every loose-leash second is a rep toward the new pattern.
- ☐ **Remember the paycheck.** If the dog gets where he wants by pulling, you paid him. Own it, then stop paying it.

GEAR UP RIGHT

Sixty seconds on equipment. The right gear makes the protocol easy. The wrong gear — especially one popular tool — is a pulling-training machine. Spec sheet below: approved vs. banned.



FIELD TESTED

CHAPTER 3 — EQUIPMENT SPEC SHEET

APPROVED VS. BANNED

You don't need much. But what you use matters — because the wrong tool doesn't just fail to help, it actively trains the pull.

ITEM	APPROVED	BANNED
LEASH	6-ft fixed leash. Flat nylon or leather, one length, no give. It gives you honest information: slack or tight, nothing in between.	Retractable leash. A pulling-training machine. The dog learns that tension = more freedom, because the leash literally rewards pulling with extra line. Retire it today.
COLLAR / HARNESS	Flat collar for training, or a front-clip harness (leash clips at the chest). When the dog pulls, he gets gently turned back toward you.	Back-clip harness for training. It turns your dog into a sled dog — the clip behind the shoulders helps him pull harder. Fine for dogs that already walk nicely. Not for training.
TREATS	Pea-sized, soft, high value. Real meat, cheese, whatever your dog would mug you for. You'll pay a lot of check-ins in week one — small keeps the dog hungry and moving.	Big dry biscuits. Crunchy, slow to eat, low value. Every treat stops the drill for ten seconds while the dog crunches. The session dies one biscuit at a time.
TREAT DELIVERY	Treat pouch on your hip. Silent, one-handed access. Speed of payment is everything — the treat has to land within two seconds of the check-in.	Treats in a pocket or bag. Fumbling for a zip-lock while the moment passes teaches the dog that checking in pays... eventually. Eventually doesn't build habits.
YOUR HANDS	Relaxed grip, leash looped loosely. The leash should hang in a soft J. Your hands report information; they don't wrestle.	White-knuckle grip, leash wrapped around the hand. Wrapped leashes injure hands and lock you into a tug-of-war. If you need to wrap it, the session is already lost — reset.

WARNING — RETIRE THE RETRACTABLE

I need to be blunt: **retractable leashes are pulling-training machines.** Constant tension is built into the design — the dog must pull to get line, and pulling is rewarded with more freedom. It also teaches the dog that the length of the leash is negotiable, which is the exact opposite of what we're building. If you own one, retire it today. Not "for walks but not training." Today.

HAND POSITION: THE SOFT J

Hold the leash loop in one hand, the slack gathered loosely in the other. The leash between your hand and the dog's collar should hang in a soft **J-curve** — not a straight line, not dragging the ground. The J is your dashboard. J means slack, slack means the dog is winning. Straight line means tension, tension means the world is about to stop.

Study the plate below. Relaxed hands. Loose J. That's the starting position of every drill in this manual.

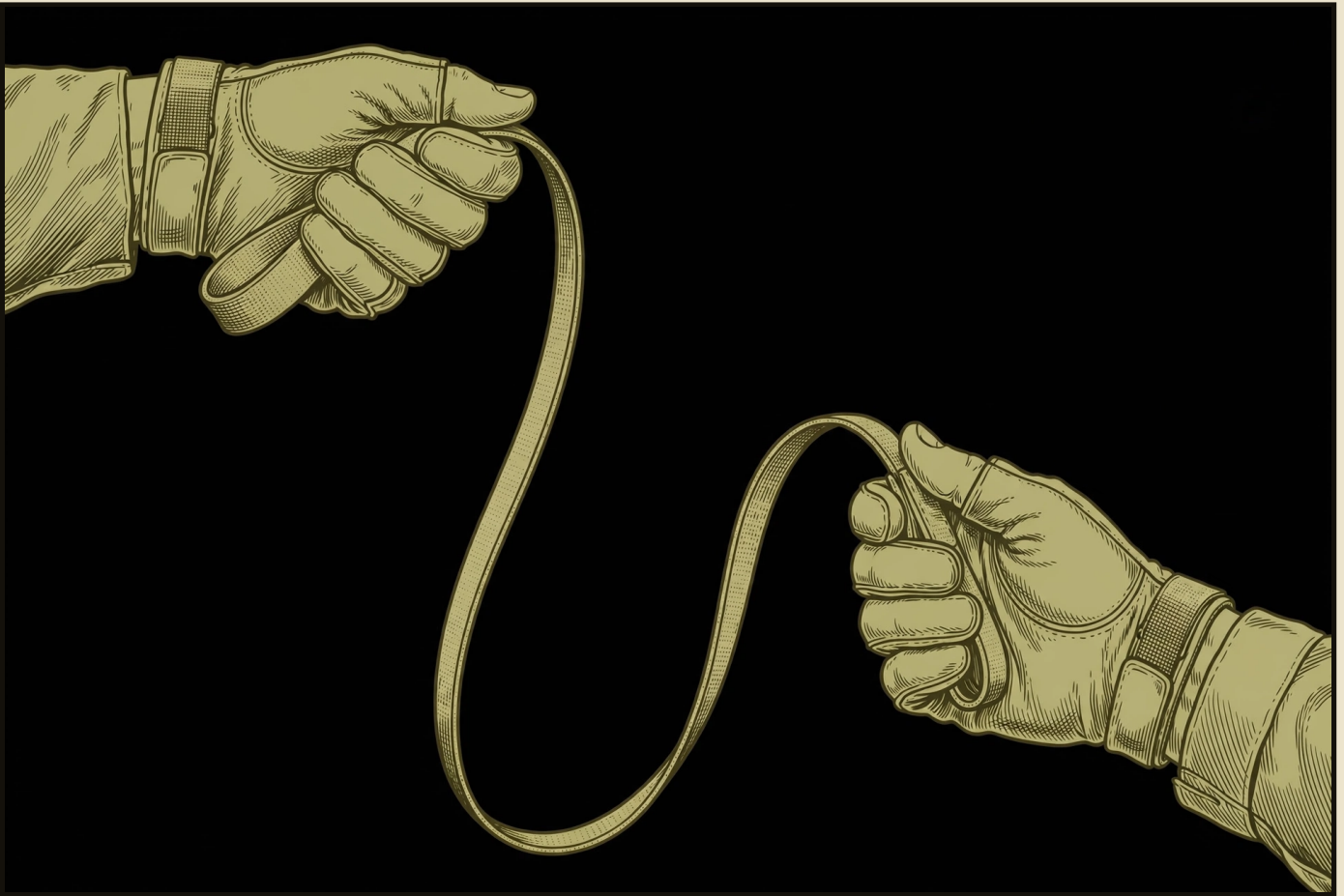


FIG. 3-1 — HAND POSITION: RELAXED GRIP, SOFT J-CURVE. YOUR DASHBOARD.

WADE'S ORDERS

- ☐ **6-ft fixed leash.** Acquire before Day 1.
- ☐ **Front-clip harness or flat collar** for training sessions.
- ☐ **Treat pouch + pea-sized high-value treats.** Pre-loaded, on your hip.
- ☐ **Retractable leash:** retired. Not in the car "just in case." Retired.

DEBRIEF

Equipment is not the training — but bad equipment makes training impossible. A retractable leash pays the dog for every pull. A back-clip harness gives him a sled rig. Fix the gear and the protocol has a clean runway. This is the only shopping in the whole manual, and most of it you already own.

STEP 1: THE TREE, UPGRADED

The classic advice is "be a tree": when the leash tightens, stop dead. That's half right. The missing half is what happens next — and it's the half that actually trains the dog.



CHAPTER 4 — THE PROTOCOL, STEP 1

THE TREE, UPGRADED

Ten minutes a day. Not on your normal walk — separate training sessions, boring location. Your normal walk has a destination, you're in a hurry, you'll cave. Training sessions have one goal: the leash.

THE DRILL

1. **Walk.** Start moving with the leash in a soft J.
2. **The instant you feel tension** — the J straightens — **stop dead.** Plant your feet. Be a tree. No yank, no "no," no drama. Just stop.
3. **Wait.** Stand still. Let the dog figure it out. He'll pull, he'll look around, he'll get confused. Hold.
4. **The moment the leash goes slack** — even for one second — **or the dog glances back at you**, mark it: **"Yes!"** and step forward immediately.
5. **Repeat.** That's the whole step.

WADE'S ORDERS

- ☐ **Stop the INSTANT you feel tension.** Not three steps later. Instant.
- ☐ **Move forward ONLY on slack or a check-in.** The "yes!" and the forward step land together — that's the payment.
- ☐ **Never** stop, wait two seconds, then walk on while the leash is still tight. That teaches: pull, pause, keep pulling. Useless.

WHY THE UPGRADE MATTERS

Most owners who try "be a tree" do this: dog pulls, they stop, they wait two seconds, they walk on. The dog learns a three-beat pattern — pull, pause, keep pulling. The pause becomes part of the pulling ritual. Nothing changes except the owner is now also annoyed.

The upgrade closes the loop. The dog only gets forward motion when the leash goes slack or he checks in with you. You're teaching one clean equation:

Slack leash = we move. Tight leash = the world stops.

First sessions are ugly. You'll stop every three steps. You'll feel ridiculous standing still in your driveway while your dog stares at you like you're broken. Good. Every stop is a rep. The slot machine is learning: pulling pays zero.

WARNING — THE EXTINCTION BURST

Around session three or four, many dogs pull **harder** for a session or two. This is normal — it's called an extinction burst. The old pattern stopped paying, so the dog tries the old pattern louder before giving it up. Do not cave here. If you move forward during the burst, you just taught him that pulling harder works. Hold the line. It breaks within a session or two, and what comes after is the fastest progress you'll see.

DRILL CARD 1 — THE TREE, UPGRADED

- ☐ Timer set: 10 minutes. Boring location: driveway or quiet street.
- ☐ Leash in soft J. Treat pouch loaded.
- ☐ Tension → stop dead. Slack or glance-back → "Yes!" + step forward.
- ☐ Count your stops. Write the number down after the session.
- ☐ When stops-per-session drop by half across three sessions → Step 2 is already working, add it in.

DEBRIEF

The tree works because it attacks the **paycheck**, not the reflex. You never fight the dog's forward drive — you just make sure it never buys motion. The dog's opposition reflex fires into a void: pull, nothing happens. Pull, nothing happens. Brains abandon strategies that pay zero. That's not obedience; that's economics.

► FIELD INTEL — B.F. SKINNER (1938): OPERANT REINFORCEMENT & THE EXTINCTION BURST

Behavioral psychologist **B.F. Skinner** (*The Behavior of Organisms*, 1938) mapped the core law of operant conditioning: behaviors that get reinforced repeat, while behaviors that stop paying out extinguish. Crucially, when a previously rewarded behavior (pulling = forward motion) suddenly stops paying, the brain temporarily tries the old strategy harder before giving it up — a documented spike called the **Extinction Burst**.

STEP 2: PAY THE CHECK-IN

In the early days your dog will look at you maybe twice per session. Each time: treat, praise, party. You are building a habit — checking in with you becomes the best-paying job in the dog's world.



CHAPTER 5 — THE PROTOCOL, STEP 2

PAY THE CHECK-IN

Step 1 removes the reward for pulling. Step 2 builds the reward for the thing you actually want: a dog that pays attention to you.

WHAT A CHECK-IN LOOKS LIKE

A check-in is any voluntary glance in your direction — eyes, a head turn, the dog drifting back to your side on his own. In the early days you'll get maybe two per session. They'll be accidents. Doesn't matter. An accidental check-in pays exactly the same as a deliberate one, because the dog's brain doesn't grade on intention — it grades on pattern.

THE DRILL

1. **Run the tree** (Step 1) as your base layer. Nothing changes there.
2. **The instant the dog glances at you** — mark it: "Yes!"
3. **Pay within two seconds:** pea-sized treat, delivered at your side (not tossed ahead), plus real praise. Not a mumbled "good boy." A party. Yes! Good! Look at you!
4. **Keep moving.** The payment happens on the walk, at your side — that's where you want the dog to default.

WADE'S ORDERS

- ☐ **Mark every check-in.** "Yes!" is a camera shutter — it captures the exact instant.
- ☐ **Treat lands within 2 seconds,** at your side, every time. Speed builds the habit.
- ☐ **Throw a party, not a receipt.** Flat praise pays flat. Be the most exciting thing on the street.
- ☐ **Log the count** after every session. Two check-ins today is data, not failure.

THE MATH OF THE HABIT

Here's what the curve looks like on a normal dog: **2 check-ins** per session in week one. **10+** by the end of week two. By week three, the dog starts defaulting to your side — because that's where the good stuff happens.

You're not bribing. You're building an economy. Right now the environment pays the dog for everything — smells, dogs, squirrels, forward motion. You're opening a competing business at his left hip, and you're paying better wages. Brains follow the money. Every time.

Tell him what TO do, then pay him. Dogs repeat what pays.

COMMON ERROR: THE TREAT TRAP

Two ways owners break this step. **One:** luring — holding the treat out to get the dog's attention, then paying. That's a bribe, and it teaches the dog to wait for the visible treat before engaging. The check-in must come first, unprompted; the treat appears after. **Two:** stopping the walk to deliver a ceremony. Keep it moving. Treat at your side, praise, walk on. The walk is the context; the side position is the product.

DRILL CARD 2 — PAY THE CHECK-IN

- ☐ Same 10-minute session, same boring location.
- ☐ Glance at you → "Yes!" → treat at your side within 2 seconds + party.
- ☐ No luring. No treat visible before the check-in.
- ☐ Log check-ins per session on the tracker. Watch the number climb.
- ☐ 10+ check-ins per session across three sessions → you're ready for Step 3.

DEBRIEF

Check-ins build **engagement** — a dog that is mentally with you, not just physically attached to you. Engagement is the foundation of everything: recall, heel, all of it. Loose-leash walking isn't really about the leash. It's about the relationship. A dog that checks in is a dog that's chosen you over the environment, one paid glance at a time.

► FIELD INTEL — IVAN PAVLOV (1927) & CLASSICAL CONDITIONING OF THE MARKER ("YES!")

Why does the treat have to land within two seconds of "Yes!"? Pairing a consistent acoustic marker with food delivered inside a **1-to-2-second window** uses **Pavlovian (classical) conditioning** to turn the word into an instant neural bridge. The marker captures the exact fraction of a second your dog glanced at you, while the treat at your left hip reinforces the position via **Skinnerian (operant) conditioning**.

STEP 3: THE 180

When the dog blows past you and the tree isn't enough: a calm 180-degree turn, walk the other way. Forging ahead doesn't get him forward — it gets him going backward.



CHAPTER 6 — THE PROTOCOL, STEP 3

THE 180

The tree handles steady pulling. But some dogs don't just pull — they forge: they blow past you like you're standing still, hit the end of the leash, and surf it forward. For forgers, you need the 180.

THE DRILL

1. **The dog surges past you.** Don't yank. Don't shout. Don't brace.
2. **Calmly turn 180 degrees** and walk the other way. Smooth, unhurried, like you meant to go that way all along.
3. **The dog hits the end of the leash,** turns, and hurries to catch up. Let him.
4. **The moment he's back at your side** with slack in the leash — "Yes!", treat, keep walking.

► FIELD INTEL — PAVLOV'S "FREEDOM REFLEX" VS. SPATIAL GEOMETRY

In his physiological studies on dogs, Nobel laureate **Ivan Pavlov (1927, *Conditioned Reflexes*)** documented an innate nervous-system response he termed the "**Freedom Reflex**" — an automatic motor opposition to physical restraint. When you haul backward on a tight leash, mechanical pressure triggers that exact reflex, driving the dog forward harder.

The **180 Turn** bypasses the reflex completely: instead of adding backward tension to the neck, you calmly change the geometry of travel. Once your dog realizes that forging ahead puts him behind you while checking your feet earns a paycheck at your side, attention replaces tension.

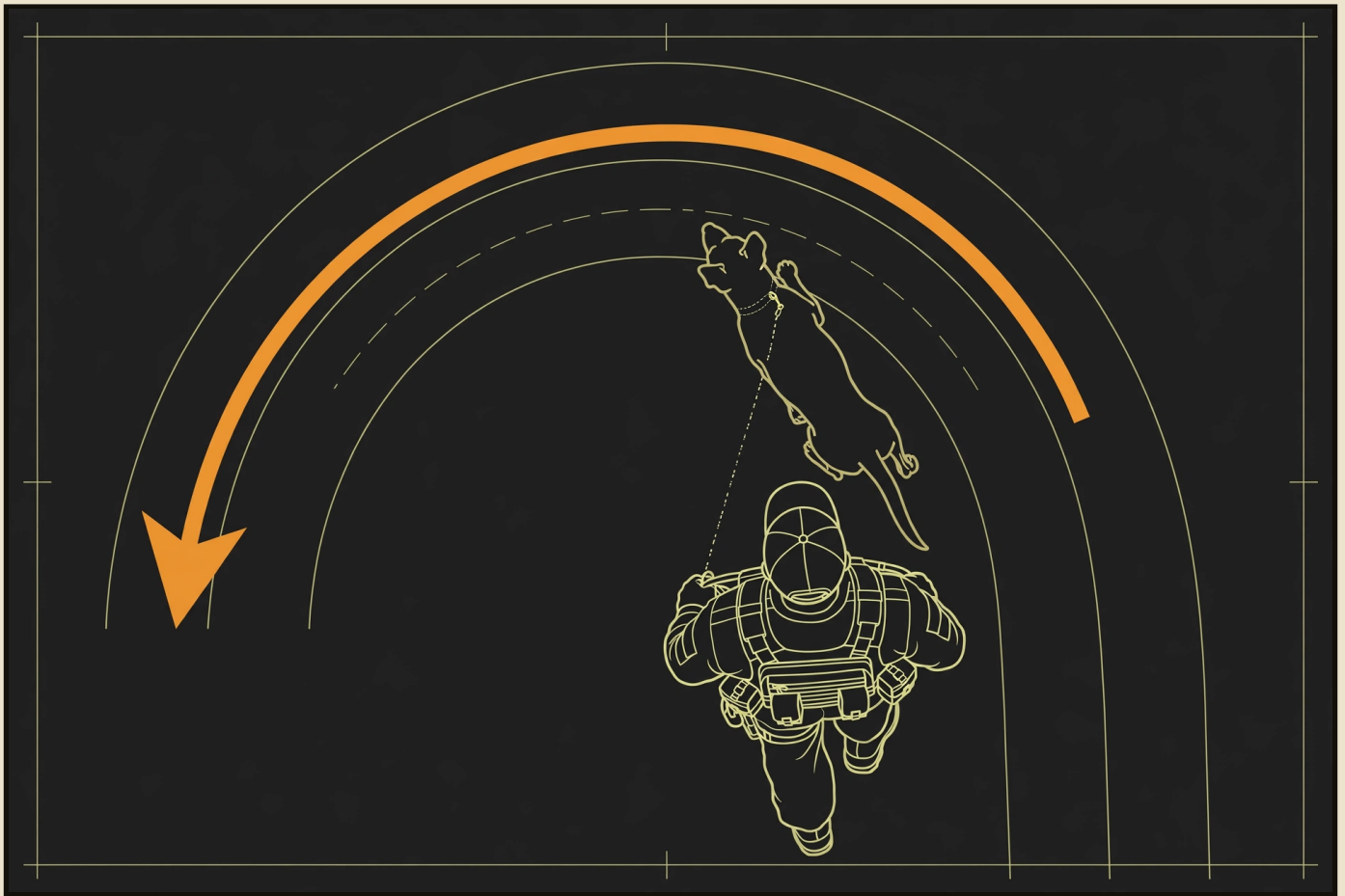


FIG. 6-1 — THE 180: DOG FORGES AHEAD → HANDLER TURNS → DOG REJOINS AT YOUR SIDE. CALM. NO YANK.

WADE'S ORDERS

- ☐ **Calm turn. No anger, no yank.** You're information, not punishment.
- ☐ **Turn before the leash goes bar-tight** if you can read it coming — anticipation beats reaction.
- ☐ **Pay the rejoin.** Dog back at your side with slack → "Yes!" + treat. Every time.
- ☐ **Three or four 180s** and most dogs start watching your feet. That's the tell it's working.

WHY IT WORKS

The forging dog has one strategy: ahead = forward. The 180 breaks the strategy cleanly. Forging ahead doesn't get him forward — it gets him going backward, away from everything he wanted. Meanwhile, the only behavior that ever produces forward motion is being at your side with a slack leash.

Notice what you didn't do: no leash pop, no confrontation, no strength contest. You just changed the geometry. The dog's brain updates the map: ahead is no longer forward. Three or four reps and most dogs start checking your feet before they surge — because your feet have become unpredictable, and unpredictable feet are worth watching.

WARNING — DON'T SPIN IN CIRCLES

The 180 is a **tool, not a lifestyle**. If you're doing twenty 180s in ten minutes, the environment is too distracting — drop back a level (see the distraction ladder in Step 5). Endless turning without payment just confuses the dog. Turn, let him rejoin, **pay the rejoin**, move on.

DRILL CARD 3 — THE 180

- ☐ Layer onto Steps 1-2. Same 10-minute session.
- ☐ Dog forges past → calm 180 → walk the other way.
- ☐ Dog rejoins at your side, slack leash → "Yes!" + treat.
- ☐ If 180s exceed ~6 per session → location too hard. Drop a level.

DEBRIEF

The 180 teaches **handler focus under motion**. The tree teaches the dog that pulling pays zero; the 180 teaches him that you are the thing to watch, because your direction is the only reliable predictor of where the walk goes. Dogs that watch the handler don't forge. The leash goes slack as a side effect of attention — which is exactly how it should work.

STEP 4: THE 10-MINUTE DRILL

Timer on. Boring location. Ten minutes, then done — even if it went great. Short sessions keep the dog's brain fresh and keep YOU consistent. Two ten-minute sessions beat one frustrated thirty-minute march.



CHAPTER 7 — THE PROTOCOL, STEP 4

THE 10-MINUTE DRILL

This step isn't a technique. It's a container — and the container is what makes the techniques work.

THE RULES OF THE DRILL

- **Timer on. Ten minutes.** Phone timer, kitchen timer, doesn't matter. When it rings, session over — even if it went great. Especially if it went great. End on a win.
- **Boring location.** Your driveway. A quiet street. Somewhere the dog has sniffed a hundred times. Novelty is the enemy of learning.
- **Separate from real walks.** Training sessions are not walks. A walk has a destination and a schedule; a session has one goal: the leash. Never train on the way to the coffee shop.
- **One to two sessions a day.** Two ten-minute sessions beat one twenty-minute session. Spacing is a feature — sleep consolidates learning.

WADE'S ORDERS

- ☐ **Set the timer BEFORE you clip the leash.** The timer is the boss, not your mood.
- ☐ **Same boring location** until the current level is easy (see Step 5).
- ☐ **End on a win:** last rep is a paid check-in, then done. The dog should finish wanting more.
- ☐ **Log it.** Date, location, stops, check-ins, 180s. Thirty seconds. The tracker is in Chapter 14.

WHY SHORT BEATS LONG

Twenty-five minutes of drilling and both of you are fried. The dog stops learning around minute twelve — after that you're just rehearsing frustration, and frustration is also training. He's learning that training sessions feel bad. You don't want that association anywhere near your dog.

Ten minutes keeps the dog's brain fresh and — just as important — keeps you consistent. Anybody can do ten minutes. Ten minutes survives bad weather, busy days, and low motivation.

The protocol that gets done beats the perfect protocol that doesn't. Consistency is the whole game; the timer is how you win it.

Two ten-minute sessions beat one frustrated thirty-minute march. Every time.

A SAMPLE SESSION, MINUTE BY MINUTE

TIME	WHAT YOU'RE DOING
0:00-1:00	Warm-up. Walk the boring location, let the dog sniff, settle. No pressure. You're calibrating.
1:00-8:00	The work. Steps 1-3 as needed: tree on tension, pay every check-in, 180 on forging. Stay mechanical.
8:00-9:30	Easy reps. Engineer wins: walk slower, pick lines with fewer triggers, pay generously. Build the ending.
9:30-10:00	Final paid check-in, big party, timer rings, session over. Unclip or transition to a free walk.

DEBRIEF

The drill format protects the **learning state**. Dogs learn in short, successful bursts with rest between — same as humans drilling any physical skill. The timer also protects **your** state: it caps frustration, guarantees consistency, and turns training from a project into a habit. Ten minutes is short enough to do daily and long enough to move the needle. That's not a compromise. That's the design.

STEP 5: PROOF IT

Once the driveway is easy, add one distraction at a time. The distraction ladder: driveway → quiet street → park at quiet hour → park at busy hour. Training is layers, not leaps.



CHAPTER 8 — THE PROTOCOL, STEP 5

PROOF IT — THE DISTRACTION LADDER

A dog that heels in your driveway and falls apart at the park hasn't failed. You skipped rungs. Proofing is how you generalize the skill — one layer at a time.

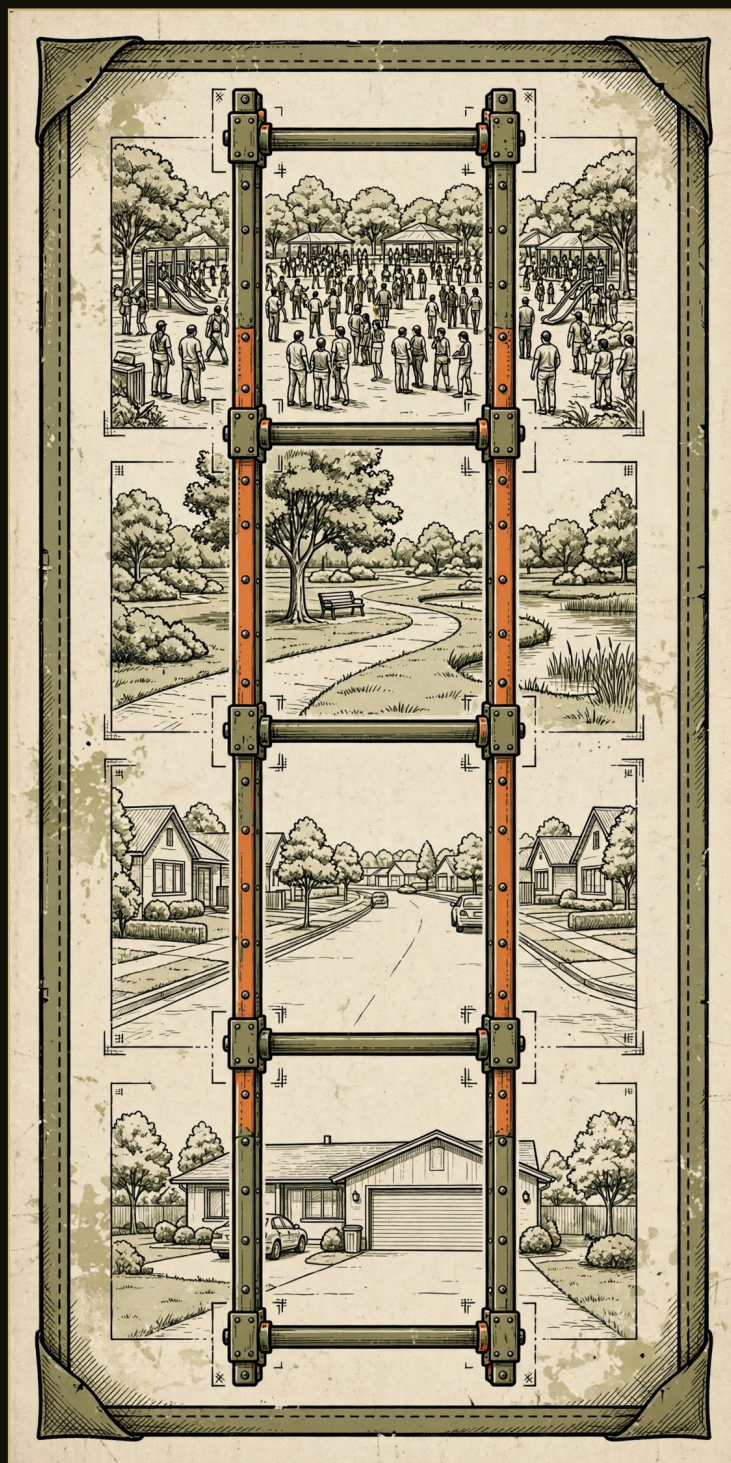


FIG. 8-1 — THE DISTRACTION LADDER. CLIMB ONE RUNG AT A TIME. FALL = DROP BACK ONE.

THE FOUR RUNGS

RUNG	LOCATION	GRADUATION STANDARD
1	Driveway / yard. Home turf, lowest distraction.	3 sessions: stops halved, 10+ check-ins per session, 180s near zero.
2	Quiet street. New smells, occasional car.	3 sessions at the Rung 1 standard. Dog recovers from surprises within 30 seconds.
3	Park at a quiet hour. Open space, distant dogs.	3 sessions at standard. Check-ins hold with dogs visible at distance.
4	Park at a busy hour. The real world.	Loose leash for a full 10-minute session with normal park traffic. You're done.

WADE'S ORDERS

- ☐ **One rung at a time.** Never skip. The ladder is the curriculum.
- ☐ **Three clean sessions** at the graduation standard before you climb.
- ☐ **Dog falls apart at a new rung?** You climbed too fast. Drop back one rung — no shame, that's the system working.
- ☐ **New rung = easier criteria for 1-2 sessions.** Pay more generously while the dog adjusts. Then raise the bar.

THE DROP-BACK RULE

This is the most important rule in the chapter: **if the dog falls apart at a new level, you moved up too fast — drop back one level.** This is not failure. This is information. The dog just told you exactly where his current limit is, and limits are only moved from below, never from above.

Owners who refuse to drop back end up drilling at a level where the dog can't think — and a dog that can't think can't learn. Every session at the wrong level is a session that teaches the dog that training is overwhelming. Drop back, rebuild, climb again. The second climb is always faster.

DEBRIEF

Dogs don't generalize well — "I can heel in the driveway" does not automatically become "I can heel at the park." Each new environment is, to the dog, a **new skill**. The ladder respects that: it re-teaches the same protocol in slightly harder contexts until the pattern holds everywhere. Training is layers, not leaps. The ladder is how you lay the layers.

DRILL CARD 5 — PROOF IT

- ☐ Current rung written on the tracker. No guessing.
- ☐ 3 sessions at graduation standard → climb one rung.
- ☐ Fall apart → drop back one rung, rebuild for 2 sessions, climb again.
- ☐ Rung 4 held for a full session → protocol complete. Maintain with 2-3 sessions a week.

CHAPTER 9 // DEBRIEF

WHY THIS WORKS WHEN YANKING DOESN'T

The full theory of the protocol in one chapter. You remove the reward instead of fighting the reflex — and the check-ins build engagement, the foundation of everything.



CHAPTER 9 — DEBRIEF

WHY IT WORKS WHEN YANKING DOESN'T

You've got the drills. Now here's the machinery underneath them — so you can trust the protocol on the days it feels slow.

1. YOU REMOVED THE REWARD INSTEAD OF FIGHTING THE REFLEX

Yanking fights the opposition reflex head-on: the dog drives forward, you haul backward, the reflex fires harder. It's a strength contest against an animal built to pull — and every rep practices the reflex. The dog gets stronger at the exact thing you're trying to stop.

The protocol never fights the reflex. It makes the reflex **irrelevant**. Tight leash never, ever produces forward motion. The dog can fire that reflex all day — it buys nothing. Brains are pattern machines; a strategy that pays zero gets abandoned within days. You're not stronger than the reflex. You're smarter than the paycheck.

2. YOU BUILT A COMPETING ECONOMY

Before the protocol, the dog had one employer: the environment, paying in forward motion for pulling. The protocol opens a second business at your left hip, paying in treats, praise, and motion for check-ins and slack leash. Then it bankrupts the first business.

This is why "just stop pulling" training fails and "do this instead" training works. Nature abhors a vacuum — take away pulling without installing an alternative and the dog invents his own (usually worse). The check-in is the alternative. It's a job with better pay, and dogs — like everyone — follow the money.

3. CHECK-INS BUILD ENGAGEMENT — THE FOUNDATION OF EVERYTHING

Here's the part most leash programs miss entirely. The check-in payments build something deeper than a loose leash: **engagement**. A dog that checks in with you is a dog that's mentally with you.

Engagement is the foundation of everything you'll ever teach — recall, heel, settling in a café, ignoring the squirrel. Every one of those starts with a dog whose default is you, not the environment. Loose-leash walking isn't really about the leash. It's about the relationship. The leash just happens to be where the relationship is most visible.

You're not training a walk. You're training a default: when in doubt, check with me.

4. LAYERS, NOT LEAPS

The 10-minute container and the distraction ladder respect how brains actually learn: short successful bursts, rest, slightly harder context, repeat. Marathon sessions and skipped rungs both violate this — which is why they both fail. The protocol is shaped like learning itself. That's not an accident.

DEBRIEF

Four mechanisms, one protocol: **remove the paycheck** (tree), **install a better job** (check-ins), **make yourself worth watching** (180), **respect the learning curve** (drill format + ladder). No pain, no confrontation, no equipment arms race. Just economics and attention — the two forces that have shaped every trained dog in history, from military K9s to the shepherd mix that got adopted by a family with kids.

THE 3 MISTAKES

Three mistakes keep owners stuck for years. I see them in almost every shelter surrender with "leash" on the paperwork. Check yourself against all three before you blame the dog.



READ THIS FIRST

CHAPTER 10 — AFTER-ACTION REVIEW

THE 3 MISTAKES THAT KEEP OWNERS STUCK FOR YEARS

If the protocol isn't working, it's almost never the dog. Run this checklist first.

MISTAKE 1 — TRAINING ONLY ON REAL WALKS

Your walk to the coffee shop is not a training session. You're rushed, the dog's excited, there's a destination — and the moment he pulls hard, you'll cave, because you're late. Every caved rep pays the old pattern and taxes the new one.

The fix: separate the drill from the walk until the drill is solid. Training sessions happen in boring locations with a timer and no destination. Real walks happen on whatever management you need — shorter route, front-clip harness, even the car to a quiet spot — while the training does its work in the sessions. Two different operations. Don't mix them.

MISTAKE 2 — MARATHON SESSIONS

Twenty-five minutes of drilling and both of you are fried. The dog stops learning, you get frustrated, everybody loses — and the dog learns that training sessions feel terrible.

The fix: ten minutes. Timer. Done. Even if it went great — especially if it went great. End on a win and let the dog sleep on it. Two ten-minute sessions beat one frustrated thirty-minute march, every single time. Consistency beats intensity; the timer is how you guarantee consistency.

WARNING — THE "MORE IS BETTER" TRAP

Skipping rest days to "speed things up" usually slows things down. Learning consolidates between sessions, not during them. If you're doing three sessions a day and progress stalls, **cut back to one** before you change anything else. Overtraining is real, and it looks exactly like stubbornness.

MISTAKE 3 — ONLY CORRECTING, NEVER DIRECTING

If all your dog hears on a walk is "no, stop, heel" — corrections with no direction — he has no idea what you want. Imagine a boss who only tells you what you're doing wrong and never what good looks like. You'd quit. Dogs can't quit, so they check out.

The fix: tell him what TO do, then pay him. Slack leash → "Yes!" + move. Check-in → "Yes!" + treat + party. Rejoin after a 180 → "Yes!" + treat. The dog should hear ten payments for every correction. Dogs repeat what pays — so make the right thing the thing that pays.

WADE'S ORDERS

- ☐ **Separate** training sessions from real walks.
- ☐ **Ten minutes**, timer, done — no marathons.
- ☐ **Direct, then pay.** Ten payments for every correction.
- ☐ Stuck for a week? Re-read this chapter before you touch the troubleshooting table.

NOT EVERY DOG READS THE MANUAL

Same protocol, adjusted for the three cases that break the standard template: puppies, giant breeds, and reactive dogs. One problem at a time — always.



CHAPTER 11 — FIELD VARIANTS

PUPPIES, GIANTS, REACTIVE DOGS

The protocol is the protocol. These variants adjust the container — not the principles — for dogs at the edges.

VARIANT A — PUPPIES (UNDER 6 MONTHS)

Same protocol, smaller doses. **Five-minute sessions** instead of ten — a puppy's attention span is a matchstick, and that's fine. Everything is a game: high voice, big party, silly energy. A puppy that thinks training is play will out-learn every "serious" puppy in the class.

Lower your criteria without lowering your mechanics. A puppy check-in that lasts half a second still pays. You're building the habit of engagement now; precision comes later. And start the ladder at Rung 1 even if the puppy seems "fine" elsewhere — confidence built slowly is confidence that lasts.

WADE'S ORDERS — PUPPIES

- ☐ **5-minute sessions**, 2-3 per day. Timer still the boss.
- ☐ **Everything is a game.** If you're bored, the puppy checked out minutes ago.
- ☐ Pay **every** check-in, however brief. Volume builds the habit.
- ☐ End every session with play. Training → fun, always.

VARIANT B — GIANT BREEDS (40 KG / 90 LB AND UP)

Physics is not on your side, so **manage the environment while you train.** Start indoors or in the yard — never let a 60-kilo adolescent rehearse dragging you down the street. Every rehearsal of the pull is a deposit in the old pattern, and with a giant breed each deposit is expensive.

A front-clip harness is close to mandatory here during the training phase — it turns forward drive into a turn toward you instead of a tow rope. Train the protocol in the yard until Rung 1 is genuinely solid, then climb the ladder exactly as written. Giants often learn faster than small dogs once the environment is managed, because the criteria are so clear.

WARNING — GIANTS

Do not "test" a giant breed at a hard rung to see if he's ready. If he forges and you can't hold the geometry, **he just learned that forging works against you** — the worst possible lesson. Climb only on clean graduations. Patience here is measured in days, not months.

VARIANT C — REACTIVE DOGS

If your dog explodes at other dogs — lunging, barking, losing his mind — that's a **different problem layered on top** of the pulling. The leash protocol alone won't fix reactivity, and reactivity will drown the leash protocol.

One problem at a time. Fix the reactivity with distance work first: find the distance where your dog notices the trigger but can still think, and pay check-ins there. Shrink the distance over sessions. That's a full protocol in itself — it's Field Manual 03, The Bad Day Book.

What you can do now: run Steps 1–4 in zero-trigger environments (empty parking lot at dawn, your yard) so the leash mechanics are installed before you ever add the reactivity layer. When the dog can think around triggers, the leash protocol slots right in — because the foundation is already poured.

WADE'S ORDERS — REACTIVE DOGS

- ☐ **Distance first.** Train where the dog can still think. No flooding.
- ☐ Install leash mechanics in **zero-trigger** environments meanwhile.
- ☐ Do not proof the ladder around triggers until reactivity work is underway — see FM 03.
- ☐ If the dog redirects onto the leash or you → stop, create distance, end the session. Safety first, always.

DEBRIEF

Variants never change the **principles** — remove the paycheck, pay the alternative, respect the learning curve. They change the **container**: shorter sessions for puppies, managed environments for giants, sequenced problems for reactive dogs. When in doubt, make it easier, not harder. The protocol rewards patience with speed.

WHEN IT GOES SIDEWAYS

Symptom → likely cause → fix. Find your symptom, apply the fix for three sessions before you change anything else.



CHAPTER 12 — TROUBLESHOOTING

SYMPTOM → CAUSE → FIX

Read the row that matches. Apply the fix for **three full sessions** before deciding it didn't work. Most "broken" protocols are just under-applied fixes.

SYMPTOM	LIKELY CAUSE	FIX
Dog pulls harder in sessions 3-4	Extinction burst — the old pattern is dying loudly.	Hold the line. Do not move forward on tension. It breaks within 1-2 sessions. Caving now teaches "pull harder works."
Zero check-ins after a week	Treats too low-value, or you're luring instead of marking.	Upgrade the treats (real meat/cheese). Hide them until after the glance. Pay within 2 seconds, at your side, with a party.
Dog only walks nicely when he sees the treat pouch	Pouch became the cue; habit isn't built yet.	Normal early stage. Keep paying. Fade the visible pouch only after 3 weeks of 10+ check-ins/session — and fade visibility, not payment.
Great in driveway, chaos on the street	Skipped a ladder rung.	Drop back to the last clean rung. Three sessions at graduation standard, then climb again. Layers, not leaps.
Dog forges constantly, 180s aren't working	You're not paying the rejoin — or the environment is too hot.	Every rejoin at your side gets "Yes!" + treat. If 180s exceed ~6/session, drop a rung. The 180 is a tool, not a lifestyle.
Dog shuts down / won't move	Too much pressure, sessions too long, or a scary environment.	Shorten to 5 minutes. Easier location. Pay any movement and any glance. End on wins for a week. Rebuild from Rung 1.
Progress for 2 weeks, then plateau	Criteria raised too fast, or real walks are undoing sessions.	Audit: are training sessions truly separate from real walks? Are you caving on walks? Fix the leak, then hold criteria steady for a week.
Dog pulls only toward other dogs	Reactivity layered on top of pulling.	See Variant C (Ch. 11). Distance work first, one problem at a time. Full protocol in FM 03.
Leash goes slack but dog is miles away mentally	You're getting compliance without engagement.	Pay check-ins harder — that's the engagement builder. A slack leash with a checked-out dog is a hollow win. Watch the eyes, not the leash.

You're exhausted and dreading sessions	Marathon sessions or too-hard rung.	Cut to one 10-minute session a day at an easier rung for a week. The protocol must be sustainable for the human too. Consistency beats intensity.
Dog pulls on real walks but not in sessions	Sessions and walks are different contexts — expected.	Keep sessions clean; manage walks (shorter route, front-clip, no caving). As the ladder climbs, sessions become walks. Don't rush the merge.

WADE'S ORDERS

- ☐ **One fix at a time**, three sessions minimum, before judging.
- ☐ **Log everything**. The tracker turns feelings into data.
- ☐ Still stuck after two weeks of clean application? Re-read Chapters 10 and 2 — the answer is usually there.

14-DAY MISSION PLAN

Two weeks. Two sessions a day. Every day has a focus, a target, and a checkbox. Print this chapter, stick it on the fridge, and execute.



EXECUTE

CHAPTER 13 — 14-DAY MISSION PLAN

OPERATION: RESCUE WALK

Print these pages. Check the boxes with a pen. Day-by-day focus below — log numbers on the tracker in Chapter 14.

WEEK 1 — INSTALL THE MECHANICS (RUNG 1: DRIVEWAY/YARD)

DAY	FOCUS	TARGET & NOTES
DAY 1	Gear check + first tree session. Read drill card 1.	Just run Step 1. Count stops. Ugly is fine. Log it. S 1 ☐ S 2 ☐
DAY 2	Tree, upgraded. "Yes!" + forward on every slack.	Stops should feel familiar. Mark the instant of slack — timing is the skill. S 1 ☐ S 2 ☐
DAY 3	Layer in Step 2: pay the check-in.	Expect ~2 check-ins. Pay them like lottery wins. Watch for the extinction burst. S 1 ☐ S 2 ☐
DAY 4	Check-in economy. Speed of payment.	Treat within 2 seconds, at your side. No luring. Count check-ins. S 1 ☐ S 2 ☐
DAY 5	Layer in Step 3: the 180 for forging.	Calm turns, pay every rejoin. Dog should start watching your feet. S 1 ☐ S 2 ☐
DAY 6	Full stack: tree + check-ins + 180s.	Run it like a system now. Stops dropping? Check-ins climbing? Log both. S 1 ☐ S 2 ☐
DAY 7	Assessment. One easy session + review the week's logs.	Compare Day 1 vs Day 7 numbers. That's your progress, measured. Rest the second session. S 1 ☐ REST ☐

WEEK 2 — BUILD THE HABIT, CLIMB THE LADDER

DAY	FOCUS	TARGET & NOTES
DAY 8	Push check-in volume. Be the casino.	Target: 10+ check-ins/session. Pay generously — you're buying a habit. S1 ☐ S2 ☐
DAY 9	Rung 1 graduation check.	3 sessions at standard? Stops halved, 10+ check-ins, 180s near zero → clear to climb. S1 ☐ S2 ☐
DAY 10	Climb to Rung 2: quiet street.	New smells, same rules. Pay more generously for 1–2 sessions while he adjusts. S1 ☐ S2 ☐
DAY 11	Consolidate Rung 2.	Dog should recover from surprises within 30 seconds. If not — drop back, no shame. S1 ☐ S2 ☐
DAY 12	Scout Rung 3: park at a quiet hour.	One session to scout, one to work. Distance from triggers is your friend. S1 ☐ S2 ☐
DAY 13	Work Rung 3.	Check-ins must hold with dogs visible at distance. Hold the standard. S1 ☐ S2 ☐
DAY 14	Final assessment + plan the next 2 weeks.	Log totals. Where are you on the ladder? Write the next rung's start date. Maintain 2–3 sessions/week from here. S1 ☐ DONE ☐

DEBRIEF

Fourteen days won't finish the job — and that's fine. What fourteen days **will** do: install the mechanics, prove the pattern to the dog's brain, and give you data. Most owners see the walk change in week two. The ladder finishes the job over the following weeks. The mission plan gets you moving; the tracker keeps you honest.

CHECK-IN TRACKER

Printable log. One row per day. Log check-ins per session and watch the number climb — that's your progress, measured.



CHAPTER 14 — CHECK-IN TRACKER (PRINTABLE)

14-DAY LOG

Print this page. Fill it with a pen after every session. **CI** = check-ins counted. **Rung** = ladder level (1–4).

DAY	DATE	S1 CI	S2 CI	STOPS	180S	RUNG	NOTES
1							
2							
3							
4							
5							
6							
7							
8							
9							
10							
11							
12							
13							
14							

HOW TO READ YOUR NUMBERS

- **Check-ins climbing week over week** → the habit is building. Keep going.
- **Stops dropping** → the old paycheck is dying. The tree is working.

- **180s near zero** → the dog is watching your feet. Handler focus is online.
- **Numbers stall for 4+ sessions** → re-read Chapter 10 (mistakes) and the troubleshooting table before changing anything.

WADE'S ORDERS

- ☐ **Log within 5 minutes** of each session. Memory lies; ink doesn't.
- ☐ **Compare weekly**, not daily. Day-to-day noise hides the trend.
- ☐ **Celebrate the climb.** 2 check-ins to 10 is a 5x return on ten minutes a day.

Need more rows? Photocopy this page or print it again from your files. The tracker is yours — run it as long as you're training.

CHAPTER 15 // FINAL ORDERS

MOVE OUT

You have the protocol. You have the plan. You have the tracker. There is nothing left to read — only reps to run.



CHAPTER 15 — FINAL ORDERS

YOUR ORDERS, SOLDIER

Tonight, somewhere in America, a healthy dog will go to sleep in a shelter kennel — not because he's aggressive, but because he pulls on the leash and nobody ever showed his owner how to fix it.

Yours doesn't have to be that dog. You now hold the exact protocol I run on dogs forty-eight hours from the needle. Ten minutes a day. A boring driveway. A timer. That's the whole price of admission.

WADE'S ORDERS — FINAL

- ☐ **Today:** retire the retractable leash. Gear check per Chapter 3.
- ☐ **Tomorrow:** Day 1. Timer, driveway, Step 1. Log it.
- ☐ **14 days:** run the mission plan. Check every box.
- ☐ **After:** maintain 2-3 sessions a week until Rung 4 is routine.
- ☐ **Always:** slack pays, tension stops. Tell him what TO do, then pay him.

Remember the shepherd. Ninety pounds, "unmanageable, dangerous on leash," forty-eight hours left. Ten days of this protocol — ten minutes, twice a day — and he walked a full block past another dog without a sound. Adopted the next week by a family with kids.

He didn't need a miracle. He needed ten days. Your dog needs the same.

A dog whose owner understands him is a dog who never sees the inside of a shelter. Be that owner.

NEXT: FIELD MANUAL 02

— recall training that could save your dog's life. Because a dog that walks beautifully on leash and bolts through an open gate is still a dog in danger. One open gate is all it takes.

Train him. Feed him. Keep him. — K9 WADE

THE RESCUE WALK

The 10-minute loose-leash protocol — the same one Wade runs on dogs forty-eight hours from euthanasia.

FM 01	THE RESCUE WALK	loose-leash protocol
FM 02	COME WHEN IT COUNTS	recall that saves lives
FM 03	THE BAD DAY BOOK	reactivity & first-hour plan
FM 04	THE FUEL PROTOCOL	feeding working dogs

TRAIN HIM. — FEED HIM. — KEEP HIM.

FIELD TESTED

RESCUE APPROVED

10 MIN / DAY

Good dogs run out of time every year for fixable problems. Yours doesn't have to.