

K9 WADE FIELD MANUAL

THE BAD DAY BOOK

Reactivity, lunging, bites
and the first-hour plan when it goes wrong.



WADE RICHTER

FIELD MANUAL 03 // THE BAD DAY BOOK

ISSUED TO ONE HANDLER. ONE DOG. ONE MISSION.

This manual belongs in your hands, not on a shelf. Fill it in. Dog-ear the pages. Take it to the field.

Handler name	
Dog's name / breed	
Date issued	
Vet name + phone	
Trainer / behaviorist	

HOW TO RUN THIS MANUAL

- ☐ **Read the mission brief first.** Two pages. It sets the tone for everything after.
- ☐ **Memorize the First-Hour Plan.** When the bad day comes, you will not have time to flip pages.
- ☐ **Print the incident log.** Keep one copy on the fridge and one in your training bag.
- ☐ **Run the 14-day mission plan in order.** Do not skip to the hard parts. Foundations first.

A note on safety. This manual teaches management and training for common reactivity, lunging, jumping, and post-incident response. It is not a substitute for a veterinary exam or for a certified professional working your dog in person. If anyone - human or animal - has been seriously injured, secure the scene and call your vet and local animal control first, then come back to this book. Never put yourself between two fighting dogs with your hands. Wade has worked military K9s and pulled dogs off the euthanasia list for fixable behavior - everything here is field-tested, and everything here assumes you use common sense alongside it.

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DEBRIEF - HOW TO READ THIS BOOK

Sections 01-05 are the **emergency response**: what to do when it goes wrong and how to read what happened. Sections 06-09 are the **training core**: distance work, the door, equipment, jumping. Sections 10-11 are the **judgment calls**: getting help and facing the hardest decisions honestly. Sections 12-14 are your **mission plan**: fourteen days, tracked. If you are reading this mid-crisis, jump straight to Section 02.

01 MISSION BRIEF

THE BAD DAY HAPPENS TO GOOD OWNERS

Your dog lunged at another dog on the walk. He pinned a dog at the park. He put teeth on a guest's sleeve at the door. Or the worst one - he bit.

Here is what I need you to hear first: **the bad day happens to good owners.** I have stood in living rooms with shaking, crying owners who loved their dogs completely - and the dog had just done something scary. Good people. Good dogs. Bad ten seconds.

This manual is not a lecture. I am not here to tell you what you did wrong. I am here to hand you the first-hour plan - what to do when it goes wrong - and then the real fix, so it does not happen twice.

"Most dogs I have pulled off the euthanasia list were not bad dogs. They were untrained dogs with owners who were never shown how. There is a difference - and that difference is why I do this."

Three truths to carry into this book:

1. **Behavior is information, not character.** A lunge is data. A bite is data. We read it, we do not judge it.
2. **Calm handlers make calm dogs.** Panic is contagious - down the leash, across the room, into the dog. Your first job in any incident is your own breathing.
3. **Management is not failure.** A crate, a leash, a closed door, a muzzle - these are seatbelts. You do not apologize for wearing a seatbelt.

WADE'S ORDERS - BEFORE YOU TURN THE PAGE

Say it out loud: **"I will stay calm. I will work the checklist. My dog is not a bad dog - we have a problem to solve."** Then turn to Section 02 and memorize the First-Hour Plan. The next bad day will not schedule itself.

02 THE FIRST-HOUR PLAN

WADE'S ORDERS CHECKLIST - MEMORIZE THIS PAGE

When it goes wrong, you get about sixty seconds where clear thinking matters more than anything. Run these four moves in order. Every time.

1

SEPARATE - GET SPACE, NO DRAMA

Get space between the dogs. Get space between the dog and the people. Move **slowly and quietly** - fast hands and shouting add fuel. Leash your dog and walk him away in a wide arc. If two dogs are locked together, do not reach in with your hands: grab a hind leg each (the wheelbarrow), or loop a leash around a hindquarter and pull steadily backward. Then separate rooms, separate yards. Done. No chasing, no "let them work it out."

2

SECURE - MANAGE THE SCENE

Leash on. Crate. Separate room with the door closed. Everyone safe, everyone accounted for. Check every person and every animal for injuries - adrenaline hides pain, so look, do not just ask. This is **scene management, not punishment**. The dog goes somewhere boring and safe. You go somewhere you can breathe.

WARNING - DOG FIGHTS

Never put your hands or face between two fighting dogs. If you are alone and cannot break it safely, make loud noise, throw a blanket or jacket over them, or use a hose. Your safety comes first - a handler in the ER helps no dog.

02 THE FIRST-HOUR PLAN

CONTINUED

3

DOCUMENT - WRITE IT DOWN WHILE IT IS FRESH

Memory lies. Adrenaline edits the tape. Before the hour is out, fill in the **incident log** (Section 03). Facts only - what happened, in order, like a police report. This log is what a vet, a trainer, or a behaviorist will ask for first. Professionals do not work from "he just snapped." They work from your log.

4

DO NOT PUNISH AFTER THE FACT

No yelling. No hitting. No dragging him to the scene of the crime for a lecture. No "time out" twenty minutes later. Your dog **cannot connect** your anger now to what he did then - his brain does not work that way. All after-the-fact punishment teaches him is that you are unpredictable and scary, which makes the next incident *more* likely, not less. If you missed the moment - and in a real incident, you did - let it go and work the plan.

WADE'S ORDERS - THE 60-SECOND DRILL

- ☐ Breathe. Slow your own hands first.
- ☐ Separate - space between all parties, no drama.
- ☐ Secure - leash, crate, closed door. Check for injuries.
- ☐ Document - incident log, facts only, within the hour.
- ☐ No punishment after the fact. Ever.

DEBRIEF - WHY THIS ORDER

Separate stops the damage. Secure stops the second incident - most "second bites" happen in the chaotic ten minutes after the first. Document captures the truth before your brain rewrites it. And no punishment protects the one relationship you need intact to fix this: the dog's trust in you.

03 INCIDENT LOG

PRINTABLE TEMPLATE - FACTS ONLY, LIKE A POLICE REPORT

Fill one of these out after every incident - the big ones and the small ones. A "small" lunge with no contact is still data. Keep it factual. This is what a professional will ask for.

INCIDENT REPORT	
Date / time	
Location (exact)	
Trigger - what started it	
Distance to trigger	
What the dog did (in order, step by step)	
What YOU did (in order)	
Other dogs / people involved	
Injuries - to whom, what	
Vet contacted? (name/time)	
Notes - anything unusual that day (tired, sick, new place, skipped meal)	

03 INCIDENT LOG

SECOND COPY - PRINT AS MANY AS YOU NEED

One log per incident. Photocopy this page or print extras. A stack of filled logs is the fastest way I know to spot a pattern - same trigger, same distance, same time of day.

INCIDENT REPORT	
Date / time	
Location (exact)	
Trigger - what started it	
Distance to trigger	
What the dog did (in order, step by step)	
What YOU did (in order)	
Other dogs / people involved	
Injuries - to whom, what	
Vet contacted? (name/time)	
Notes - anything unusual that day (tired, sick, new place, skipped meal)	

04 READ THE ROOT BEFORE THE LABEL

FEAR VS FRUSTRATION VS PAIN VS TRUE AGGRESSION

"Aggressive" is the most overused word in dog ownership. It is a label, not a diagnosis - and the wrong label points you at the wrong fix.

Here is the reframe: most of what gets called aggression is **fear or frustration wearing a costume**. A fearful dog explodes to create distance. A frustrated dog explodes because he cannot *close* distance. Pain makes a sweet dog snap like a stranger. And true aggression - calm, deliberate, no warning wasted - is rare, and it is a different mission entirely.

Treat the wrong root and you train the wrong thing. Punish a fearful dog and you confirm his fear. Restrain a frustrated dog tighter and you add pressure to a pressure cooker. Miss pain and you train against a medical problem. Read the root first. Then act.

THE FOUR ROOTS

FEAR - "Get me out of here." The dog wants distance and will fight to get it.

FRUSTRATION - "Let me AT it." Barrier frustration, usually on leash. Wants closeness, explodes from restraint.

PAIN - "Don't touch that." Sudden, out of character. Medical first, training never.

TRUE AGGRESSION - rare. Calm, deliberate intent to do damage. Needs a professional now.

HOW TO USE THE TABLE

Watch the whole dog - ears, tail, mouth, hackles, voice - not one signal. A wagging tail on a stiff body is not a happy dog. Context is everything: same snap at the vet's office and at the dinner table can be two different roots.

When in doubt between fear and frustration, ask: does he want **away** from it, or **at** it? That one question solves most cases.

04 BODY LANGUAGE SPEC SHEET

READ THE WHOLE DOG, NOT ONE SIGNAL

SIGNAL	FEAR	FRUSTRATION	PAIN	TRUE AGGRESSION
Ears	Pinned flat back	Forward, rotating, swiveling	Back or flattened, held still	Forward and fixed
Tail	Tucked hard under belly	High, stiff, fast wag	Still, clamped, or guarded	High, stiff, vibrating - or still
Mouth	Lips pulled back, panting, yawning	Open, barking in bursts	Closed tight, lip lick, sudden snap	Closed, then committed bite - no wasted motion
Hackles	Up over rear half	Up along the back, patchy	Usually flat - look for stiffness instead	Full ridge, neck to tail
Voice	Whine, yip, high sharp bark	Barking bursts, frustrated whining	Yelp when touched, growl at handling	Low growl or silence - silence is worse
Body	Low, leaning away, trying to flee	Forward, lunging against restraint	Stiff, hunched, guards one area	Tall, weight forward, direct hard stare
Goal	Create distance	Close distance	Stop the touch	Do damage

WADE'S ORDERS - THE AWAY-OR-AT TEST

Freeze the mental video of the incident. Ask one question: **was my dog trying to get AWAY from it, or AT it?** Away = fear (or pain). At = frustration (or true aggression - but true aggression does not bark and bounce; it goes still and commits). Write your answer in the incident log. That line is worth more than a paragraph of adjectives.

04 READING THE CHART

FOUR POSTURES, FOUR DIFFERENT MISSIONS

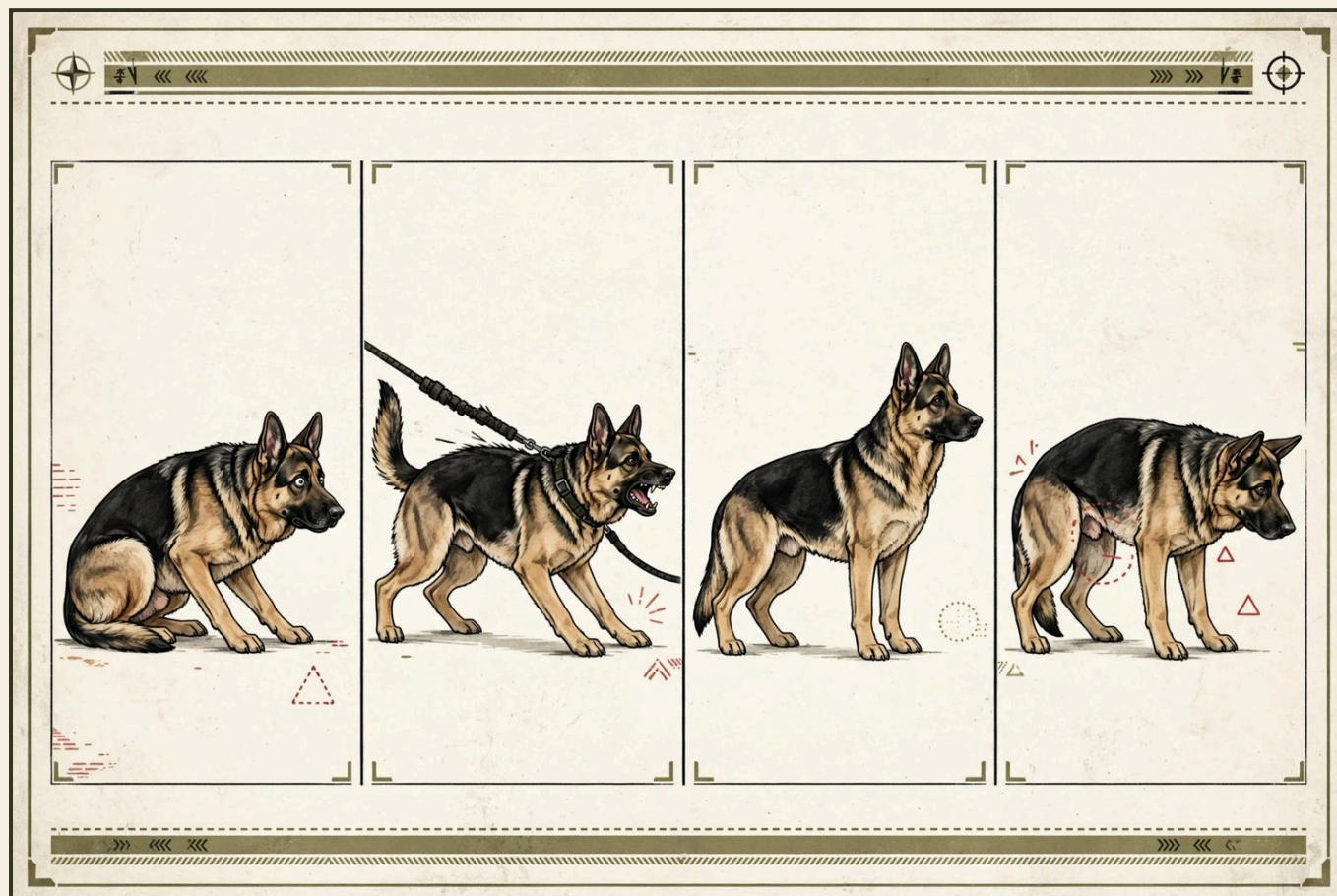


Fig. 4-1 - Left to right: *FEAR* (low, tucked, trying to vanish) / *FRUSTRATION* (forward, lunging against the leash) / *CALM BASELINE* (loose, neutral - know what your dog looks like here) / *PAIN* (stiff, hunched, guarding - vet first).

DEBRIEF - WHY THE CALM BASELINE MATTERS

You cannot read a deviation if you never studied normal. Spend one boring afternoon watching your dog do nothing: how he stands, where his tail sits, how his ears rest. That picture is your zero. Everything in this manual is measured against it. Handlers who skip this step misread every signal that follows.

05 VET CHECK FIRST

NON-NEGOTIABLE

WARNING - SUDDEN BEHAVIOR CHANGES GET A VET VISIT BEFORE ANY TRAINING PLAN

A dog who was fine last month and is snapping this month is not a training problem yet. He is a **medical question**. Pain is a behavior problem wearing a medical mask - ear infections, dental pain, hip and joint pain, thyroid issues, neurological problems, and plain old aging all show up first as "he just snapped."

No training plan in this book - or any book - starts before the vet clears the dog. Training a dog who is in pain is like doing drills on a broken leg: cruel, and it does not work.

MEDICAL RED FLAGS - BOOK THE VET IF YOU SEE THESE

- ☐ **Sudden** snapping, growling, or guarding in a previously social dog.
- ☐ Snaps **when touched** in a specific spot, or flinches at handling.
- ☐ Reluctance to move, climb stairs, jump into the car, or play like before.
- ☐ Guarding food, toys, or space that **started recently** - especially in seniors.
- ☐ Behavior change after injury, surgery, illness, or starting a new medication.
- ☐ Excessive licking of one area, head pressing, or restlessness at night.

WADE'S ORDERS

Tell the vet exactly what changed and when - bring the incident log. Ask for a full hands-on exam and, for seniors or sudden cases, bloodwork. "He is just getting old" is not a diagnosis. Get the clearance in writing in your head: **medically cleared, then we train.**

► FIELD INTEL – PROF. DANIEL MILLS ET AL. (2020): THE CLINICAL PAIN-REACTIVITY LINK

Why is a veterinary examination mandatory before starting any behavior modification plan? In a landmark clinical review led by veterinary behaviorist **Prof. Daniel Mills and colleagues at the University of Lincoln (2020, *Animals*)**, researchers analyzed dogs referred to behavior clinics for aggression or sudden reactivity and found that a striking proportion — **up to roughly 80% in studied clinical cohorts** — had an underlying painful medical condition (such as hip/joint osteoarthritis, otitis, dental disease, or GI discomfort) contributing to their reactions. Pain lowers a dog's neurological bite threshold. Clear the body with your vet first.

06 DISTANCE WORK

THE CORE FIX FOR REACTIVITY

Forget everything complicated. The fix for reactivity is one variable: **distance**.

Every reactive dog has a distance where his brain still works. Far enough from the trigger, he can see it, notice it, and still hear you. That is where training happens. Closer than that, the thinking brain shuts off and the reacting brain takes over - and no training happens there, only rehearsal of the explosion.

So the mission is simple:

1. **Find the distance where your dog can think.** He sees the trigger and stays under threshold - loose body, can take a treat, can look away.
2. **Pay calm behavior there.** Every glance at the trigger followed by a check-in with you gets marked and paid. You are building a new habit: trigger appears, dog checks in with handler.
3. **Shrink the distance over sessions, not minutes.** Five feet closer per successful session. Not per minute. Sessions, plural. Training is layers, not leaps.

DEBRIEF - WHY DISTANCE BEATS EVERYTHING

You cannot train a dog who cannot think, and you cannot punish a reaction out of a dog who is already over threshold - you will only add your own pressure to his. Distance is the only dial that keeps the thinking brain online. Every other technique in this book assumes you found the right distance first.

06 THRESHOLD TABLE + SESSION STRUCTURE

KNOW YOUR ZONES, RUN THE DRILL

ZONE	WHAT YOU SEE	WHAT YOU DO
GREEN - under threshold	Sees trigger. Body loose. Takes treats. Can look at trigger, then look away.	Train here. Mark and pay every calm glance, every check-in.
YELLOW - loading	Staring hard. Body stiffening. Treats refused or taken roughly. Closed mouth.	Add distance now. Arc away calmly. You waited too long - note it in the log.
RED - over threshold	Barking, lunging, spinning. Gone. Cannot hear you.	Leave. No training happens here. Create distance, end the session on a calm rep far away.

SESSION STRUCTURE - 5 TO 10 MINUTES

- ☐ **Set the field:** boring location, trigger far away (start embarrassingly far - across a field, not across the street).
- ☐ **Let the dog notice the trigger.** The instant he looks at it calmly: mark ("yes!") and pay.
- ☐ **Pay check-ins double.** Dog looks at trigger, then looks at you on his own - jackpot. That is the behavior we are building.
- ☐ **End on a win.** Timer ends, or three clean reps in a row - quit while you are ahead. Short sessions keep the brain fresh.
- ☐ **Log it:** distance, reps, zone reached. Shrink distance only when GREEN was easy twice in a row.

► FIELD INTEL – LESLIE MCDEVITT'S SUB-THRESHOLD "LOOK AT THAT" (LAT) PROTOCOL

This session structure is built on **Systematic Desensitization and Counter-Conditioning (DS/CC)** and the sub-threshold pattern game formalized by certified behavior consultant **Leslie McDevitt, MLA, CDBC, CPDT-KA** (*Control Unleashed*, 2007) as **"Look at That" (LAT)**.

Instead of forcing your dog to ignore a trigger or correcting him after he explodes in the RED zone, you work at a safe GREEN-zone distance: the moment he calmly notices the trigger, you mark ("Yes!") and pay as he turns back to you. Over repetitions, seeing a trigger stops launching a lunge and becomes the cue to check in with you.

06 DISTANCE WORK IN THE FIELD

ONE GOOD SESSION BEATS TEN RUSHED ONES



Fig. 6-1 - The picture of a good session: dog under threshold, handler paying calm, trigger far enough away to be boring.

WADE'S ORDERS - THE THREE MISTAKES THAT KILL DISTANCE WORK

Mistake one - closing distance too fast. You had two good sessions at 100 feet and jumped to 40. The dog exploded. That was not the dog failing - that was you skipping layers. Drop back. Earn the distance.

Mistake two - marathon sessions. Twenty minutes of trigger exposure and the dog is fried, you are frustrated, everybody loses. Ten minutes. Timer. Done.

Mistake three - training when YOU are frustrated. The leash is a telegraph wire. If you are angry, the dog feels it before you speak. Bad day for you = no session. Management only.

07 THE DOOR ROUTINE

FOR GUESTS - REHEARSE IT BEFORE YOU NEED IT

The front door is where manners go to die: doorbell, stranger, excitement, chaos. So we do not improvise the door. We run a drill.

1

DOG ON PLACE BEFORE THE KNOCK

PLACE means: go to your mat and stay there until released. Drill it daily with no guests first - the doorbell itself becomes the cue. Dog hears the bell, dog goes to the mat. Start boring, add the real bell later.

2

LEASH ON BEFORE ANYONE OPENS THE DOOR

Leash the dog *before* the door opens, every time. A leashed dog on place cannot rehearse rushing the door. Management first, manners second.

3

GUEST IGNORES THE DOG UNTIL CALM

Brief every guest at the door: no eye contact, no petting, no baby talk until the dog is calm. Attention is the paycheck - the dog only gets paid when he is settled. Most guests will break this rule. Enforce it anyway. Your house, your drill.

4

CALM GETS RELEASED - RUSHING RESETS

Dog holds place while the guest settles: release with your word, calm greeting allowed. Dog breaks place or rushes: back to the mat, no drama, no anger. Reset as many times as it takes. The third reset is usually the last one.

07 DOOR ROUTINE - THE SETUP

POSITIONS AND MOVEMENT



Fig. 7-1 - The setup: dog on PLACE (mat), handler between dog and door with leash on, guest enters and ignores the dog. Rehearse with a helper before real guests.

WADE'S ORDERS - THE CRATE IS LEGITIMATE

Some days the full routine is too much - new baby, repair crew, six people arriving at once. Then the dog goes in the crate with a chew, in a quiet room, **and that is a correct decision**. A crated dog cannot make a mistake. Management is not failure. Failure is setting the dog up to rehearse the exact behavior you are trying to fix.

DEBRIEF - WHY GUESTS MUST IGNORE THE DOG

Every excited greeting from a guest pays the dog for exactly the arousal you are trying to reduce. Ten calm rehearsals get erased by one squealing "OHMYGOD HI PUPPY." The rule is not rude - it is the fastest way to a dog who can actually enjoy guests.

08 EQUIPMENT FOR THE OUTMATCHED HANDLER

TOOLS BUY YOU SAFETY WHILE TRAINING DOES THE WORK

Training fixes the dog. Equipment keeps everyone safe *while* you train. No shame in tools - a handler who cannot physically hold the dog cannot train the dog.

1

FRONT-CLIP HARNESS - STEERING, NOT STOPPING POWER

The leash clips at the chest. When the dog lunges, he gets turned back toward you instead of getting a sled-dog harness that helps him pull harder. This is your default for strong, reactive dogs. Back-clip harnesses are for dogs that already walk nicely - not for training.

2

HEAD HALTER - POWER STEERING (CONDITION IT FIRST)

For dogs you genuinely cannot hold: a head halter gives you control of the head, and where the head goes the body follows. But a dog who hates the halter will spend the whole walk fighting *it* instead of learning. **Condition it first:** treats through the nose loop, seconds at a time, over several days, before it ever goes on a walk.

WARNING - CONDITION BEFORE YOU WALK

Slapping a head halter or muzzle on an unconditioned dog and marching out the door is how you create a dog who panics at the sight of equipment. Three to five days of treat-pairing at home first. Boring work. Do it anyway.

08 EQUIPMENT - FIT AND TIMING

THE LOADOUT SPEC SHEET

3

MUZZLE - A SEATBELT, NOT A PUNISHMENT

A properly fitted basket muzzle (dog can pant and take treats) is the single most responsible tool an owner of a bite-risk dog can use. Condition it with treats until the dog shoves his own nose in. **A muzzle is never a punishment, never left on unsupervised, and never an excuse to skip training.** It buys safety while the work gets done.

4

TWO POINTS OF CONTACT ON STRONG DOGS

Leash to the front-clip harness, backup line to a flat collar. If one fails - clip breaks, dog slips the harness - you are still connected. Redundancy is a military habit for a reason: equipment fails at the worst moment.

TOOL	FIT CHECK	USE IT WHEN	RETIRE IT WHEN
Front-clip harness	Snug, no chafing at armpits; chest strap sits above the point of shoulder	Default for strong/reactive dogs in training	Dog walks loose on a flat collar - graduate
Head halter	Nose loop loose enough to fully open mouth; neck strap snug	You cannot physically hold the dog otherwise	Dog is conditioned AND under control on harness
Basket muzzle	Dog pants freely and takes treats through it	Any bite history or bite risk around triggers	Never by feel - only on professional guidance
6-ft fixed leash	Clips solid, no fraying	Always - retractable leashes are banned from this program	Any wear at the clip or stitching

09 JUMPING - THE 4-PAWS PROTOCOL

JUMPING NEVER PAYS, SITTING ALWAYS PAYS

Jumping is not dominance. It is not disrespect. It is a slot machine that has been paying out: paws on human, human gives attention. We are going to bankrupt the slot machine.

The protocol has two halves, and both must run every time:

1

JUMPING NEVER PAYS - ATTENTION WITHDRAWS

The instant paws leave the floor: turn sideways, fold your arms, go silent. No eye contact, no pushing (pushing is attention), no kneeling. You become the most boring statue on earth. The second all four paws hit the floor again, you stay boring for one more beat - do not reward the landing either.

2

SITTING PAYS - ATTENTION ARRIVES

The instant the butt hits the floor: attention arrives. Calm petting, a treat, your voice. We are not just killing jumping - we are **installing the replacement**. Dogs repeat what pays. Make sitting the best-paying job in the house.

DEBRIEF - WHY BOTH HALVES MATTER

Withdraw attention without installing the replacement and the dog just tries harder - higher jumps, mouthing, frustration. Pay sitting without withdrawing attention for jumping and the slot machine keeps paying. Both halves, every rep, every person.

► FIELD INTEL — DR. SOPHIA YIN: LOW-STRESS SIGNALS & INCOMPATIBLE BEHAVIORS (DRI)

Veterinarian and applied animal behaviorist **Dr. Sophia Yin, DVM, MS** (*How to Behave So Your Dog Behaves, 2007; Low Stress Handling, 2009*) demonstrated two core principles used across this manual:

1. Differential Reinforcement of an Incompatible Behavior (DRI): A dog physically cannot jump on a guest and sit with all four paws on the floor at the same time. By removing all social reinforcement for jumping (even pushing or shouting "down" acts as attention to an aroused dog) and immediately paying the sit within two seconds, the calm behavior replaces the chaotic one.

2. Reading the Whispers (Sec. 04): Recognizing early low-level stress signals (closed mouth, body stiffening, pinned ears) lets you add distance before a dog ever reaches a bite.

09 THE HOUSEHOLD DRILL

ONE WEAK LINK KEEPS THE BEHAVIOR ALIVE

The dog only needs **one** person who rewards jumping to keep the behavior alive. Grandma who cannot resist the paws-on greeting is not being kind - she is funding the slot machine. The whole household runs the same drill, or the drill does not work.

WADE'S ORDERS - THE HOUSEHOLD BRIEFING (READ THIS OUT LOUD TOGETHER)

☐

Paws leave the floor: turn, fold arms, silent. Every person, every time.

☐

Butt hits the floor: calm attention and a treat within two seconds.

☐

No pushing, no kneeling, no shouting "down" - those are all paychecks.

☐

Guests get the two-sentence brief at the door: "Ignore the jumping, pet him when he sits."

☐

Kids practice with an adult coaching - they are the hardest to keep consistent, and the most important.

HOUSEHOLD CONSISTENCY CONTRACT

We agree: jumping never pays in this house. Sitting always pays. No exceptions, no "just this once."

Name		Signature	
Name		Signature	
Name		Signature	

10 FINDING A REAL PROFESSIONAL

CALLING FOR BACKUP IS A TACTICAL DECISION, NOT A DEFEAT

There is a line in every hard case where a book stops being enough. Crossing it early is smart. The best handlers I know call for backup fast.

Call a professional now - not after the 14-day plan - if: anyone needed medical attention, the dog has bitten more than once, the dog targets children, or you feel unsafe in your own home. Those are not training projects. Those are professional cases.

CREDENTIALS THAT MATTER

- **Certified behavior consultant (IAABC)** or **CPDT-KA** - tested knowledge, continuing education, ethics code.
- **Veterinary behaviorist (DACVB)** - for the hardest cases; a veterinarian who can also address medication alongside behavior.
- **Force-free, LIMA-based methods** - least intrusive, minimally aversive. For fear and frustration cases, this is not ideology, it is mechanics: you cannot punish fear out of a dog.
- **Transparent process** - they explain what they are doing and why, and they teach *you*, because you are the one living with the dog.

DEBRIEF - WHY CREDENTIALS BEAT CHARISMA

This industry has no license requirement in most places. Anyone can print "dog whisperer" on a van. Credentials do not guarantee greatness, but they guarantee a floor: tested knowledge, an ethics code, and someone who loses something if they hurt your dog.

10 RED FLAGS + FIRST SESSION

WHAT TO RUN FROM, WHAT TO EXPECT

WARNING - RED FLAGS. WALK AWAY FROM ANY TRAINER WHO:

- **Guarantees a fix.** Behavior is not an appliance repair. Guarantees are sales, not science.
- **Will not show you their own dogs** or let you watch a session first.
- **Leads with pain** - shock first, questions later - especially on a fearful dog.
- **Wants to take your dog away for weeks** with no transparency about methods or daily updates.
- **Dismisses your vet** or tells you medical clearance does not matter.

WHAT A FIRST SESSION SHOULD LOOK LIKE

- ☐ They **watch** before they touch - observing your dog's baseline behavior.
- ☐ They **ask for the incident log** (Section 03 - now you see why we wrote it).
- ☐ They handle your dog **calmly** - no flooding, no forced confrontations on day one.
- ☐ They give you **homework** - management changes starting today.
- ☐ They set a **realistic timeline** - weeks and months, not minutes.
- ☐ You leave understanding the **root** (Section 04) better than when you arrived.

11 THE HONEST HARD PART

DECISION POINTS FOR THE HARDEST CASES

Most dogs in this book get better. Management plus training plus time turns most bad days into history. But honesty is part of this manual, so here is the part nobody wants to write.

Some cases do not resolve into a normal life. Not because you failed - because the combination of the dog's wiring, his history, and your real-life constraints does not add up to a safe picture. Pretending otherwise helps no one, least of all the dog.

WHEN MANAGEMENT IS WORKING

- ☐ No incidents for weeks, and the trend in the log is clearly improving.
- ☐ The dog can live a **full life** inside the management plan - walks, play, rest, affection, not just a crate and a prayer.
- ☐ Every person in the house can run the plan reliably - including the kids, the guests, the dog walker.
- ☐ You are tired sometimes, but you are not afraid in your own home.

If those four hold, keep working. You are on the right road. The 14-day plan in Section 12 is your next move.

11 THE HONEST HARD PART

CONTINUED - A CLEAR-EYED FRAMEWORK

WHEN YOU ARE IN OVER YOUR HEAD

- Incidents are **escalating** - more intense, less warning, harder to interrupt - despite real training effort.
- There are **vulnerable people** in the blast radius - small children, elderly family - and you cannot guarantee 100% management, 100% of the time. Be honest: nobody can.
- You are **afraid in your own home**, or the management plan has shrunk the dog's life to something that is not a life.

If that is where you are, you need your vet and a certified behaviorist in the same conversation - soon, not someday. The options on the table, spoken plainly:

Rehoming with full disclosure - to an experienced home with no triggers the dog cannot handle, with every incident documented and disclosed. Not a shelter drop with a vague note. Full disclosure is the price of a clear conscience.

Behavioral euthanasia - the last option, and a legitimate one when a dog cannot live safely and cannot be safely placed. This is not failure. Failure would be waiting for the catastrophic bite that makes the decision for you.

"No guilt, no slogans. Just this: you owe the dog honesty, and you owe the people around him safety. Make the decision with professionals, make it with open eyes, and never let anyone tell you it was easy - because it is not, and that is exactly why it matters that you face it."

12 14-DAY DE-ESCALATION MISSION PLAN

PHASE 1 - DAYS 1-3: LOCKDOWN AND DECOMPRESS

Fourteen days. Four phases. One rule for all of them: **train below threshold, manage everything else.**

WADE'S ORDERS - PHASE 1: DAYS 1-3

- ☐ **Lockdown.** No dog parks. No off-leash greetings. No guest chaos. No "let's see how he does." The world shrinks for three days on purpose.
- ☐ **Decompress.** Short, boring walks at odd hours. Crate rest with chews. Sniffing games in the yard. A stressed dog's cortisol needs 48-72 hours to clear - give it that time.
- ☐ **Review the incident log.** Circle the trigger, the distance, the time of day. Patterns live here.
- ☐ **Book the vet** if there was any sudden behavior change (Section 05). Do not skip this.
- ☐ **Fit the equipment.** Front-clip harness on, fitted. Muzzle and head halter conditioning starts - treats only, no walks in them yet.

DEBRIEF - WHY LOCKDOWN IS NOT PUNISHMENT

A dog fresh off an incident is running on stress hormones. Every walk in the trigger zone is another rehearsal of the explosion. Three quiet days reset the nervous system and give you a clean baseline. Handlers who skip decompression train a dog who is still living in the last incident.

12 14-DAY MISSION PLAN

PHASE 2 - DAYS 4-7: FOUNDATIONS

WADE'S ORDERS - PHASE 2: DAYS 4-7

- ☐ **PLACE command, daily.** Two 5-minute sessions. Mat on the floor, dog goes to mat, dog stays, release word. Build duration before distraction.
- ☐ **Door routine rehearsals.** Helper knocks, dog goes to place, leash on, helper enters and ignores. Three rehearsals before any real guest.
- ☐ **Distance work, sessions 1-2.** Start embarrassingly far from the trigger. GREEN zone only. End every session on a win.
- ☐ **4-paws protocol starts.** Whole household briefed (Section 09). The contract gets signed.
- ☐ **Equipment check.** Muzzle/halter conditioning continues. Dog should be shoving his own nose into the muzzle for treats by day 7.

DAILY RHYTHM (EVERY DAY, PHASES 2-4)

Morning: boring walk or yard time, 15-20 min. **Midday:** one 5-10 min training session (one skill only).

Evening: second short session or door rehearsal, then crate wind-down with a chew. Two short sessions beat one long session every time.

12 14-DAY MISSION PLAN

PHASE 3 - DAYS 8-11: PROOFING

WADE'S ORDERS - PHASE 3: DAYS 8-11

- ☐ **Distance work shrinks.** Reduce distance only after two consecutive easy GREEN sessions. If you hit YELLOW, you moved too fast - add distance back. No shame in retreating.
- ☐ **Door routine with a real guest.** One briefed guest. Leash on, place held, guest ignores. Crate is still a valid call if the dog is not ready.
- ☐ **PLACE under distraction.** Mat work while the TV is on, while someone walks past, while the doorbell rings on your phone speaker.
- ☐ **Jumping audit.** Count jumping reps per day - the number should be falling. If one person is still paying the slot machine, re-brief them.
- ☐ **Log review.** Compare to days 1-3. Fewer incidents? Shorter recovery? Calmer baseline? Write it down - progress is fuel.

DEBRIEF - THE PROOFING MINDSET

Proofing means testing the skill against real life in small, controlled doses - one variable at a time. New distance OR new location OR new distraction. Never two at once. Handlers who stack variables get explosions and learn nothing about which variable caused it.

12 14-DAY MISSION PLAN

PHASE 4 - DAYS 12-14: REAL WORLD

WADE'S ORDERS - PHASE 4: DAYS 12-14

- ☐ **One controlled real-world test per day, max.** A normal walk at a quiet hour. A second briefed guest. One variable, observed closely.
- ☐ **Run the full door routine live.** This is the graduation exercise for Section 07.
- ☐ **Distance work at your new working distance.** Consolidate - do not chase new records in the final days.
- ☐ **Full log review.** Fourteen days of data. What improved? What is stuck? What still scares you?
- ☐ **Make the call:** continue the plan for another 14 days, adjust the stuck parts, or bring in a professional (Section 10). Deciding is part of the mission.

AFTER DAY 14 - THE THREE OUTCOMES

GREEN: incidents down, dog recovering faster, household running the drills - run it back for another 14 days at the new baseline.

YELLOW: some progress, some stuck points - keep the plan, change one variable at a time, consider a single professional session for the stuck part.

RED: escalation, or you are still afraid - professional now, Section 10 and 11. That is the plan working as designed: it told you the truth early.

13 MISSION TRACKER

DAYS 1-7 - WHAT GETS MEASURED GETS FIXED

DAY	SESSION 1 DONE	SESSION 2 DONE	INCIDENTS (Y/N + LOG #)	CALM REPS PAID (COUNT)	NOTES
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					

END-OF-WEEK-1 REVIEW

Working distance this week: _____ ft Jumping reps per day: start _____ / now _____

Biggest win: _____ Biggest stuck point:

13 MISSION TRACKER

DAYS 8-14

DAY	SESSION 1 DONE	SESSION 2 DONE	INCIDENTS (Y/N + LOG #)	CALM REPS PAID (COUNT)	NOTES
8					
9					
10					
11					
12					
13					
14					

END-OF-MISSION REVIEW - CIRCLE ONE

Outcome: GREEN / YELLOW / RED

Working distance: start _____ ft / now _____ ft Total incidents: _____

Next move:

14 THE BAD DAY CARD

POCKET QUICK REFERENCE - CUT ALONG THE BORDER, KEEP IT IN YOUR TRAINING BAG

THE BAD DAY CARD - FM-03

WHEN IT GOES WRONG - 60 SECONDS

1. **Breathe.** Slow your hands first.
2. **Separate.** Space between all parties. No drama, no chasing.
3. **Secure.** Leash, crate, closed door. Check every person and animal for injuries.
4. **Document.** Incident log within the hour. Facts only.
5. **No punishment after the fact.** Ever.

THRESHOLD CHECK

GREEN: loose body, takes treats, can look away - train here.

YELLOW: staring, stiff, refusing treats - add distance now.

RED: barking, lunging, gone - leave. No training here.

AWAY OR AT?

Trying to get **AWAY** = fear or pain. Trying to get **AT** = frustration. Write it in the log.

Print this page. Cut out the card. Laminate it if you are fancy. The day you need it, you will not have time to find the book.

15 FINAL ORDERS

STAND BY YOUR DOG

You are your dog's last line of defense. Not the trainer. Not the vet. You.

The bad day does not define him. It does not define you either. What defines both of you is what happens in the days after: the log filled in honestly, the distance work run patiently, the door routine rehearsed until it is boring, the household running one drill.

"I have watched dogs walk out of shelters - forty-eight hours from the needle - and into living rooms, because one person decided to learn instead of give up. Be that person."

WADE'S ORDERS - YOUR STANDING ORDERS FROM HERE

- ☐ The First-Hour Plan lives in your head, the Bad Day Card lives in your bag.
- ☐ Every incident gets logged. No exceptions, no "it was nothing."
- ☐ Train below threshold. Manage everything else. Management is not failure.
- ☐ Sudden change? Vet first. Always.
- ☐ When you are in over your head, call a professional early. That is strength, not surrender.

NEXT IN THE SERIES

FIELD MANUAL 04 - THE FUEL PROTOCOL

Training is only part of the mission. A dog can walk perfectly and still fall apart early because nobody fed his joints, his gut, his coat. Next manual: what actually matters in the bowl, how to read a label without getting played - and the daily routine that keeps a working dog moving like an athlete for years. **Train him. Feed him. Keep him.**

THE LAST-CHANCE PROTOCOLS

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FIELD MANUAL 01 - THE RESCUE WALK

The ten-minute loose-leash protocol. Slack leash pays, tight leash never does.

FIELD MANUAL 02 - COME WHEN IT COUNTS

Recall training that could save your dog's life. One open gate is all it takes.

FIELD MANUAL 03 - THE BAD DAY BOOK - YOU ARE HERE

Reactivity, lunging, jumping - and the first-hour plan when it goes wrong.

FIELD MANUAL 04 - THE FUEL PROTOCOL

How I feed my working dogs. What matters in the bowl, and the daily routine behind it.

TRAIN HIM. FEED HIM. KEEP HIM.

APPROVED - K9 WADE

K9 Wade Field Manual series - written from the field, for the dogs running out of time.