

## Doggie Point Scale

The **Doggie Point Scale** is something I created to make it easier to understand reactivity in dogs. This is not a scientific model by any means, but putting a numeric value on things helps quantify what can seem like abstract concepts. The chart below is an example –talk with Kelsey to determine what your dog’s point scale will look like.

Every stimulus in your dog’s life has an emotional point value. For some stimuli, they are excited/happy points, some are stress points, some are fear points, etc. Our dogs operate on a 10 point scale. If we add multiple points (stimuli) together, eventually we are going to max out our dog’s scale.

Your goal, as your dog’s trainer, is to help your dog stay in the lower numbers (relaxed, happy brain). Every time your dog gets to the 8+ range, they are experiencing an extreme form of stress (even if all the points were excitement based!), so it is important not to overstimulate our dogs. Additionally, training can help desensitize our dogs, so various stimuli can develop lower point values over time.

Emotional Points	Physical Signs	Possible Stimuli
1-2	Low level of interest, may glance at stimulus, relaxed body language, will readily accept lower value treats	Owner calmly pets dog while dog was napping, owner walked into the kitchen, average at home behavior for calm dogs
3-4	Mild interest, dog may wag tail, will be alert and focused on stimulus, will still take lower value treats	Owner put on shoes or grabbed car keys, owner is enthusiastically petting/scratching dog, someone walked by the house at the edge of the dog’s threshold, your dog is in a familiar environment other than home (close family members house)
5-6	Moderate interest, dog may be jumping/wiggling or show fearful posture/avoidance/ try to flee, dog maintains eye contact with stimulus, body posture is square to stimulus (unless trying to flee),will take high value treats	Owner just came home and uncrated dog, a familiar/family dog is wanting to play, a car/motorcycle made loud engine noises, your dog is in a new environment
7-8	Fixated behavior, dog is “locked on” to stimulus and has difficulty disengaging (intense stare with eyes opened wide, lunging towards stimulus, pulling on leash, hackles up), most dogs are vocal at this level with whining or barking, <i>might</i> take extra high value treats	Owner playing with chuck-it (for the ball-o-holics), someone and their dog is walking too close to the house, other dog is barking from behind a fence while your dog is on a walk, a squirrel just ran up a tree, dog is in a stressful/exciting environment (park)
9-10	Dog is showing manic (usually aggressive) behavior, showing teeth, barking, lunging, will not disengage from stimulus; OR dog is completely panicked and ready to defend itself, <i>will not</i> take treats	Other dog is lunging and barking at your dog, scary person is trying to touch/corner your dog, your dog is in a scary environment, fireworks are going off

These materials are provided for you as a way to review behaviors previously discussed in training sessions. It is important for the success of both you and your dog, that these materials are used for reviewing, not for teaching. Do not skip ahead, even if you think your dog is ready. Every dog, every owner, and every situation is specific and requires a training program catered to fit; because these handouts are very general, please talk to Kelsey before attempting any of these training techniques on your own.



## Trigger Stacking

Have you ever had one of those days when nothing goes right? You wake up late, then get stuck in traffic, then spill coffee on yourself, then the boss yells at you. You finally make it home. One of the kids accidentally spills something and you yell at her like she just wrecked your car! Normally you would not react so strongly, but with all the other things piled on to your day, you just snapped. The same thing can happen to our dogs!

When we begin to stack on the triggers, eventually our dog's point scale will max out. Even if each trigger had a low point value to start, if the dog is exposed to multiple stimuli at a time, those points begin to add up.

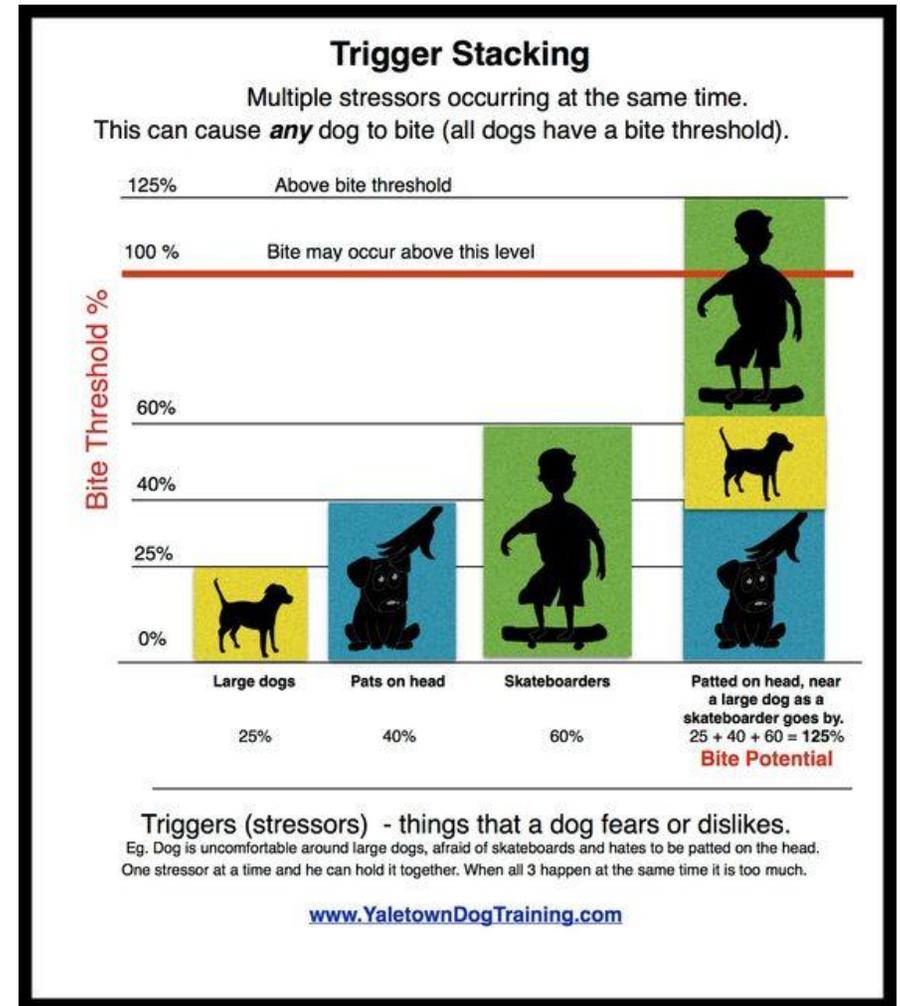
For example: Going to the dog park

- put on shoes, grab car keys, put on dog's leash, get in car, drive to park, approach park, dog sees other dogs, open gate, take off leash, let into park, dog greetings happen ..... if each of these triggers was only worth 1 point, our dog would still be well over their 10 point threshold!!

So what can we do?

Be your dog's advocate! If your dog is showing signs of stress: take them further from the distraction, do not add additional triggers, redirect to something more fun, take a break, let your dog go smell around to destress, give your dog a bone to chew, remain calm and relaxed...

Training programs can help teach dogs how to settle in between triggers as well as decrease a particular trigger's point value. Check out the Desensitizing and Counterconditioning handout and talk to Kelsey about how to help your dog become Pawsitively Trained!!



These materials are provided for you as a way to review behaviors previously discussed in training sessions. It is important for the success of both you and your dog, that these materials are used for reviewing, not for teaching. Do not skip ahead, even if you think your dog is ready. Every dog, every owner, and every situation is specific and requires a training program catered to fit; because these handouts are very general, please talk to Kelsey before attempting any of these training techniques on your own.





These materials are provided for you as a way to review behaviors previously discussed in training sessions. It is important for the success of both you and your dog, that these materials are used for reviewing, not for teaching. Do not skip ahead, even if you think your dog is ready. Every dog, every owner, and every situation is specific and requires a training program catered to fit; because these handouts are very general, please talk to Kelsey before attempting any of these training techniques on your own.