

FREE BONUS GUIDE

The Stranger & Guest Reset

Calm, safe visits with your Rottie.

Bonus guide for The Complete Rottweiler Guide

Why Rotties Watch Strangers

Rottweilers were bred to guard their owners' property and livestock. Many are loving clowns with family but naturally reserved, even suspicious, with people they don't know.

That's not a fault. But a big, protective dog needs a clear plan so visits feel safe for everyone, including your Rottie.

What we're aiming for

- Your Rottie stays calm when the doorbell rings.
- Guests can come in without being rushed, blocked or barked at.
- Your Rottie can **choose** to say hello, or simply ignore guests.
- You're always in control.

> The goal isn't a dog who loves every stranger. It's a dog who is **calm and safe** around them.

Know the warning signs

Watch for: a hard stare, a stiff or still body, raised hackles, a closed mouth, a low growl, leaning forward, or blocking a doorway. These mean "I'm not comfortable." Give space straight away.

> If your Rottie has growled, lunged, snapped or bitten at visitors, keep them fully separated during visits and work with your vet and a qualified behaviourist.

The Toolkit

- **A baby gate or closed room** away from the front door.
- **A crate** your Rottie already loves.
- **A lead and harness** for controlled indoor practice.
- **Long-lasting chews** and frozen food toys.
- **Tasty, small treats** your Rottie only gets around guests.
- **A basket muzzle,** trained positively, if advised by your behaviourist.
- **A sign** asking visitors to knock gently or text instead of ringing.



Step 1: Manage First

Every time your Rottie rushes the door, barks at guests or blocks them, they practise guarding. The first job is to stop the practice.

Before guests arrive

1. Walk your Rottie and give a brain game.
2. Set them up behind a gate, in a crate or in a quiet room with a chew.
3. Put on background sound to soften door noise.
4. Brief your guests (see Step 3).

The front door

- Your Rottie is never loose when the door opens.
- Use a gate across the hallway.
- Receive deliveries outside, or with your Rottie in another room.



Step 2: Change the Doorbell

For many Rotties, the doorbell means "intruder alert." Let's make it mean "go to your spot for treats."

Doorbell Means Treats

1. Record or play a doorbell sound very quietly.
2. The instant it plays, toss a treat to your Rottie's bed.
3. Repeat 10 times a session.
4. Slowly turn up the volume over days.
5. Then practise with a real knock or ring from a family member.

Go to Your Spot

Teach your Rottie to run to their mat or crate when they hear a knock. Reward generously there.



Step 3: Brief Your Guests

Give every visitor these simple rules before they come in:

- **Ignore the dog:** no talking to, looking at or reaching for your Rottie.
- **Don't lean over** or try to stroke.
- **Sit down calmly** soon after arriving.
- **Toss treats** onto the floor away from yourself, if asked.
- **Let the dog come to you,** and if they do, a short stroke on the chest is plenty.
- **Children** never approach or hug your Rottie.

> Most bites to visitors happen when someone reaches for a dog who didn't want contact. Ignoring the dog is the kindest thing a guest can do.



Step 4: Calm Introductions

Only move to this step if your Rottie is relaxed behind the gate.

1. Guest arrives and sits down. Your Rottie stays behind the gate with a chew.
2. When your Rottie is calm, bring them in on a lead and harness.
3. Keep a comfortable distance. Reward calm looks at the guest.
4. Let your Rottie sniff the guest if they choose. Call them away after a few seconds and reward.
5. Settle your Rottie on their mat with a chew, still on the lead.
6. Keep it short. Return your Rottie to their safe space before they get tired or worried.

Moments to watch

- **Guest stands up or moves:** a common trigger. Call your Rottie to you and reward.
- **Guest leaves:** another trigger. Put your Rottie in their safe space before goodbyes.
- **Busy gatherings:** your Rottie stays in a quiet room. That's fine.

Step 5: Strangers Out and About

- **Keep distance:** step aside or cross the road.
- **Look at That:** reward calm looks at people from far away.
- **Say no to strangers' requests** to stroke your dog if your Rottie isn't comfortable.
- **Keep your Rottie on a lead** in public unless in a safe, enclosed space.



Find Your Threshold

Every reactive dog has a **threshold**: the distance at which they can see a trigger and still stay calm enough to think. Further than that, your dog can learn. Closer than that, they react, and no learning happens.

How to find it

1. Go somewhere open, like the edge of a big park, at a quiet time.
2. Watch for a dog or person in the distance.
3. Notice the moment your dog sees them. Can they still take a treat? Can they look away?
4. If yes, you're under threshold. If not, move further away.

Write down the distance. It might be 20 metres or 100. Wherever it is, that's your starting point.



Find Your Threshold

Signs your dog is close to threshold

- stops sniffing and stares
- body goes stiff, weight leans forward
- ears go forward and tail goes up, or ears pin back and tail goes down
- closed mouth, stops taking treats
- ignores their name

When you see these, **add distance right away.**



The Look at That Game

This is the core of the reset. It teaches your dog to see a trigger and turn to you, instead of exploding.

Step 1: Practise at Home

Hold up a toy or a cup. When your dog looks at it, say "yes!" and give a treat. Repeat 10 times. Your dog learns that "yes" means a treat is coming, no matter what they're looking at.

Step 2: Start Under Threshold

At your threshold distance, wait for your dog to notice a dog or person. The moment they look, say "yes!" and give a treat. They look, you mark, they eat.

Step 3: Wait for the Turn

After a few days, wait a second after your dog looks. Many dogs will look at the trigger, then turn to you as if to say, "There it is, where's my treat?" Mark that turn with "yes!" and reward. That turn is the new habit.

Step 4: Keep Sessions Short

Five to ten minutes is plenty. Then walk away and let your dog sniff and relax.

Step 5: Close the Distance Slowly

When your dog is turning to you easily, move a few metres closer next time. If they react, move back. Progress is measured in metres, not days.

Emergency Exits

Even with the best planning, triggers will sometimes appear too close. Have your exits ready.

The U-Turn

Practise at home and on quiet walks: say "this way!" cheerfully and turn around, rewarding your dog as they turn with you. When a trigger appears, use it to calmly walk away.

Find It

Say "find it!" and scatter a handful of treats on the ground. Sniffing helps your dog calm down and looks away from the trigger. Practise at home first until your dog's nose drops instantly.

Behind the Barrier

Step behind a parked car, a hedge or a wall so your dog can't see the trigger. Feed treats until it passes.

Off-lead dogs

If an off-lead dog runs towards you, call out: "Please call your dog, mine needs space!" Step between your dog and the other dog, toss treats behind you, and move away. Your dog's safety comes first, not politeness.

Emergency Exits

Rottie walk situations

The fence fighter: dogs barking behind fences can be very triggering. Cross the road or choose a different route while you're training.

The bike chaser: if your Rottie lunges at bikes or joggers, practise Look at That from a distance in a park with a cycle path. Keep a long line on in open spaces.

The protective partner: some Rotties react more when walking with a particular person, guarding them. Have that person practise Look at That too.

The car-window barker: cover your dog's car crate so they can't see out, and keep car journeys calm.



The Handler's Half

Reactivity isn't only about your dog. How you hold the lead, where you look and how you breathe all travel down the lead to your Rottie. Dogs are experts at reading us, and Rotties more than most.

Before you leave the house

The energy of the walk is decided before you step outside. If your dog is spinning and barking at the door, you're starting with a full stress cup.

1. **Calm at the door:** ask for a sit before the harness goes on. If your dog jumps up, put the harness down and wait.
2. **Calm at the threshold:** open the door a crack. If your dog surges forward, close it gently. Open again when they wait.
3. **Calm on the step:** stand outside for 30 seconds and let your dog look around. Scatter a few treats to sniff before you set off.

A walk that starts calmly is far more likely to stay calm.



The Handler's Half

Your body on the walk

- **Breathe out.** When you see a trigger, take a slow breath out. Holding your breath and tensing up tells your dog something is wrong.
- **Loose lead, soft arms.** A tight lead is a signal of alarm. Keep it loose whenever you can, and hold the end firmly but with soft elbows.
- **Keep moving.** A dog who is frozen and staring is more likely to explode. Walking in an arc away from the trigger helps your dog keep thinking.
- **Use your voice cheerfully.** "This way!" in a happy voice works far better than a stern "No!"
- **Position yourself.** When passing a trigger, put yourself between your dog and the trigger, so your dog is on the far side.

Practise without triggers

Most handler skills can be practised on quiet walks. Rehearse your U-turns, Find It scatters and calm breathing when nothing is around. Then, when a trigger appears, your body already knows what to do.

Muzzle Training Made Easy

A basket muzzle is a safety tool, not a punishment. A dog who wears one happily can go to the vet, meet the groomer, or walk in busy places with everyone safe. Many owners also find they relax more when their dog wears one, and a relaxed owner means a calmer dog.

Choose a **basket muzzle** that lets your dog pant, drink and take treats. Avoid fabric muzzles that hold the mouth closed; they're only for very short vet procedures.

Step 1: Muzzle Means Treats (Days 1–3)

Show the muzzle, then give a treat. Hide it behind your back. Repeat 10 times, twice a day.

Step 2: Nose Touch (Days 3–5)

Hold the muzzle out. When your dog sniffs or touches it, say "yes" and reward.

Step 3: Treats Inside (Days 5–10)

Smear a little soft cheese or wet food in the bottom of the muzzle, or drop treats through the front. Let your dog push their nose in to eat. Don't fasten it.

Muzzle Training Made Easy

Step 4: Hold It There (Days 10–14)

Feed treats through the front of the muzzle while your dog keeps their nose inside for a few seconds. Build to 5, then 10 seconds.

Step 5: Fasten Briefly (Weeks 3–4)

Do up the strap, feed a treat, then undo it straight away. Slowly build up to wearing it for a minute, then while walking around the house, then on short walks.

Step 6: Keep It Positive Forever

Put the muzzle on for good things too, like walks and games, not only vet visits. That way your dog never learns that the muzzle predicts something bad.



Troubleshooting

"My Rottie is fine at first, then barks when the guest moves." Common. Keep visits shorter, and move your Rottie to their safe space before guests stand up.

"My Rottie won't take treats when guests are here." They're too worried. Go back to the gate and more distance.

"My guest wants to make friends." Thank them, and ask them to ignore your dog. Friendship comes from calm, not contact.

"My Rottie is great with some people and not others." Normal. Treat each new person as a fresh start.



CHECKLIST

Your Guest Checklist

- ☐ Gate, crate or quiet room ready.
- ☐ Rottie never loose at the front door.
- ☐ Doorbell Means Treats practised daily.
- ☐ Go to Your Spot taught.
- ☐ Guest rules shared before every visit.
- ☐ Lead and harness for introductions.
- ☐ Safe space before guests stand or leave.
- ☐ Behaviourist booked if there's growling or snapping.



10 Popular Questions Answered

1. Should my Rottie like everyone? No. Many Rotties are naturally reserved. Calm and safe is the goal.

2. Should guests stroke my Rottie to make friends? Not at first. Ignoring the dog helps them relax.

3. My Rottie growled at a visitor. What now? Keep them separated during visits, and work with a qualified behaviourist.

4. Is muzzle training a bad sign? No. It's a smart safety skill for any strong dog.

5. How long does this take? Usually several weeks of steady practice.



10 Popular Questions Answered

6. My Rottie is fine with women but not men. Treat each type of person as a new step, and go slowly.

7. Should I let my Rottie meet people on walks? Only if your dog is calm and the person is happy, and never force it.

8. Can my Rottie be around visiting children? Only with close supervision, and a gate or lead.

9. Will neutering help? Sometimes, but not always. Talk to your vet.

10. When should I get help? If there's growling, lunging, snapping, or no progress after several weeks.



A Final Word



A Rottweiler who watches over their family is doing what they were bred for. This reset simply shows your Rottie that you're in charge of visitors, so they can relax.

Calm, safe, and confident: that's the goal, one visit at a time.