

# Meeting Your Guests



Inviting visitors into your home can be a stressful time when you are the guardian of a fearful or reactive dog. Help them feel as comfortable as possible by creating a reliable and consistent greeting routine.

**1** Take your dog for a walk (if it is an activity that serves them well) or give your dog some sort of physical & mental exercise no less than 1 hour before guests arrive. Don't walk Fido right before company comes as your dog will likely have increased energy for a short time after exercise.

**2** Put your dog into another room, the backyard, or their crate for your guest's arrival. Ensure it is a place that they are comfortable. Give them something nice like a raw bone, a bully stick, or a stuffed Kong toy. Having your dog safely away from the door helps decrease the stress during the busy arrival time.

**3** If your dog is sensitive to the doorbell or the sound of knocking ask your guests to phone or text when they arrive. Alternately you can watch for them out the window to be ready at the door.

**4** Seat your guests comfortably at the table and place a few handfuls of treats around their feet. Add a trail of treats from your guests to the area where your dog is. Instruct them to ignore your dog, not give eye contact and resist petting them until they are ready for it. It can be helpful to have appetizers and drinks at the table so that your guest feels comfortable and settled as well.

**5** Allow your dog to come in and investigate. Be ready with extra treats to make the interactions as pleasant as possible. If your dog is going wild in the other room/crate/yard remember that all of that energy will be brought with them to the greeting. Help them to calm.

**6** As your dog settles and is feeling more comfortable with your guests you can allow them to offer treats from their hand if it is appropriate. Coach them to move slowly to avoid accidentally startling your dog. Watch for stress signs in your dog and progress at their own pace. Review [www.ispeakdog.org](http://www.ispeakdog.org) for information on stress signals.

If your dog struggles, give them breaks away from the crowd to relieve some pressure. Set them up with a nice chew toy or stuffed Kong and allow them to relax. Should you decide to reintroduce your dog, follow the same steps as before to ensure success!