



Kevin - What to Expect

Kevin is a fun-loving dog who enjoys training, playing with toys, sniffaris (sniff walks) and playing a game of food find (where we hide food and then he sniffs it out). He loves people but we think he was likely wrestled with in the past and unfortunately this taught him to be too rough in play and use his mouth on people.

Also, he had surgery on his knees, has some exercise limitations (although he is well on his way to recovery now), which, accompanied by his natural energy level, his age and his breed has made it hard for us to give Kevin the physical exercise he really needs.

We have taught him to carry a toy or stick to keep him busy and doing something more appropriate with his mouth 😊 And we are teaching him to walk on a Head Halter tool called a Haltie, which really helps too. But Kevin needs a patient, dog-experienced adult who has the time and energy to *continue* with positive reinforcement training he has received.

He also needs a house with a fully-fenced backyard where he can consistently get daily opportunities to go out into the yard with you, to eliminate without always *having* to go on a walk. A home with a lot of hustle and bustle or young children would not be appropriate for him as he becomes overstimulated under these circumstances and will nip or get grabby with his mouth.

He also has struggled in an environment where he has to see a lot of other dogs all the time (such as a house by a park or with neighbor dogs running the fence line) and would become overstimulated and barky. He actually likes other dogs but cannot play rough due to the likelihood of hurting his knees.

How to be successful with Kevin:

Make sure you have an indoor tethering system in place. This is easy to do and will really help manage his behavior and help to teach him to stay calm and relaxed both for his physical and his mental state. (See handout on tethering for training purposes). Work on “settle” and gently praise him for lying down. If he gets up or puts his mouth on you, simply move out of his reach. Come back only when he settles again. Reward verbally and treat when he does this.

Use a crate. Kevin has been crate trained and this came in handy for his surgery recovery and for having a calm, quiet place for him to settle in if you have guests over.

Walk him on his Haltie (head collar) for calm control. Kevin has been using this walking tool very successfully while at OHS and it really helps to keep him calm and relaxed and prevents him from being able to use his mouth to grab at things when he is over excited. You need to be calm, have a gentle touch and a loose leash using this tool and we can demonstrate this to you. 😊

Provide a calm routine and calm daily exercise to reduce stress. Walk in a very quiet area, allow him to sniff, work on training etc. This helps exercise him appropriately after his surgery.

No Dog Parks! You will not be able to take Kevin to busy places where he can have a lot of uncontrolled interactions with people and other dogs (off-leash parks, popular hiking trails, Saturday market, walks down Hawthorne, etc.). He is still healing from his surgery, and we want to avoid having an impact injury and he becomes too overwhelmed and this triggers the mouthy, nipping behavior. Down the road, a play date with a calm, friendly dog might be appropriate.

Use positive reinforcement and reward-based training methods. When training, use treats and squeaky toys. Anything negative or forceful will likely cause his arousal or excitement level to increase and will ultimately be counterproductive for both of you.

Practice “Leave It.” Kevin will get mouthy and grabby when he is worked up and excited. Try to be proactive and always reward calm behaviors (walking on a loose leash, sitting, lying down etc.) prior to him starting to nip. If he starts to grab at you on a walk, say “leave it”. Ask for a sit or a down, wait for a few seconds and reward him with a favorite treat. Playing fetch before going on a walk will help reduce any mouthy/overexcited behavior on leash. It is best to keep a distance from other dogs on walks, so he doesn’t become over excited.

Play Biting & Self Control

Kevin can play rough. It is important that all play with him is centered around the use of toys. You should also encourage Kevin to take breaks to calm down. **Avoid any wrestling-type play or tug games**, as these types of games will increase the level of his excitement and the intensity of his mouthy behavior. We found two methods helpful:

- Redirect him to carry a toy as much as possible. In moments where he’s excited, grab a toy, and tell him, ‘take it.’ When he carries the toy around, he should receive tons of praise and attention. If he drops the toy, all the attention stops until he picks it up again.
- Incorporate breaks in play sessions with him. After playing a bit with him, stop and calmly ask him to sit and stay for a moment before resuming play. You can also practice his sit-stay with distractions to further improve his ability to remain calm when exciting things are happening. The more exciting the distraction, the more distance he will need to be successful. He also needs to be reinforced frequently while his is holding the stay.

Turning to ignore Kevin if he begins play biting or jumping sometimes does not work, so you need to have some safety options in place such as the tethering system and haltie or redirect him onto a toy or stick. In time, he will learn not to do this, but at first, these tools will be necessary for the adjustment period to be successful.

Remember that if you pet him, talk to him, push him off you or look at him while he is being mouthy or jumping, you are **reinforcing** that behavior. If you ignore the behavior and it continues (or if he starts to jump/mouth at someone else), give him a calm time out immediately to give him a break. It is important that Kevin is not allowed to continue playing when he gets mouthy/jumpy or is too rough. Training always works best if he is positively reinforced for all the right behaviors, not punished for the wrong ones. So be pro-active in your approach.

We’re here to help!

We want Kevin to be successful in your home. We’re available to answer questions via phone and email. Call our Behavior Help Line at (503)416-2983. One-on-One training consultations are also available. Learn more at oregonhumane.org/training

Please keep in touch so we can continue to help you and Kevin now and in the future. Reach out if you have any questions or concerns – or just to give an update. We love to see photos and hear how our friends are doing.

Thank you for adopting from the Oregon Humane Society. Congratulations on your new dog!