



Oreo's Training Plan

This plan is focused on a long-term, week-by-week approach to building Oreo's confidence (optimism) and sense of "agency"—his ability to recognize situations, take actions, and control outcomes in his environment. **We are prioritizing gradual, steady improvement over quick fixes.**

1. Core Goal & Philosophy

Overarching Goal: Shift Oreo from a "pessimist" (worrying that something bad might happen) to an "optimist" (investigating new things like puzzle toys). We want him to rely less on coddling and more on his own skills and confidence.

Focus Area	Description
Agency	Oreo must learn he can control outcomes.
Pacing	Take it slow, week-by-week. These behaviors took time to develop and will take time to undo.
Mindset	Stop coddling/protecting and start empowering him.

2. Phase A: Avoidance and Management (What NOT to Do)

The most important step is minimizing exposure to major triggers to keep him below threshold and avoid negative emotional rehearsals.

Trigger/Action	Action to AVOID	Management Strategy
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Surprise/Startle	DO NOT surprise him with petting, and DO NOT let him fall asleep next to you (he wakes up startled).	Announce yourself first before any physical proximity.
Other Dogs	DO NOT make a big deal, introduce food, or make loud noises.	Do the absolute minimum necessary: calmly walk away, turn, or pick him up if necessary. Keep the experience neutral.
Clinginess/Codependency	DO NOT engage in prolonged holding, petting, cuddling, or protecting.	If he jumps on your lap or gets clingy, let him stay for a short moment, then use a clear cue like " All done ", toss a high-value treat away from you, and then stand up or move elsewhere.
Entering His Space	DO NOT get into his space without him knowing.	Always announce your presence and let him initiate the interaction.

3. Phase B: Respectful Interaction Protocol

Every interaction should be a lesson in consent and control.

- Announce Yourself:** Get Oreo's attention verbally before any interaction.
- He Initiates:** Wait for him to move towards you as a request for affection.
- Short Duration:** Pet him for only 3–4 seconds.
- Pause:** Stop petting and hold still.
- Re-initiate:** Wait for him to re-initiate the affection (by nudging, leaning, or asking) before continuing.

4. Phase C: Active Confidence Building (What TO Do)

The goal of these exercises is less about the skill itself and more about the confidence and agency he gains from successfully completing the task.

Activity	Focus	Description

Structured Training	Confidence	Continue working on skills he already has: Sit, Touch (targeting), and Loose-Leash Walking (start indoors, then transition to a quiet yard).
Work-to-Earn (Puzzles)	Agency	Introduce food puzzles where he has to work to get his treats. Start with very easy puzzles (easy movement of a ball/snuffle mat) and increase difficulty slowly. I will send a link.
Scent/Exploration	Optimism/Mental Engagement	Hide treats around the house for him to find. On walks, prioritize walks where he is allowed to sniff and explore things at his own pace, rather than focusing on distance.
New Skills	Agency	Look for new, simple, positive reinforcement training exercises (e.g., from resources like Kikopup) to expand his repertoire and confidence. I will send a link.

Next Steps & Looking Ahead

This first phase is about managing the environment and establishing new, respectful boundaries. Focus intensely on consistency, especially with the 'All done' cue and the respectful petting protocol. We will look for small, gradual improvements each week.

It is highly recommended to book a follow-up appointment (suggested date: early January) to review progress. You can always cancel if you decide to go a different direction, but having the time reserved ensures continued support.