

# Experts urge dog owners to teach life skills to help their canines cope with distractions

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Many working dogs have to cope with sirens, sudden loud noises and flashing lights while carrying out vital work that keeps humans safe. Visual and acoustic distractions distinctly affect people's ability to

concentrate and perform tasks; a new study investigates for the first time the effects these conditions have on dogs.

Researchers at the University of Lincoln, UK, found that both strobe lighting and acoustic distraction significantly reduced [dogs'](#) ability to move efficiently in their environment, the latter to a greater extent. Acoustic distraction also impaired dogs' decision-making abilities.

The findings identify a clear need for dogs in working environments, such as military or policing capacities, to receive specific training to overcome these challenges. It is important that these animals build resilience against a number of possible distractions.

Daniel Mills, professor of veterinary behavioral medicine at the University of Lincoln, said, "Sudden changes in sound and light are part of everyday life for many people and dogs. It might be the roadworks going on outside or simply stepping out into a dark night to walk home. A night-time walk might also be interrupted by [flashing lights](#) and noises from a passing ambulance."

"We have shown that these distractions can have a considerable effect on dogs' performance as a result. Within our clinic, we routinely manage many animals with sensitivities to sound and other distractions, but it is possible through a carefully structured reward-based program to prevent many of these issues."

"We urge all owners to teach their dog's [life skills](#) to help them cope and have previously published a short and easy-to-read book for owners to help them in this process, titled 'Life Skills for Puppies'."

The research team previously developed the first scale to assess resilience in dogs. Pet owners can benefit from this research by measuring their dog's resilience for free using the team's [online](#)

[calculator](#).

**More information:** Online calculator: [ipstore.lincoln.ac.uk/product/...ehaviour-calculators](https://ipstore.lincoln.ac.uk/product/...ehaviour-calculators)

Provided by University of Lincoln

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