

SPACE BUBBLES

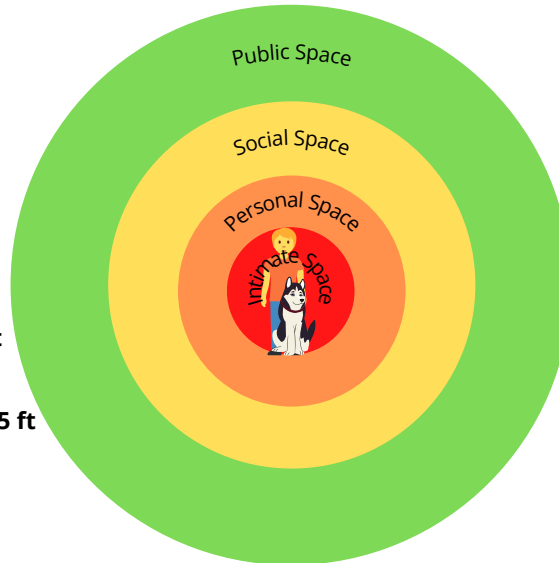


Humans are surrounded by four **space bubbles** inside which they are comfortable interacting with people of certain levels of familiarity. The size of these bubbles vary by individual.

- **Intimate space:** 0 to 1 ½ feet. Open to core family members
- **Personal space:** 1 ½ to 4 feet. Open to extended family and friends
- **Social space:** 4 to 12 feet. Open to acquaintances/coworkers/some strangers
- **Public space:** 12 feet or more. Applies to the general public

Space Bubbles (humans)

- **Public Space - 12+ ft**
- strangers
- **Social Space - 4 -12 ft**
- acquaintances/ coworkers
- **Personal Space - 1.5 - 4 ft**
- extended family
- **Intimate Space - up to 1.5 ft**
- core family members



Research done with animals shows that all animals have what is called a **flight distance** – the distance at which the animal will allow an intruder or something that they perceive to be dangerous to approach before the animal will flee. Research into the flight distance for dogs has produced varying results – anywhere from 7 feet to 150 feet. The reason there is such a huge gap is that are many factors that play into flight distance for dogs. For example, does the dog have a home? Is it a stray? Is it feral? The familiarity of the approaching person/dog, previous experience, etc. For example, a feral dog would generally have a larger flight distance than a homed dog - meaning that a feral dog will generally flee when a person is at a greater distance than will a homed dog.

It is reasonable to apply the basics of space bubbles to dogs. The size of each bubble will vary from dog to dog - as they do from human to human. Bubble size would be affected by many variables; such as, age, gender, reproductive status, level of fear or anxiety, past experiences, etc.

- **Intimate space:** Open to core family members that they are very trusting of – littermates and mother, owners, other dogs or animals in the same household.
- **Personal space:** Open to extended family and friends that visit the home frequently, playgroup dogs
- **Social space:** Open to acquaintances and some strangers - e.g., a neighbor, a dog that you pass frequently on walks
- **Public space:** Applies to unfamiliar people and dogs

Thinking about the size of these spaces, public space could range anywhere from 12 feet, like it is in a person, all the way out to 50 feet or even two blocks. It will depend on your dog's tendencies - is he an anxious dog, is he a fearful dog, how close does he want to be to that strange thing coming to invade his space bubble.

Knowing your dog's space bubbles is an important first step in helping him to overcome fear and reactivity.

