

## Initial Dog Training Consultation Summary

**Date:** 9th May 2026

### Dog Description

**Name:** Apollo

**Breed:** Chocolate Spaniel

**Age:** 5 years old

**Gender:** Male

**Neutering:** Apollo has not been castrated. At this stage, there does not appear to be a clear behavioural need for castration.

### General Behaviour:

Apollo is generally a happy, playful dog with a lot of energy. He adores his tennis ball and this appears to be one of his favourite outlets.

Ellie explained that Apollo can be a nightmare to walk. He pulls constantly and can react to certain dogs, although this can sometimes seem random. He is generally okay with women visiting the home, but he is much more uncomfortable around men and can react defensively towards them.

### Health:

No specific health concerns were raised during the consultation.

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### Training Goals

- The main goals for Apollo are to:
  - Improve his confidence around men and visitors in the home.
  - Reduce defensive reactions towards unfamiliar people, especially those who appear nervous, hesitant or unpredictable.
  - Put clear visitor management strategies in place ahead of Ellie moving in with her boyfriend in September.
  - Help Ellie understand Apollo's body language before he feels the need to react.
  - Build calmer lead walking skills so Ellie can walk Apollo safely alongside her daughter and the pram.
  - Work on Apollo's barking and reactivity on walks, particularly around larger dogs.
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### Background

Ellie advised that she adopted Apollo when he was only 5 weeks old after he had been rejected by his mum. She also mentioned that her stepdad has one of Apollo's siblings, who is also nervous. However, Apollo's sibling tends to hide and take herself away when overwhelmed, whereas Apollo appears more likely to react defensively.

For most of Apollo's life, it has mainly been him and Ellie. Ellie explained that she has never been someone who has a lot of visitors, other than some female friends who Apollo does not generally seem too bothered by. Since Ellie's daughter came along, Apollo has adjusted well and Ellie advised that he is very good with her little girl.

Ellie has noticed that if someone appears nervous, hesitant or jumpy around Apollo, he is more likely to react. Her boyfriend's sister can be nervous around him, despite owning a Staffy herself, and this may contribute to Apollo being less comfortable around her.

Also to note, Apollo was previously attacked while out on a walk with Ellie's stepdad. Two large bully breeds were completely out of control and attacked Apollo, which resulted in him running all the way home. This understandably terrified him. Before this incident, Ellie said he was walked off lead and was always good as gold. Since then, he has been walked on an extendable lead and has become much more difficult to walk, especially with the pram.

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### **Consultation Observations**

When I arrived, Apollo barked at the door, which was expected. I intentionally mimicked nervousness and hesitation, and Apollo appeared more reactive towards this. Once I changed my approach and became more confident, he adjusted much better.

Although Apollo appeared fairly accepting once I sat down, his body language still showed some uncertainty. His body was tense and tail would wag, but more rigid rather than relaxed. His eyes were very focused on me and my movements at times and he would look to Ellie for reassurance. He would also use appeasement behaviours, such as pushing into me for attention (active submission) . He was very focused on his tennis ball, which may be a form of stress relief for him. None of these are a major concern, however someone who does not understand the signals, may inadvertently go too far resulting in Apollo reacting and potentially nipping someone.

After around 10 to 15 minutes, Apollo relaxed fully. He became wiggly, affectionate and wanted to play. Any reservations he originally had were gone.

Ellie's boyfriend invited his dad over so we could safely assess Apollo's response. To avoid the risk of another bite, Apollo was placed in another room while Ellie's boyfriend's dad came in, sat down and kept his hands hidden.

Apollo barked from the other room, but this did not seem obsessive. It appeared to be a reasonable response to being removed and hearing someone enter the home.

When Apollo was let back into the room, there was no major reaction. He had his ball, wanted to play, and did not immediately react to Ellie's boyfriend's dad. There were some subtle signs that he was unsure, but nothing alarming. When Ellie's boyfriend's dad stood up and walked into the kitchen with his hands in his pockets, Apollo was not phased.

Ellie's boyfriend's mum came in a few minutes later. Apollo is already known to be fine with her, and there were no concerns noted during this.

It is common during consultations for dogs not to show the full behaviour owners are concerned about. However, this still gave us useful information about Apollo's triggers and how we can support him moving forward.

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## Assessment

### Apollo's Strengths

- Apollo is affectionate, playful and able to relax once he feels safe.
- He has a strong bond with Ellie and is very good with her little girl.
- He can settle around visitors when the situation is managed carefully.
- He responded well when pressure was reduced and people behaved calmly and confidently.
- Ellie has already done a lot of good work with him, and he is clearly a much-loved dog.

### Areas for Improvement

- Apollo needs support with visitor confidence, especially around men.
  - Ellie will need clear management strategies for visitors entering the home.
  - Apollo needs help with calmer lead walking, especially when Ellie also has the pram.
  - His barking and reactivity on walks need work, particularly around larger dogs.
  - Ellie will need support reading Apollo's body language before he feels the need to react.
  - A crate may be useful as a safe space if Apollo still enjoys using one.
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### Next Steps

For Apollo's first training session, we will focus on three key areas:

1. Walking, including heelwork, calmer lead handling, and managing Apollo's barking and reactivity on walks.
2. Visitor preparation and management, looking at how to set Apollo up safely and reduce pressure when people enter the home.
3. Muzzle training, which I recommend for all dogs as a valuable life skill. Even the friendliest dogs may need to wear a muzzle if they are injured or require treatment at the vets. In Apollo's case, it may also be useful as an added precaution around visitors, particularly if Ellie is unsure whether someone will follow guidance or respect Apollo's space.

For the visitor work, we are hoping Ellie and her boyfriend may be able to ask a friend to assist during the session. If this is not possible, I can try to arrange a suitable volunteer.

As Ellie has signed up for the Complete Package, support is also available between sessions by phone or email. This means if anything comes up, or if Ellie needs guidance before the next session, she will not be left trying to work things out alone.

After the first session, we can review whether there is anything else that needs to be covered. The follow-up session can then focus on harder challenges, such as meeting my dog on a walk and working through how Ellie handles Apollo in that situation. We can also hopefully continue working on visitor confidence in the home.

*It may be worth considering holding off on the follow-up session until after Ellie and her boyfriend have moved home. This would allow us to work with the new environment and potentially introduce likely regular visitors for the first time in a managed way. This can be discussed at a later date.*

Overall, Apollo is a wonderful dog who has had the odd unfortunate bad experience and appears to become defensive when he is unsure, overwhelmed, or does not understand what is expected of him. Now the family's lifestyle is about to change, the focus will be on building confidence and skills, creating clearer structure, and helping both Apollo and Ellie feel safer and more prepared for the future ahead.