



**Date:** 12/6/21

**Preparer:**

Jennifer Joyce  
323-333-9526

**Dog:**

Gunner / Vizsla / 2.5yrs / Neutered at 2yrs

**Owner's name:**

Doreen & Krister Genmark

**Temperament:**

Gunner is a very sweet, extremely smart Vizsla boy. He has a lot of the typical Vizsla personality traits. Gunner is very high energy, has high adrenaline, and a strong chase drive. Once Gunner is comfortable with a new person, he is sociable and friendly. He enjoys quiet nature areas, and long hikes. Gunner can be wary of novel people who appear suddenly, so we recommend open spaces for hikes, rather than narrow trails with surprises around every corner. Gunner loves to chase, and sometimes this means he ends up far afield, after chasing dogs at the beach. Gunner's current family will begin to retrain him on recall, and will pass along the handouts, and tips that were passed along thus far.

Like a lot of dogs, Gunner alerts and barks when someone is at the front door, or when he hears novel sounds outside. Since moving to a new environment, Gunner's alert barking and general wariness has increased. Gunner is less inclined to want to go out for walks, as well. This seems to be a sign that he is sensitizing further in his current over-stimulating environment. Gunner has a pronounced emotional response to new people in and around the home, and will need special consideration at times like this, in order for him to feel safe. With visual access to the front door when a new visitor enters, Gunner will alarm bark and this will continue for a number of minutes before he is able to settle.

Gunner is considerably dog selective, with the potential for cohabitating with an older dog around his size or slightly smaller. As dogs get older they tend to become less social, and seek attention less often from other dogs, and this can be just the ticket for a dog-selective dog of any age. We prefer the idea of "peaceful coexistence" between two adult dogs, over the potentially compulsive greeting, invitations to play, which can both lead to frustration and short fuses. If two dog-selective adult dogs can achieve peaceful coexistence, it's much more likely that we'll eventually see a little, very polite play. Gunner has a nice history of play with his housemate dog, Hunter. This could indicate the capability of building a similar pattern with another dog.



Around the beginning of Gunner's adolescence he was ambushed by an aggressive husky. The dog rushed him from far away on the beach, jumped him, and bit him on the face, leaving a few superficial punctures. He displayed a demeanor shift after this, though we can't know for sure if that was solely a result of the attack, or partially from the normal maturation into adulthood.

Gunner has a history of becoming overstimulated, and fearful. When Gunner finds himself in these situations, he communicates his discomfort very clearly by rushing up, and barking. Outside, he can be wary and avoidant of dogs, and will need his new family's help to navigate these situations. It's best for now to steer clear of dogs and people on walks, until we can get some helpful training and conditioning protocols on board.

Gunner is sweet and sensitive, with a bold temperament and demeanor. While he does avoid scary stimuli at times, he has a tendency to approach to investigate, and once close he may become reactive. Luckily, a trusted family member will always be able to facilitate safe interactions moving forward.

Gunner loves training, and has an extensive list of reliable obedience behaviors, as well as tricks. He's extremely bright and very motivated. Because he's very sensitive, he's easier to motivate and train. Also, for this reason, training sessions should be daily, with lots of breaks. The benefits of daily training practice on both old and new behaviors will be invaluable for Gunner as he begins recovering from intense city life.

Disclosure: Gunner has a history of becoming defensive when fearful. This has resulted in a few bites to children and adults. The contexts in which these events occurred were as follows: reaching for Gunner when he was settled with a high value item, reaching for Gunner when he was under a bed, and when a novel human entered through a gate in the yard, unannounced. The good news is that any resulting injuries did not require medical attention, and because these events were so contextual, it will be very easy to set up iron-clad management to be sure none of these situations arise again.

#### **Diagnosis / presenting issues:**

- High adrenaline / high drive (not unusual for Vizslas, but something to factor in).
- Generalized anxiety.
- Fear and hypervigilance, sound sensitivity/reactivity.
- Pronounced fear response (phobia) to walking equipment, and the idea of going for walks
- Obsessive-compulsive behavior, including but not limited to fixation on movement, novel sound, or other perceived threat.



- Pronounced startle response to the sudden appearance of novel humans.
- Environmental fear. Startles at novel inanimate objects that he's not been regularly exposed to, or that are new to a particular area.
- Needs help with impulses, such as rushing up to a new person while barking.
- Needs work on basic skills, mainly for the purpose of keeping his mind occupied with something positive that he'll gain confidence from.

### **Management:**

In order for Gunner to feel safe, and relaxed, he will need help in several areas, most of which have to do with proximity to his triggers.

Gunner currently wears a muzzle for visits to the beach, and we encourage you to continue this practice, without fail, anytime Gunner is outside the home (for now).

Puzzle toys, long lasting chews, etc should be kept up and away so they continue to keep their "positive charge". Toys and chews left out on the floor all the time invariably become boring.

For a more relaxed, safer walking experience, and Gunner should be fitted with an Ergonomic front attaching harness. This is a management and training tool that should be used in conjunction with loose leash walking training, as noted in the treatment section below.

Please discontinue any "keep away" or "I'm gonna get you" games with Gunner. This will counteract any recall training that's been done, as it reinforces Gunner's decision to move away from you, or anyone else trying to get close to him in any emergency situation.

### **Treatment:**

Take a Big Picture approach to addressing the obsessive-compulsive behavior patterns. Rather than focusing on simply redirecting when the fixation starts, add in as many of our recommendations in order to lower adrenaline, anxiety, and ultimately lower the likelihood that Gunner will even begin to fixate or bark.. If he does, try getting up and walking into another room. This will likely break his concentration, without a chance for inadvertently reinforcing an unwanted behavior. This is always preferred over interrupting and redirecting directly, especially for extra smarty pants dogs like Gunner who are literally scanning for reinforcement 🐾

We recommend ordering some 'Composure for Dogs' (link below) and giving them to Gunner daily. This will help take the edge off as you prepare to rehome him.

Gunner is a potential candidate for a daily medication such as Fluoxetine (generic name for Prozac). This is something we can discuss with you further if you're interested.



A basic obedience program is recommended, using all gentle/science-based methods. Learning more basics, and practicing daily will help with the human-dog bond, and will allow Gunner to build some much-needed confidence.

Gunner needs to build trust with new hands coming toward his face, and we recommend his meals are hand-fed (during training sessions), in order to create a positive association to adult reach. This practice can easily be transferred over to Gunner's new family.

Exploration, sniffing, and some running in wide-open spaces will help stimulate and calm Gunner's mind, as well as relax his body. Narrow trails should be avoided, as well as crowded areas. Dog parks are not ideal as a primary form of exercise. There is also an inherent risk in taking a dog with increasing anxiety and reactivity. Not only that, but since we can't know exactly how a dog is feeling, it's better to err on the side of caution and exercise elsewhere.

Gunner will be much more relaxed, more able to handle triggers while on walks, and much less likely to pull while being walked on a front attaching anti-pull harness. We recommend carrying some high-value treats in a training treat bag (link below in resources) on walks. Allow Gunner to sniff when he feels like it, without pressure, and when he orients to you, smile, use a quiet/happy tone to give him verbal praise, and feed him a treat or two. Continue to use your voice, and facial expressions to get his attention, and feed him near your outer pant seam when he's walking nicely. Whatever you reward, you'll see more of it.

Crucial: Ignore request behavior entirely. Please see basic program document, and ask me for clarification.

**Prognosis:**

With proper management, enrichment, gentle basic training, and appropriate exercise, we believe Gunner will thrive in his new environment. Success is always based on participation. If you're willing to take suggestions and implement them with our support, you will see improvements right away. Emotional issues do not resolve quickly, they are always a work-in-progress. Gunner may always face some challenges with novelty, startle, and light/shadows. Acceptance of Gunner for who he is, and the willingness to work with him where he is emotionally at the time, is the first step.

**Recommendations for placement:**

Gunner will do best in a quiet, adult-only home. Though he can lounge and relax, he will need guardians who can dedicate time every day to walking him, and giving him healthy opportunities to use his brain. Gunner's new family should be willing to keep him out of situations that are frightening or triggering for him.



Because of Gunner's past emotional response to novel people, dogs, and perceived threat, Gunner's new family will need to be willing to find the least invasive ways to address this issue, with our support or the support of another science-based trainer.

We have high hopes for sweet and smart Gunner, and are here to be of support along the way. Thank you for the opportunity to meet with you and evaluate your lovely Vizsla boy ❤️

[[[ no cats or other small animals please ]]]

**Resource links:**

[Composure Supplement](#)

[30 ft long cotton training lead](#)

[Ergonomic front attaching harness](#)

[Training Treat Bag](#)

[The Language of Dogs](#)

[Play tug with rules](#)

[Tricky Treat Ball](#)

[Kong Stuffing Recipes](#)

[Animal Enrichment FB group](#)

[Baskerville Muzzle](#)