

How full is your dog's bucket?

NO, REALLY, YOUR DOG HAS A BRAIN BUCKET

Much like us, all dogs can only tolerate a certain amount of stress before their behaviour starts to change. We describe dogs as having a behaviour bucket in their brain, and when that bucket overflows, we see undesirable behaviours. There are a few important things to get to grips with if we want to help our dogs manage their buckets, and stay cool, calm and collected. Most importantly: Every dog's bucket is different, and as their guardians, it's our responsibility to figure out what their bucket looks like, and what influences the state of the bucket.

What fills the bucket up

Fun stuff, scary stuff, even things going on in the dog's own body can fill the bucket.

The size of the bucket

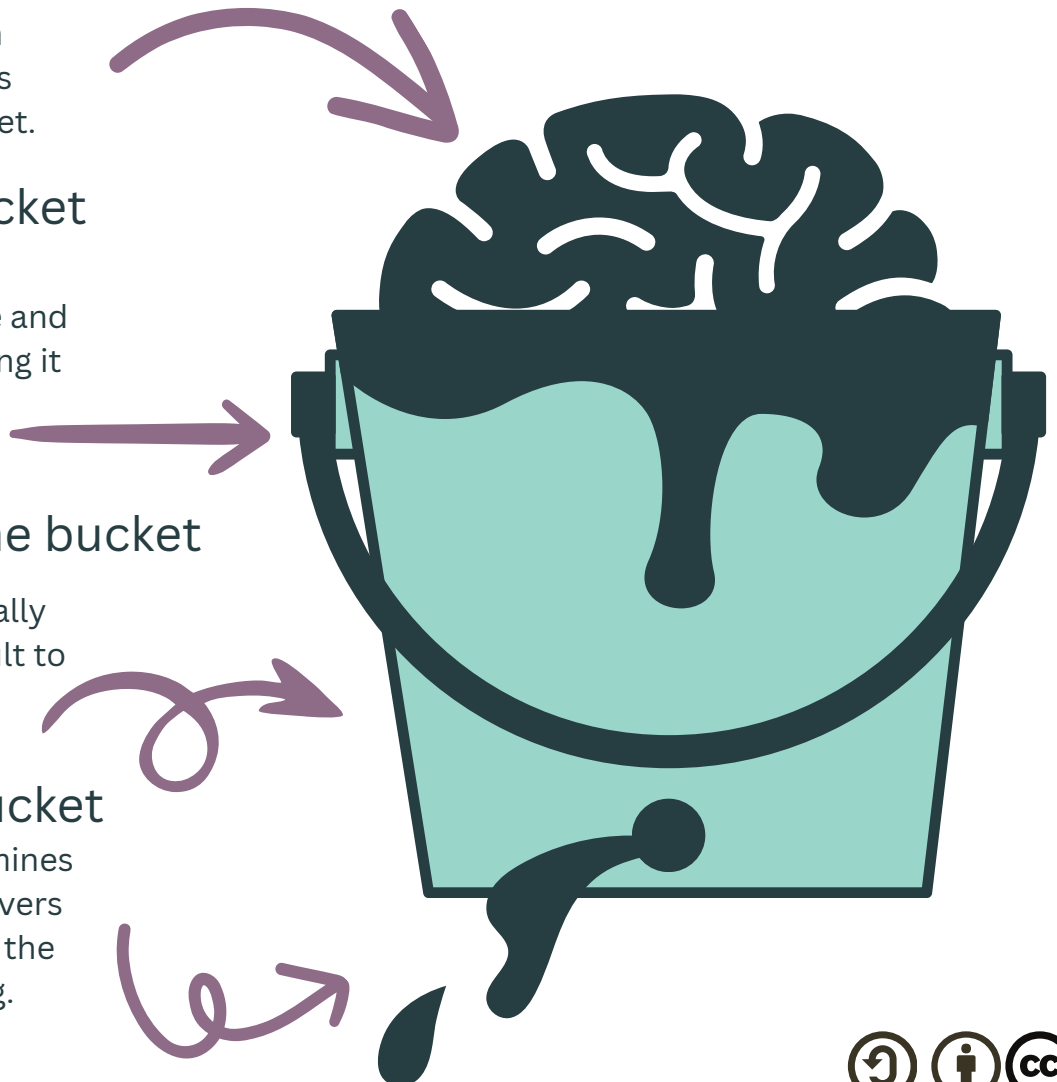
Some dogs have a bigger bucket, some a smaller one and the size determines how long it takes for stress to cause unwanted behaviours

The baseline of the bucket

Is your dog's bucket naturally quite full, or do they default to an emptier vessel?

The hole in the bucket

The size of the hole determines how quickly your dog recovers from stressful events, and the size varies from dog to dog.



Getting to grips with the bucket

WHAT'S FILLING IT, AND HOW CAN WE EMPTY IT

Now we know about the four components of The Bucket, we can start looking at how to use that knowledge to help our dogs to succeed where they've previously struggled.

We can get the quickest transformation by focusing on reducing what's paying into the bucket, and also by helping our dogs to empty it, but over time as we put the work in, it's also very likely that the size and baseline of the bucket will also improve. So! How do we do it?

What fills the bucket

Novelty: anything new and exciting, be it something in the environment (a new smell, perhaps, or a new sound), a person or dog they haven't met before, or going to a new place.

Happiness! Seeing someone they really like, or playing with a favourite toy.

Pain or other uncomfortable or unfamiliar body sensations, including being over-tired

Fear or uncertainty: whether it's a loud noise, a new scary person or thing, or something you can't identify, fear fills a bucket very quickly.

What empties the bucket

Natural behaviours, such as sniffing, licking and chewing - think kongs, long lasting chews, sniffy walks, bones, scentwork, snufflemats, lickimats, doggy ice cream and other similar items.

Rest: if a bucket has overflowed because the dog is tired, sleep is a great remedy

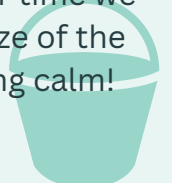
Time: Sometimes it takes a while for the stress hormones to leave the body, or for the dog to recover from something the found frightening.

The baseline

The bucket baseline describes how your dog's bucket looks day-to-day. For some dogs, they're naturally very chilled out, and the bucket looks empty as a baseline. Other dogs might start the day with a naturally half-full bucket. Knowing where your dog sits helps you to help your dog.

The size

Some dogs have a huge bucket with a huge hole, they rarely overflow, and empty quickly. Other dogs have a tiny bucket with a tiny hole: they overflow quickly and take a long time to calm down. Over time we can increase the size of the bucket by practicing calm!



Let's keep track

FOR THE NEXT WEEK, TRY TO KEEP TRACK OF WHAT WENT ON IN YOUR DOG'S LIFE THAT MIGHT HAVE FILLED THEIR BUCKET

	WHAT FILLED THE BUCKET TODAY?	WHAT EMPTIED THE BUCKET TODAY
MON		
TUE		
WED		
THU		
FRI		
SAT		
SUN		

Let's keep track

LET'S ALSO KEEP TRACK OF WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THE BUCKET OVERFLOWS, AND WHAT HELPED

	DID THE BUCKET OVERFLOW?	WHAT HELPED?
MON		
TUE		
WED		
THU		
FRI		
SAT		
SUN		