



BETTERDOG STUDY GUIDE

Intro / Life Changer · In-Home

Fern

Calm puppy, clear rules · Couch, doors, walks

Nancy spent the afternoon with you, Adam and Fern: living room, front hall and the sidewalk out front. You learned one clear way of talking to Fern, so the couch, the door and the leash stop being a negotiation, starting now at eight months.

YOUR TRAINER TODAY

Nancy Corriveau

Thursday, February 12, 2026 · 1 p.m.–4 p.m. · Intro / Life Changer · In-Home

HEY / GOOD GIRL

SPACE RESET

MORNING ROUTINE

DOOR THRESHOLD

HUMANS FIRST

DRILL WALKS

HOUSEHOLD

Lena Marlow · Adam Brooks

DOG

Fern
Mixed breed - possibly
spaniel · Female · 8 months

TRAINER

Nancy Corriveau
BetterDog

SESSION

Intro / Life Changer
Thu Feb 12, 2026

TODAY FIRST · HISTORY IN THE BACK



MUST-READ TODAY · START HERE

Must-Read Today

Lena, you came in with good questions about the couch, the door and pulling. Nancy showed you how to talk to Fern in her own language and keep the house green. Read these four cards first.

MUST-READ 01

Stand up first, then Hey / Good girl

Fern already answers when you stand up and say 'space'. Build on that: start nonverbal, then a plain 'Hey' (I don't like it) or 'Good girl' (I like it), with a running commentary on every small step. Repeating only 'Hey' is a loop.

Do: Stand up first. If Fern holds out, say 'Hey'. The moment she shifts, say 'Good girl'. Keep toggling until she is out of your space.

MUST-READ 02

Claim the couch and the armchair with your body, not your hands

Fern hops onto the couch and armchair whenever she likes, and gets pushy with visitors at the door. Moving her by hand taught her nothing. She needs to feel a consequence from her own choice.

Do: Drag the house leash. She jumps up: 'Hey' and release. If stubborn, step on the leash, then lead her to bed. Never push, pull or lift.

MUST-READ 03

Bed reset after every big moment

Zoomies, greetings and the 'poop energy' after a walk are when Fern has no brain left. Five to ten minutes on her space brings her back to green before she bounces off the couch or the door.

Do: After every walk or play session, and when people come and go, send her to 'space' and hold her there until she is soft.

MUST-READ 04

Walks are drills, and the gear changes this week

Fern pulls toward other dogs and is hard to redirect. Her back-clip harness lets her lean into the pull, so she isn't learning with it. A finger-tight front-tie harness lets you talk to her through the leash.

Do: Swap the back-clip harness for a front-tie, non-stretchy one. Then 10–20 minutes of one-step drills; the sidewalk out front counts.

"And it keeps your conversations with your dog at the calmest, lowest level possible."

NANCY · FEB 12, 2026

SNAPSHOT

One-Minute Read

You and Adam share Fern, a bright, slightly bossy young dog of about eight months, mixed breed, possibly a spaniel type. She learns fast when she knows what you want, and has built habits at home: the couch and armchair, pulling, pushy greetings, watching doors and windows. Nancy gave you one system: stand up, 'Hey', 'Good girl', then the leash to her bed.

First wins: Fern settled quickly after the first correction, stayed on her bed while Nancy walked past the couch, and stayed mellow when a jogger went by and a bike bell rang, where she would normally be ears-up and pulling.

WHAT HAPPENED

The Session Story

INTRO / LIFE CHANGER · IN-HOME · FEB 12, 2026

Starting with Fern, and what you want

Nancy read your file first. The big three for you are calm greetings at the door, couch and armchair manners, and walking beside you without pulling or constant treats. Nancy called this the construction phase: boundaries and clear communication. Maintenance follows, and you can return to a half day of construction whenever life gets busy and standards slip. It isn't complex, but it is demanding: there's no gray zone.

"So our training is not complex, but it is demanding because there's no gray zone. It is yes or no, black and white."

NANCY · FEB 12, 2026

Food, the crate and your personal bubble

Nancy said many kibbles are mostly carbs. She wants about 35% meat protein and under 20% carbs, and said not to put the change off; Acana is 'top notch'. The crate is in the kitchen for now. Nancy wants it moved gradually, door open and facing you, then to a quieter spot, and wants you to practise crating while you are home. Shrink your bubble to arm's length with a finger pointing down. Fern stays out of your space unless invited, and you eat and go first.

"the first tool in their arsenal to be a good leader is to have their personal bubble free at all times, so that they can monitor and assess risk and intervene if they need to without any impediment."

NANCY · FEB 12, 2026

Learning to talk to Fern

Nancy showed the first level, standing up, then 'Hey' and 'Good girl' as running commentary, and finally the leash to the bed. At the front door Lena practised: back Fern off, claim the threshold and say 'Hey' as you shuffle forward, restarting each time she surged. Nancy showed the same idea on the couch, the crate door and the stairs. In the crate Fern settled low-tailed and panting from the work: that is the Morning Routine.

"As long as she's following, you're past the corrective mode."

NANCY · FEB 12, 2026

The walk

Outside, Nancy fitted the front-tie harness finger-tight and began with one-step stops: 'toe beans behind your toe beans'. She clapped high, said 'Hey', popped and released, then 'Good girl' at one small step. When Fern surged and then stalled, Nancy slowed things down. Back at the house, she asked Fern to wait at the foot of the steps and invited her up with a small flick, not a pull. This is plenty for now; unused extras get forgotten.

SAFETY NOTE

Claim the door threshold and look both ways before inviting Fern out. If she bolts, don't chase; be attractive. Her nails and mouthy play can scratch or nip guests, so greetings and couch jumping come first. Never lift, drag or pull her on walks or stairs; on slippery steps keep her at the top and invite her down. Don't stare her down; it becomes a contest. Use a finger-tight front-tie harness, not a back-clip harness or a martingale yet. Crate her when nobody is home.

THIS WEEK

What's Next This Week

COUCH House leash and couch sessions — Keep the short, handle-free leash on Fern indoors for about ten days. Have Adam or a friend sit on the couch, then the armchair; you work only with Fern and claim the space.

MORNING Crate door-open stay — Say 'home', then wait for surrender: four paws visible, soft body, eyes on you. Add a minute and a step daily, toward door open while you make breakfast in the kitchen.

RESET Bed reset — After every walk or play, and during greetings and chaos, send Fern to 'space'. Hold her there five to ten minutes until she is calm.

THRESHOLDS Doors and stairs — Every time: back her off the door, look both sides, then invite her only when calm. On stairs, you go first and invite her from the bottom or landing.

FIRST DAYS Harness and food — Buy a front-tie, non-stretchy harness and retire the back-clip one. Start moving Fern to a higher-meat, low-carb food; add bone broth, chicken or a hard-boiled egg.

WALK Drill walks — Daily, 10 to 20 minutes: one-step stops, redirecting about every three seconds, and a hand under your butt to correct before she passes. You decide when she sniffs and pees.

PACK Book a pack walk — Nancy will add a pass for this month. Pick a walk in the BetterDog app; if it's full, join the wait list.

ORIENTATION

How to Use This Guide

This guide continues the session on paper. Start with Must-Read and the four coaching cards, then work through This Week. Look things up in the Learning Guide; history and baseline are at the back.

DIRECTION

Your North Star

You want Fern to listen reliably, greet people calmly, walk politely beside you, settle around other dogs, and eventually need fewer treats. Today gave you one clear language for the couch, doors, crate and walk.

FROM TODAY

Your Questions, Answered

YOU ASKED

Do I need to change her food right away?

Nancy said not to put it off: start transitioning as soon as you can. Many kibbles are mostly sugar and carbs, and she called Acana top notch.

YOU ASKED

She barks at joggers and bikes and pulls toward other dogs. What now?

Could be novelty or a negative association; the training replaces either with a confident leader she follows. For dogs, use the drills; a pack walk teaches her to be with dogs and ignore them.

YOU ASKED

Does the personal bubble apply even when she is just lying near us?

Nancy said yes, regardless. Fern stays free of your space unless you invite her in.

YOU ASKED

Is her back-clip harness fine, given how much she pulls?

Nancy prefers a front-tie, non-stretchy harness, finger-tight at every contact point. A back-clip harness lets her lean into the pull and she isn't learning with it. A martingale comes later.

YOU ASKED

She eats very fast, then paces. Is that a problem?

Most likely she is eating too fast. Nancy suggested the house of plenty: split the meal across several plates in different spots and escort Fern to each.

YOU ASKED

How do we get support between sessions?

You can go a la carte, with lessons and pack walks by the hour, and move to the yearly program later if you want. Nancy will add a pass for the month.

WHAT FERN IS LEARNING · WHAT YOU ARE LEARNING

What Fern Is Learning

- That your standing up means something.
- That 'Hey' and 'Good girl' mark what you like and don't like.
- That her bed and crate are calm places to reset.
- That she waits, four paws visible, until released.
- That doors, stairs and couches are claimed by you first.
- That on a walk she stays behind or beside you, brain with you.

What You Are Learning

- Stand up first, then speak.
- Run 'Hey' and 'Good girl' as commentary; don't just repeat 'Hey'.
- Never push, pull or lift her; let leash, body and bed do the work.
- Read yellow: a stare over three seconds, or a mouth closing from panting.
- Don't rush a moment. Let her work through it and choose.
- Keep Fern free of your space; humans go first.

PRACTICE DETAIL

Complete Learning Guide

CORE Escalation ladder: stand up, 'Hey', 'Good girl'

What it is: One consistent way of talking to Fern, in her own escalating style, so you stop nagging with commands.

How: Stand up → if she holds out, 'Hey' → at any step toward what you want, 'Good girl' → keep toggling → if she still ignores you, pick up the leash and say 'come' to her bed or crate.

Safety: Don't push, pull or lift her.

Do: Comment on each small movement: I like this, I don't like this, give me more.

Success marker: She shifts out of your space or goes to her bed.

COUCH House leash and couch space-claiming

What it is: A short, handle-free leash Fern drags indoors; you claim the couch the way you claim the door.

How: She jumps on the couch → 'Hey' and release → if stubborn, step on the leash so she self-corrects → 'come, let's go to the bed'. Practise with a helper on the couch, then in the armchair.

Safety: No hands. Keep guests out of the line of her nails and mouth.

Do: Keep it on about ten days. Others act like themselves; you talk only to Fern.

Success marker: She leaves the couch and settles, tail relaxed, with no contact.

RESET Bed / space and green reset

What it is: Her space is where she drains energy and calms down.

How: 'Hey... space' → hold until surrender → add minutes and steps over days → hide treats, add smelly clothes, rotate items.

Safety: Don't give the bed a permanent home in a high-traffic spot.

Do: Use it when people come and go, and five to ten minutes after walks and play.

Success marker: Soft body, low tail; she checks in before leaving.

MORNING Crate: Morning Routine and Voice of God

What it is: A calm crate exit and separation practice that also drains her energy.

How: 'Home' → close the gate, 'Hey... good girl' until she settles → open the door, wait for surrender → add a minute or step daily. Voice of God: crate her briefly while home, correct whining as 'you're fine', call from another room.

Make it easier: Start with the door open so she holds her own spot.

Safety: Don't let her bolt out of excitement; if she does, start again.

Do: Work toward door open while you make breakfast in the kitchen. Train for what you need; don't be empathetic.

Success marker: Mellow, low tail, panting from the work; settles without constantly checking.

DOOR Lines: doors, stairs and your bubble

What it is: You go first; she waits to be invited. Stops bolting and sets the tone for every outing.

How: Door: push her back and claim the space → sit → shuffle forward with 'Hey' → open → look both sides → invite with a low 'come'. Stairs: sit her at the top, you go down, invite 'Come on'; on return, leave her at the bottom and invite her up with a small flick, not a pull.

Make it easier: She's young; some speeding on stairs is accepted.

Safety: Never drag her. If she bolts, start again; don't chase.

Do: Do it in and out of doors, hallways, stairs. Bubble: arm's length, finger down; entry by invitation.

Success marker: She waits and follows; notices when you stand up and shifts away.

WALK Structured heel walk and lie-down recovery

What it is: A drill walk where her brain stays with you; lying down doesn't control the walk.

How: Finger-tight harness → one-step stops → high clap, 'Hey', pop and release → 'Good girl' at the first incline → redirect every three seconds. Lying down: diagonal toward her tail, facing paws, pop across legs toward tail, praise.

Make it easier: If she looks confused, slow down and invite her step by step.

Safety: Don't rush, drag, lift or correct after she has passed.

Do: You decide when she sniffs and pees. Stop and centre often.

Success marker: She stays behind or beside you, mellow, even when a jogger passes or a bike bell rings.

COME Recall: be attractive

What it is: How to get her running to you instead of away.

How: Low, open stance, Mickey Mouse voice. If she is riding the red dragon, don't chase: turn away, trip or yelp, roll on the floor.

Safety: Don't chase.

Do: Use the theatrical tricks sparingly.

Success marker: She returns to you.

FOOD House of plenty and potty timing

What it is: Slows eating, changes her feelings about accident spots, and puts you in charge of when she goes.

How: Split the meal across plates in different spots → put her on her bed → escort her to each. Potty: log drink, eat, pee and poop in an app → ignore her cues and redirect her requests → when she relaxes, you initiate going out.

Do: Put plates where she has peed or pooped. Pick up after about 10 minutes. Enzyme cleaner after accidents.

Success marker: She slows down, avoids eliminating at fed spots, and waits for you to initiate.

FOOD **Food is health, not a transaction**

What it is: Aim for about 35% meat protein, under 20% carbs. Meanwhile add bone broth, chicken, egg, sauerkraut.

How: Start the switch this week. Feed three times a day with fasting between.

Safety: Mention the food change at the next vet visit.

Do: No people food. Eggs can also be your treats.

Success marker: More satisfied, less frenzy at mealtimes.

READ **Traffic-light states**

What it is: A quick way to read her brain.

How: Red: no brain, all energy. Yellow (about a four-second window): concern or thrill-seeking. Green: full brain access. Train in green and yellow.

Do: Watch for a stare over three seconds, mouth closing from panting, tense ears, stiff or high tail.

Success marker: You interrupt yellow before it becomes red.

SHARED WORDS

BetterDog Language

TERM	IN YOUR HOUSEHOLD
Hey	A plain 'I don't like this', with a pop or tug.
Good girl	A plain 'I like this', as running commentary on every small step.
Space	Go to her bed or pillow and stay there; where she resets.
Home	Go into the crate.
Surrender	Soft body, four paws visible, full focus on you, waiting to be released.
Riding the red dragon	Red zone: zoomies, no brain, all energy; her crate-exit burst can look like this.
Emotional speed bump	Your job: interrupt her yellow state within about four seconds.
Toe beans behind your toe beans	On walks, Fern's front paws stay behind your feet.
Puppy TV	Fern watching doors and windows. Redirect it so she doesn't take on the guarding job.

POCKET CARDS · PHOTOGRAPH THESE

Quick Coaching Cards

CARD 01

Fern hops on the couch and won't get off

1. Stand up and claim the couch, as at the door.
2. 'Hey' and release. If stubborn, step on or pop the leash.
3. 'Good girl' at her first step off; lead her to bed.
4. Stay calm and quiet. Don't plead or push; let the leash and your body do the work.

If she follows you to the bed, you are past corrective mode.

CARD 02

The morning crate exit

1. 'Hey... good girl' at the closed gate until she settles.
2. Open up; wait for four paws visible, soft body, eyes on you.
3. Add a minute and a step each day.
4. She should check and double-check, calm. If she bolts, restart.

The goal is breakfast in the kitchen with her door open.

CARD 03

Out the front door

1. Push her back and claim the space.
2. Sit her, then shuffle forward with 'Hey'.
3. Open the door; if she tries to bolt, 'Hey'.
4. Look both sides, then invite her with a low 'come' when calm.

Do 'Hey' on the way back in, too.

CARD 04

Fern locks onto a dog or freezes on the walk

1. Redirect about every three seconds; read her body: mellow or tense.
2. 'Hey', pop and release, then 'Good girl' at the first small step.
3. If she freezes or lies down, go diagonal toward her tail, facing her paws.
4. Pop across her legs toward the tail; praise as she moves.

Confused? Slow down. Never lift or drag; don't correct after she passes.

PRACTICE PLAN

Your Practice Plan

EVERY DAY Work down This Week; tick each ask as you do it.

FOOD House-of-plenty plates; log potty times in an app; enzyme cleaner after accidents.

HOUSE Redirect puppy TV; keep Fern free of your personal space.

LATER Move the crate gradually: door open and facing you, then a quieter spot.

APP Find the exercises under Training in the BetterDog app.

Next session (as discussed): Nancy will email a summary, load today's exercises into the app, add a pass for the pack walk and send a harness link. Book a lesson a la carte if issues come up, or move to the yearly program later.

RHYTHM

Daily Flow

MOMENT	DEFAULT
Morning crate exit	Door-open stay; wait for surrender, then release, working toward breakfast in the kitchen.

MOMENT	DEFAULT
Meals	Fern waits on her bed while you prep. House-of-plenty plates; pick up after about 10 minutes.
Showers and chores	Crate her when you can't watch her. With nobody home, always crate.
Greetings and chaos	Send her to 'space' before the hellos. Keep Fern out of your space.
Walk	Front-tie harness, doorway routine, drills, then a bed reset when you come in.
Evenings on the couch	House leash on. Claim the couch with your body; everyone else relaxes as themselves.

CHECK-IN

Test Your Understanding

Fern bursts out of the crate in the morning and races for the couch.

Best first move? Don't let her bolt. Close the gate and say 'Hey... good girl' until she settles, then open the door and wait for surrender.

A friend rings the doorbell and Fern goes wild at the door.

Best first move? Send her to 'space' before the greeting, then bed-reset her until she is calm.

On the walk, Fern sees a dog, freezes and stares for more than three seconds.

Best first move? Be her emotional speed bump: 'Hey', pop and release, 'Good girl' at the first small step. Check whether her body is mellow or tense.

HONESTY

Recognizing Progress

ALREADY SEEN TODAY

- Fern settled quickly after the first correction and held her bed through the couch scenario.
- On the walk she stayed mellow when a jogger passed and a bike bell rang.
- She stayed on her pillow when a pan clattered in the kitchen. She is bright and recovers fast.

WATCH FOR THIS WEEK

- Less couch and armchair jumping now that you are claiming the space.
- A calmer morning crate exit as you add minutes and steps.
- Better behaviour at doors and on stairs with consistent practice.

DEVELOPING

- The front door: she tried to bolt several times before you got the space.
- Leash walking: she surged ahead, then stalled; slowing down helped.
- Her interest in dogs and squirrels: yellow, with ear tension, during first bed practice.

NOT YET RELIABLE

- Pulling toward dogs, barking at people, puppy TV and doorway barking.
- Crate separation and being crated while someone is home.
- Pushy door greetings and fast eating.
- Food and harness change still pending; stairs not yet established; weaning off treats still ahead.

SUPPORT

When to Reach Out

- Fern bolts out an open door and you can't get her back safely.
- Fern guards the couch or snaps when asked to get off, or a guest gets scratched or nipped despite the work.
- She refuses meals for more than a day, her weight looks off, or you have any food or weight concern; tell the vet.
- The crate stays distressing, or her barking from inside gets worse when you leave.
- She is still hard to move around other dogs after a week or two of drills, or you're unsure the harness fits.

FORWARD

What's Next

This week, get the harness and start the new food. Then protect the few things you were given: the 'Hey' and 'Good girl' commentary, the Morning Routine, door and stair rules, bed reset and drill walks. Book a pack walk this month. Nancy is a call away.

"Don't rush a moment, right? And take over. Let the dog work through it"

NANCY · FEB 12, 2026



BACK OF THE BINDER · INTAKE & PROGRESS

Your Starting Point

What we know about Fern and your household, and where each piece came from.

FIELD	PICTURE	SOURCE
Household	Lena and Adam, with a senior cat. A townhouse with stairs and a small yard.	Onboarding
Dog	Fern, female, about 8 months, mixed breed, possibly a spaniel type. With the family since she was ten weeks old. Spay to be discussed with the vet.	Intake
Handlers	Adam has the firmer hand; Lena handles most walks.	Intake
Goals	Calm greetings at the door, couch and armchair manners, walking without pulling, less barking at dogs and people, and less reliance on treats.	Session
Concerns	Mouthing, pulling, pushy greetings, jumping on furniture and people, barking at windows, reactivity to dogs.	Onboarding
Health and safety	No health concerns reported. No bites or growling reported.	Session
Gear and setup	Crate in the kitchen, to be moved gradually. Back-clip harness, to be replaced by a front-tie, non-stretchy harness. House leash, bed or pillow.	Session
Food	An adult kibble. Nancy advises a higher-meat, low-carb food as soon as possible. Three meals a day.	Session

BINDER CHRONOLOGY

Session History

DATE	SESSION	FOCUS
2026-02-10	Onboarding	Pack onboarding form submitted.
2026-02-12	Intro / Life Changer · Nancy	Introductory session: one communication system, the Morning Routine, door and couch claims, bed reset, drill walks and the gear and food changes.

HONEST STATUS

Where Things Stand

TOPIC	HONEST STATUS AFTER FEB 12, 2026
Couch and armchair jumping	Demonstrated and practised; keep working.
Morning crate exit	Demonstrated. Fern was calm in the crate.
Crate separation	Not yet reliable. Voice of God explained.
Front door and stairs	Door developing (tried to bolt); stairs not established.
Greetings at the door	Demonstrated; keep working.
Leash walking	Developing. Mellow near everyday noises, but surged and stalled.

TOPIC	HONEST STATUS AFTER FEB 12, 2026
Pulling toward dogs	Not yet reliable. Pack walk coming.
Food	Change pending.
Potty and fast eating	Not yet reliable. House of plenty and potty tracking explained.
Puppy TV and doorway barking	Not yet resolved.
Weaning off treats	In progress.

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