



THE END OF PULLING ON THE LEASH

By and large, leash-pulling masks the real problem: without a leash you would probably be without a dog. It is indeed a sobering thought to think that most dogs prefer to forge ahead to sniff the grass or other dogs' rear ends than to walk by their owner's side.

There are of course some dogs who simply don't want to walk beside people who keeping yanking the leash. However, regardless of why your dog pulls, all dogs need to be trained to walk nicely on leash. If not, they are unlikely to be walked at all.

Trying to teach a dog to heel using leash prompts and corrections requires a lot of skill and time. And even then, all you have is a well-behaved dog on-leash. Let him off-leash and he's history; you cannot safely take him for off-leash rambles, and you still cannot control him around the house, where he is off-leash all the time.

Luckily, there are more effective and enjoyable ways to get the job done.

- 1) **Teach your dog to follow off-leash.**
- 2) **Incorporate "sits" and "stays" for control and attention.**
- 3) **Teach your dog to "heel" off-leash and on-leash.**

After following these steps, you will find it is easier to teach your dog to walk calmly on-leash.

Teach Your Dog to Follow Off-Leash

Your dog's desire to follow and remain close is the necessary foundation for walking politely on-leash. You must become the center of your dog's universe. You need to stimulate and strengthen your dog's gravitational attraction towards you by moving away enticingly and heartily praising your dog all the time he follows. Click your fingers, slap your thigh, or waggle a food treat or toy in your hand to lure the dog to follow. Proceed with a happy heart and a sunny disposition: talk to your dog, tell him stories, whistle, walk with a jaunty step, or even skip and sing.

Do not accommodate your dog's improvisations; **You are the leader**, not the other way around. Whenever your dog attempts to lead, accentuate his "mistake" by stopping short and/or doing the opposite. Stretch the psychic bungee cord:

If your dog forges ahead, stop short or smartly turn about; if your dog lags behind, speed up a little bit; if your dog goes right, turn left; and if your dog goes left, turn right. Practice in large areas, such as in your backyard, friends' yards, tennis courts, dog parks, and safe **off-leash** areas. **Feed your dog his dinner kibble, piece by piece as you walk.** Once your dog is following closer, practice at home, going around furniture, from room to room, and from the house to the yard.

Sits, Downs, and Stays

Enticing your dog to follow off-leash takes a lot of concentration and it is easy to let your dog drift. Consequently, ask your dog to "sit" or "lie down" and then "stay" every fifty yards or so. **Frequent sits, downs, and stays teach your dog to calm down and**

focus. They also give you the opportunity to catch your breath, relax your brain, and to objectively assess your dog's level of attention.

Sitting is absolute: either your dog is sitting or not. Only have your dog "sit" or "lie down" for a couple of seconds (just to check that he is paying attention) and then walk on again. **Occasionally ask your dog to go into a "down" for a minute or so to watch the world go by.** You will find that the more "down stays" that you integrate into the walk, the calmer and more controlled your dog will be when walking.

Teach Your Dog to Heel Off-Leash - "Heeling" is defined as the dog walking at your side, *with his head or shoulder at the seam of your pants*, never deviating from this position and *sitting automatically whenever you stop*. The goal of initial "Heel" training is to have your dog associate that following you, from the view he has of you at your side, equals a high likelihood of rewards.

1) Starting with the dog on your left side, ask your dog to "sit", and then with your right hand, lure him to sit using a food or toy lure.

2) Transfer the lure to your left hand, say "Heel," waggle the lure in front of your dog's nose and quickly walk forward a few steps.

3) Then say "Sit," and transfer the lure to your right hand to lure your dog to sit, and offer the kibble as a reward - if your dog sits quickly and stylishly.

Repeat this sequence over and over. Practice indoors and in your yard (where there are fewer distractions) before practicing in the dog park and off-leash walking areas. Getting this behavior generalized from your living room to the great outdoors will require time and patience. Once it's well conditioned indoors, take it outside to practice on actual walks. Outside, just attach the dog's leash and you will find he heels nicely on-leash. The most efficient way to install automatic sits is to "Heel" your dog with frequent halts. The sequence is as follows: 1) you stop walking 2) you hand signal the dog into a sit while he is the heel position and click and treat successful responses. **Your eventual goal could be the cessation of walking becomes the sit command.**

Walking on a Loose Leash (The Red-Light, Green-Light Game)

While on a walk, you may only move forward if the leash is loose and jangly. As soon as the dog tightens the leash, which creates tension, you will freeze dead in your tracks.

The loose leash is relaxed, which is the green light - you move forward. The tight leash is the tension, which is the red light - you stop.

To begin, you must teach your dog not to pull while you are both standing still.

1) Hold the leash firmly with both hands and refuse to budge *until your dog slackens the leash. Not a single step! It doesn't matter how long it takes.* Just hold on tight and ignore every leash-lunge. Eventually your dog will stop pulling and sit. As soon as he sits, say "Good dog," offer a food treat, and then take just one large step forward and stand still again. Hold on tight; your dog will likely explode to the end of the leash, thereby illustrating the reinforcing nature of allowing your dog to pull for just a single step. Wait for your dog to stop pulling again (it will not take as long this time). Repeat this sequence until your dog walks calmly forward (because he knows you are only going one step) and sits quickly when you stop and stand still.

Your dog quickly learns he has the power to make you stop and to make you go. If he tightens the leash, you stop. But if he slackens the leash and sits, you take a step. After a series of single steps and standstills without pulling, try taking two steps at a time. Then go for three steps, then five, eight, twelve, and so on. Remember to go only at your dog's pace. Now you will find your dog will walk

attentively on a loose leash and sit automatically whenever you stop. And the only words you have said are "Good dog."

2) Preferably, using a flat collar and a six foot lead, start walking your dog from a sit, saying "heel" as you move off. (If he doesn't immediately follow, a little coaxing as you continue walking forward should get him moving. Try slapping your leg or jogging slowly to entice him.

3) When the dog is following eagerly, **practice turning in all directions: right, left and 180-degrees.** When you turn 180-degrees, do so with the dog on the outside track. This means that if the dog is on your left, whirl around to your right side.

4) Praise your dog while he is walking nicely on a loose leash. This is an essential part of getting your dog to feel good about walking without pulling.

5) Your physiology - the way you stand, the pace at which you walk and the energy you emit - should have a purpose and a presence to it. Remember, you are the leader. Embody it.

6) Sniffing is allowed and encouraged so long as you do not allow pulling at anytime. From your dog's point of view, the reward for walking nicely on a loose leash is the ability to move forward as well as sniff. The split second the leash becomes tight, all the fun stops.

7) You must be 100% consistent with your commitment to not allowing pulling or you will teach your dog that pulling works and he will more than likely pull you for the rest of his life. Even if you allow your dog to pull you "once in a while", you are putting the behavior of "pulling on the leash" on what behaviorists call a variable reinforcement schedule, which in turn will keep the pulling behavior alive and stronger than ever. This is a black and white issue. If you want a dog that walks nicely by your side without stress and without strain, you can never allow pulling, ever. It's that simple.

8) When you are teaching this to your dog, do not judge your progress or success by how far you go. Even if it takes a week to go one block, that's okay. Simply designate a predetermined amount of time which you dedicate to simply teaching your dog how to walk nicely on a leash and stick to it. Ex: I am going to walk Sparky for 45 minutes now. If we only make it 3 house lengths, so be it. It does not matter how far we get. What matters is we will walk without pulling.

Alternate "Heeling" and Walking on a loose-leash.

For most of the walk, you can let your dog range and sniff on a loose leash, but every 100 yards or so, have your dog "sit", "heel", and "sit", and then walk on again. Always sit-heel-sit your dog when crossing a street:

- A) Sit before crossing
- B) Heeling across the street
- C) Sitting on the other side of the street

Note: When allocating treats to your dog on a walk, try and always OFFER THE TREAT BEHIND YOU, rather than beside you. This will encourage your dog to stay behind you, rather than just beside you. It's a more subordinate position to walk in.

Some common problems and solutions walking your dog on-leash

If while on a walk, your dog decides to simply lie down and not move at all, you have several options to choose from.

a) You can teach your dog to “target” your finger. You do this by pointing your pointer finger to the side of your knees and rewarding your dog when he bumps his nose into your finger. To get your dog in the habit of “targeting” your finger, you would practice this *before* you use it on an actual walk.

b) In a safe area, you can simply drop the leash and keep on walking forward. You do this *without* looking back or calling your dog to you. When done properly, your dog’s natural pack instinct will kick in and he will more than likely get up and follow you when he sees his leader walking away without him.

c) If all else fails, a very gentle tug on the leash while saying “let’s go” while placing a juicy food treat in front of his nose could help. In this example, you would not give your dog the food treat when he started to move but rather only after 7 to 10 seconds walking along side of you.

If your dog is only considering lying down and hasn’t done so yet, try have him “targeting” your finger or better yet, saying “leave it” *before* he gets to the point of resting.

d) You can go pick your dog up the spilt second you see this behavior and then start moving forward again.