



Enjoy Walking Your Dog

Three Simple Steps to Stop Pulling

Walking your dog in the park or in your neighborhood ought to be relaxing and fun. But what if your dog acts like you're not there? What if he seems more interested in the environment in you? What can you do if your dog hasn't yet learned that a walk is *something you do together*!

When you complete the steps in this lesson, you will know how to use simple, positive methods to teach loose leash walking. You'll finally stop using resistance and begin building cooperation so that both you and your dog will enjoy going for a walk.

Teach your dog loose leash walking in 3 simple steps.

Step One: Communication

Communication goes two ways.

The attention your dog gives you mirrors the attention you give to him. If you're not paying attention to your dog, then he'll look for other interesting things around him. He'll pull on the leash to investigate smells and chase

the movement of birds, squirrels, bikes, cats, or other dogs. He'll impulsively rush to greet people you meet on your walk.

The key to loose leash walking is getting your dog to engage with you when you ask. You'll balance those periods of engagement by also giving your dog enrichment opportunities to explore his surroundings.

The first step is to add more value to engagement with you. In other words, you need to be at least as interesting as the other things that claim his attention.

Don't underestimate the power of attention. It's a resource that dogs highly value. Remember, you have to give attention in order to get it.

Communication goes two ways.

How to keep your dog engaged:

- Do something with your dog that he loves (like tug) in a *low distraction environment*.
- Find a location where he isn't bombarded by temptations to sniff, chase, bark at, and follow a multitude of distractions. Starting indoors is often a good choice.
- Minimizing distractions makes it easier for him to choose *what you have to offer* instead of something else.
- Get your dog emotionally engaged with *friendly eye contact*. Build his trust and attachment to you.
- Use *your voice* to praise and encourage him. Say "Yes!" or "Good!" with enthusiasm when he does what you want.
- Use *your facial expressions* to build his confidence. Dogs accurately read your body language and are drawn to you when you are happy. So smile a lot and show you are pleased.
- Use *gentle, friendly touch* instead of yanking on his collar. Pet him on his neck, behind ears, shoulders, and back. Using praise and petting together is a powerful combination.
- Use *rewards* that the dog values. Give food treats occasionally as a special reward. *Never use food as a bribe*. Surprise your dog with a

favorite toy. Some dogs love carrying a toy and some enjoy a quick game of tug with a rope toy.

- *This is a give and take arrangement. The more attention you give your dog for the things you want the more he will continue to offer those things to you.*



Step Two

- Go for a *short walk without a lot of distractions*. Keep it short and successful. Practice getting attention with the techniques from **Step One**.
- If your dog is distracted, *simply stop walking*. No yanking his collar or letting him drag you around.
- Give him a few seconds to make a choice about whether he will pay attention to you or to something else. *If he chooses you*, praise, pet, smile, and celebrate! And start walking again.
- *If he does not choose you* after two or three seconds, get his attention with voice and touch and ask him to engage with you using what you taught in **Step One**.
- When you get your dog's attention praise him with enthusiasm. Now you can start walking again. This is a good time to start using a verbal cue to let your dog know what you want. I like saying simply, "Let's go". It's much more effective than the old fashioned "heel" which is really unfamiliar in normal conversation.
- Keep the walk short. Remember it's practice so end on a positive.

Step Three

- Take more short walks using the techniques in **Step Two**.
- Gradually build up to longer walks. For now, keep the distractions to a minimum.
- You can't always control the kinds of distractions you encounter on your walks, but just do your best to make it easy for your dog to give you his attention.
- Shorter walks that end on with positive rewards are better than long walks with struggling.
- If the distractions are difficult for your dog (other dogs, bicycles, etc) shorten the walks so your dog doesn't get overwhelmed.
- If your dog becomes too distracted to pay attention to you, simply end the walk and give him a chance to relax.
- If your dog is too aroused to pay attention, he is letting you know *he isn't yet ready* to advance to that level. So help him be successful by returning to a previous step.
- You'll be able to tell if you have moved ahead before your dog is ready because he will become confused and default back to his previous behavior.



Summary

1. Don't expect to fix leash pulling in a day. Changing a habit takes consistent repetition.
2. There's no benefit in force or punishment. They erode trust and instill fear.
3. Restraint causes resistance. Our goal is to eliminate restraint and resistance by preventing pulling and rewarding our dogs for paying attention.

Equipment

- Choose a plain, flat buckle type collar or a martingale collar.
- **Never** use a choke collar or any collar made out of metal.
- **Never** use an electric shock collar. If you believe that you need to shock your dog into submission, the problem isn't leash walking!
- If you choose a harness with a front attachment ring be sure it doesn't restrict the dog's normal shoulder movement.
- Your leash should be made of fabric or leather and be 5 or 6 feet long.
- **Never** use a retractable leash! They are dangerous and they actually teach your dog to pull and to ignore you.

Resources

You can find descriptions of proper equipment on my website:

<https://dogwisdomworkshop.com/resources/>



**When you see your dog as your partner,
he'll see you as his leader.**

**Learn more about how a partnership with your pet
prepares you to be the leader your dog deserves.**

<https://dogwisdomworkshop.com>