

LOOSE LEASH WALKING



Why do we teach dogs to walk on a leash?

We have to teach dogs how to give a loose leash walk because leashes are required in most cities and **dogs don't naturally know how to walk on a leash**. It's important to teach this skill because pulling on leash is frustrating for us, and can result in injury to us and our dogs.

How we teach dogs to walk on a leash:

Selecting the right equipment:

I've been using and recommending the EasyWalk harness ([deluxe](#) and [regular](#)) for more than 6 years now. When properly fit, it will encourage your dog to spin around to face you when it tries to pull you and will not harm your dog. This will take away some of your dog's pulling power and give you more control. Measure your dog and select the right size. [Here's a link to the size chart.](#)

Use a leash that is 5 to 6 feet long and has a snap that isn't too large for your dog. The larger the snap the more it will weigh down the d-ring on the harness, which reduces the functionality of the harness.

Let's Begin:

Forget your definition of a walk for a moment and think about this; your dog walks faster than you, has far more energy than you and from past experience, knows exactly where you're going - straight down the sidewalk, so your definition of a walk is likely to result in your dog pulling you. If we change our definition of a walk we can have **an outdoor experience** with our dogs that will eventually result in us being able to walk with them.

Put some treats in your pocket and then put your dog's harness on. You will begin training inside a quiet part of your home. After a few days of practice, move to a quiet area outdoors. As you make progress, continue to practice in environments with higher levels of distraction.

When you finally head outdoors, set the tone of the walk by leaving the house in a calm manner. If your dog is jumping all over the place, slow down the exit time so they have time to calm themselves.

The Protocol:

1. **NEVER allow pulling again.** This is a self-reinforcing behavior and will get stronger if you allow it. If you allow pulling **occasionally**, the unwanted behavior will become **even stronger, because your dog will have learned perseverance pays off.**
2. Try to do some light training **in the grass.** Ask for a sit, a hand target or a down. Just two or three repetitions will remind your dog you have treats and are on the walk with him!
3. Look down at the grass and **stroll** around as though you have nowhere to be. This will encourage your dog to sniff and to relieve themselves.
4. Walk a few steps in a straight line, say, **“this way”** and then change your direction by 90 degrees. When you first change directions if your dog turns to follow you, say the praise word you’ve been using in other training exercises, **“good girl” or “yes”**. Say it emphatically with a smile and immediately follow that with a [high value meat treat](#) you already had ready in your other hand or pocket. The treat should always be delivered at or behind your leg. If she gets ahead of you, say **“this way”** and turn again.
5. Focus on timing your verbal cue and direction change so that you’re delivering the cue just before your dog gets to your leg.
6. This takes some practice for both of you, but you should pick this up quickly and it will help you to see me do it. It’s totally understandable if we need to work on this together more than once.
7. Keep practicing in the easement and occasionally hit the sidewalk for a few steps, but then return to the easement. Throw in a couple of other skill cues again, like sit.
8. Slowly you will be able to transition back to a sidewalk experience, but make the transition gradually over time.

Quick Summary:

1. Take a few steps in a new direction.
2. Say “yes”, and deliver a treat to your dog at or behind your leg as she approaches your side.
3. Change directions and repeat.
4. Repeat in increasingly distracting environments.

NOTE: If this method is not working for you, that’s okay. You’re new to this and so is your dog. We just need to discuss your dog’s energy level, and the level of distraction in your environment. This training method in combination with the EasyWalk harness has consistently delivered great results for me and many clients. We can do this! Remember to reach out to me sooner than later - I do not charge for follow-up discussions.