



Dog Behaviour Guide

Loose Leash Walking



Tired of your dog pulling on leash? Training your dog to walk on a loose leash is beneficial for you and your dog. Leash pulling is inadvertently rewarded by allowing your dog to move forward when they pull. In order to address pulling, you have to stop reinforcing the unwanted behaviour. Here are some recommendations for teaching your dog how to walk on a loose leash!

Training Process

Ensure you have the following before training:

- Flat collar or harness (a harness is preferable!)
- Leash (six-foot leash)
- Treats
- A low-distraction area

Do NOT use a retractable leash, as this gives to pulling and reinforces the unwanted behaviour. Avoid using aversive equipment, such as prong or choke collars as these tools create discomfort and/or pain for dogs, which is not a humane training method.

Loose Leash Walking Exercise

- Start with your dog sitting or standing by your left or right side, with their shoulders even with yours.
- Reward your dog for sitting (give a treat)
- Start walking forward, reward your dog with a treat for “heeling” (staying at your left or right side, not in front of you) every 2-3 steps. Repeat this several times.
- When your dog successfully stays at your side for 2-3 steps, increase the reward interval to every 4-5 steps. Thereafter, every 7-10 steps, and so on.
- Walk in a circle (instead of in a straight line) as this helps to keep your dog focussed. Then change direction. Once your dog is staying at your side, you can try going in straight line.

By rewarding frequently enough, you will motivate your dog to stay by your side. Over time, you can reduce the frequency at which you reward your dog. Your dog will learn that pulling does not allow them to move where they want to go. Be consistent. Stop every time your dog pulls and only move forward when your dog relieves the leash pressure.

Do not over-train these exercises. Train for approximately 5-10 minutes, a few times per day, if possible. You will have to exercise your dog outside of these training sessions (i.e. play fetch) to ensure your dog has adequate physical activity.

Helpful Tips

- Respond promptly to leash pressure and release. When your dog relieves pressure on the leash, immediately move forward. Your dog needs to understand what behaviour allows them to move forward.
- Train this exercise until your dog walks loosely on-leash. If you allow your dog to pull sometimes, this will cause the pulling to return.
- Allow your dog to explore and sniff during your walk, as long as the leash is loose. This is a very enriching activity for dogs! You may need a leash longer than six feet for “sniffing walks” to allow your dog to explore a bit further.
- Avoid high-distraction areas, as distractions will intensify pulling and reduce your dog’s ability to focus on you. You may wish to start in your backyard or a quiet sidewalk.

Additional Resources:

The Training Academy at the Edmonton Humane Society offers training classes, including Hustle Your Walk! This course helps you build reliable recall and loose-leash walking skills. For more information, visit our website: <https://www.edmontonhumanesociety.com/sessions/hustle-your-walk/>

Did You Know?

You can also ask us behaviour questions by emailing:
askthespecialist@edmontonhumanesociety.com

It takes approximately \$7 million to keep the Edmonton Humane Society operational for one year and 40% of these funds come from generous donations made by supporters like you. Please [Donate](#).