The Happy Dog Training Academy

Walking on a lead

**Teaching a Puppy to Walk on a Lead.**

* Getting your puppy to walk on a leash is easier than you may think.
* There are simple solutions if your puppy misbehaves on leash, don’t yank or drag!
* Let your puppy wear a collar and leash inside before going outdoors.

Many people think that dogs just innately know how to walk politely on a leash, but this skill is something that needs to be trained. It’s an important skill to teach, and one you’ll value every time you take your dog out for a walk. You will enjoy taking your dog out for a walk if they don’t pull your arm out it’s socket every time. Walking a pulling dog becomes a chore and is not enjoyable.

**Training Your Dog to Walk on a Leash**

**Introduce the puppy to the collar and leash.** Start out by letting them get used to wearing a collar and a leash. Let him wear them for short periods of time in the house while you are playing with him and giving him treats. The puppy should love collar-and-leash time because it represents food and fun.

**Teaching a cue.** Introduce your puppy to a sound cue that means, “a treat is coming.” Some people like to click and treat, some people use a word like “yes,” and some people cluck their tongue. Whichever you use, the method is the same, in a quiet, distraction free area, with the puppy on a leash and collar, make the sound. The second your puppy turns toward you and or looks at you, reward with a treat. After a few repetitions, you’ll notice your puppy not only looking at you, but also coming over to you for the treat.

**Getting your puppy to come to you.** While he’s on his way to you, still wearing the leash and collar, back up a few paces and then reward him when he gets to you. Continue the progression until your puppy, upon hearing the cue noise, puppy comes to you and walks with you a few paces, as you are backing away. Remember that puppies have a short attention span, so keep your sessions short, just 5 or 6 minutes, and end when your puppy is still eager to do more, not when he’s mentally exhausted. Setting you and your puppy up for success.

**Practice inside.** Now that your puppy understands how to come to you, practice walking a few steps in the house where there is little distraction. Try to make the area as big as possible, getting your puppy to come with you as you back up. When the puppy is achieving, you can back up 2 or 3 steps as you do turn to the right, so the dog is now on your left and walk 2 or 3 steps with your puppy. Lot of praise and reword this. “Feeling and seeing the lead around him will be enough of a challenge. Offer treats and praise as your puppy gets used to coming and walking just a few steps.

**Take it outside.** First the garden, you’re ready to test your puppy’s skills in the Great Outdoors. There will be new challenges with this step because all the sounds, smells, and sights your puppy encounters will be intriguing and new to him. Be patient and keep the first training short. Go back to the first stage and repeating it. if your puppy looks as if he’s about to get distracted (you’ll notice this because you will keep your eyes on him at all times), make your cue sound and move a few steps away, Calling puppy. Then reward him with a treat for following you. It is important to get every stage fully reinforced. You may have noticed we have not yet picked up the lead, we are just allowing your puppy to feel the lead on his shoulders. As your puppy walks to you, feeling the lead dragging this is enough for them to know it is there, and it is not pulling excessively.

**Now you’re ready to take the lead in hand.**

Using a training lead, this is a lead that clips back onto itself. The lead extends approximately 6ft, allowing you to repeat the exercise calling the dog to you. Your puppy will come to you. As they come to you pull the lead but not to pull the puppy, just to stop the lead from tripping or tangling around the dog. When your puppy is just about to you, turn again to the right and walk a few steps and treat your dog as you walk away, just a few steps. Once mastered the few steps you are able to increase the distance. Should your puppy start to get Infront of you turn to the right in an about turn, calling your puppy, back to your side.

**Troubleshooting**

Even though your puppy may be learning to walk on a leash very nicely, you’re likely to run into some issues as he gets older, goes new places, and experiences new distractions. You’ll want to teach him loose lead walking because it’s much more pleasant for you both. Here are a few tips on what to do if you’re having problems with lead training.

**If your pup pulls:** If your dog starts pulling in the other direction, stand very still and refuse to move, encourage your dog until your dog comes back to you. Do not yank or jerk the lead, keep a slight tension on the lead, and do not drag your dog along with you.

**If your pup lunges:** If your dog is going after something while on a walk, another dog, a car, a skateboarder, for example, you should be proactive. Try to redirect his attention with a treat before he has a chance to lunge. Increase the space between your dog and the target, trigger. Stay alert and be prepared before any triggers gets too close. This type of behaviour may be more common in herding breeds, but any dog can be startled by something he’s not used to or finds exciting.

**If your pup barks:** Some dogs have the habit of barking at other dogs while on a walk. Oftentimes, this behaviour comes as a result of lack of exercise, and socialisation as a puppy. Make sure your dog gets the proper amount of mental and physical stimulation for his age and breed. If this is still a problem, use the same process as you would if your dog is lunging, as described above, create distance, and offer treats before he starts to bark, so every time he sees a dog, he gets used to turning his attention to you. Gradually you’ll reduce the number of treats and the amount of troubleshooting that your puppy needs during a walk, but it’s a good idea to keep some on hand at all times so you can randomly reinforce good lead walking behaviour. Keeping your dog’s attention is the key, to most training. When the dog’s attention is on you, and you have the right distance between you and the triggers that your dog faces, you are able to keep your dog’s attention. Over time your dog will become desensitised.