

*Your complete guide to natural dog care and training*

# WholeDog Journal™



# Walking Your Dog

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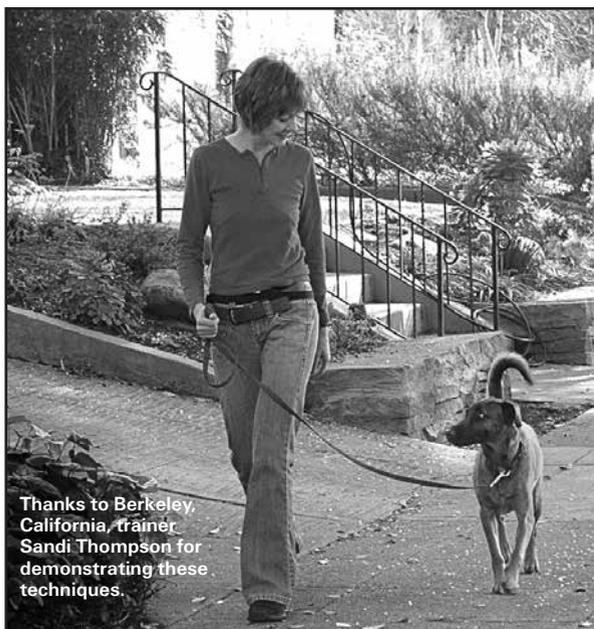
# Good Dog Walking

## Teaching your dog good leash manners is worth all the time it takes.

By Pat Miller, CPDT-KA, CDBC

Dog owners often bemoan the paucity of public places in our society where their dogs are welcome. We band together and lobby mightily to secure small spaces in our communities for dog parks. We struggle to preserve dog-use rights in public common areas. And while I share the dismay over the shrinking access for our canine companions, I know that to a large degree we've brought it on ourselves by our collective carelessness about proper public and leash-walking etiquette.

Picture yourself strolling down Main Street, your faithful companion stepping smartly alongside you on a loose leash. This is the image most pet



Thanks to Berkeley, California, trainer Sandi Thompson for demonstrating these techniques.

**Here's the goal: A dog who can walk with you in a relaxed, attentive manner. The catch: You, too, must be relaxed and attentive! No talking on the phone, clutching at the leash with anxiety, or failing to reinforce your dog's good behavior.**

owners have in mind when they adopt a warm fuzzy puppy, or offer to give a shelter or rescue dog a second chance for a lifelong loving home. In reality, however, walking the dog is more often a chaotic scene of canine dragging human down the sidewalk at the end of the leash, rudely approaching other dogs, jumping on passers-by, and snapping at the heels of joggers. Where did things go wrong?

### What is a walk?

Much of the problem with ill-behaved dogs on leashes stems from the fact that many dog owners have a major misconception about exercise. A walk is a great social outing for you and your dog. It's a good bonding experience, an opportunity for you to stretch your legs, and the perfect time to work on training generalizing your dog's learned behaviors to new environments with new distractions.

What a walk is not, however, is adequate exercise for your dog. Unless you are a marathon runner, or your dog is elderly or has some physical problem, a walk around the block is simply an exercise hors d'oeuvre for your furry pal.

Think about it. If you took your four-legged friend for a hike in the hills, off-leash (assuming it's legal and he'd stay with you and has a decent recall), he'd run circles around you. And at the end of the hike, as you dragged yourself back to the car on tired legs, he'd still happily be making loops around you, begging for another trip around the trails. Face it. For most dogs, a polite walk around the block is rather slow and boring and if the energy level is high, some dogs will

### What you can do . . .

- Know and heed the rules of good leash walking etiquette – **always**.
- Make a commitment to train and practice your dog's good manners while on leash. Work in a low distraction environment at first, gradually increasing the level of distraction until he can be well-behaved in public.
- Be sure your dog is well exercised. Tire him out **before** you take him for a stroll in public.



resort to lunging, barking, and worse, to spice up the experience.

### Train, train, train

Another piece of the problem is simply a failure on the part of many owners to teach their dogs to walk politely on leash. Despite an emphasis on this important behavior in many good manners classes, some humans just aren't motivated to practice reinforcing polite walking enough to make it a habit for them or their dogs. This is especially true in suburban and rural areas, where dogs have yards or farms to run in, as

opposed to city-dwelling dogs whose only outlet for fresh-air exercise may be a walk on leash.

I personally find it very annoying to have a dog constantly yanking on my arm, so even though I live on 80 acres, I take the time to teach my dogs two different cues for walking: "Let's walk," which means "You can act like a dog occasionally stopping to sniff, pee, and explore as long as you don't drag me," and "Heel," which means "Walk at my side, refrain from sniffing, sit when I stop."

## Don't Neglect Dog Walking Etiquette

The final, very significant piece of the walking challenge is proper dog walking etiquette.

The first, most important rule of dog walking etiquette is "Pick up after your dog!" Almost anywhere dogs and people gather – including dog trainer conferences – you can spot at least an occasional owner casually gazing off in the distance, pretending not to notice his or her dog as he "assumes the position," and walking off the instant the dog is done, leaving behind a steamy, aromatic calling card. There's no excuse!

Feces aside, there are a number of other faux pas regularly committed by human/dog pairs out for a stroll. For some odd reason, many dog owners think the rest of the world loves their dog as much as they do. I adore dogs, and still find it quite rude when someone lets their dog charge up to me. That goes double if I have *my* dogs with me, some of whom are more intolerant than I am of rude canine greetings.

"Oh, he's friendly," the owner usually assures.

"Obviously," I think to myself as I brush muddy pawprints from my pants and wipe dog saliva from my face. Or struggle to prevent my dog-reactive Scottie from sinking his teeth into the other dog's smiling lips.

I think many owners misunderstand the current emphasis on socialization. They believe that socialization means letting their dog visit with every other dog they see, rather than recognizing the correct definition: giving their dog positive associations with the world around them.

I teach my dogs and clients that when a dog is on leash she is to be attentive to her owner; no greeting other dogs allowed. The only time my dogs are allowed to greet, visit, and play with other dogs is when I give them express permission to do so – and that's usually off-leash in a safely enclosed play area.

Another walking faux pas is taking dogs where they're clearly not wanted or allowed. "No dogs" signs should be obeyed. Period. Parents who take their children to picnic and play in dog-free parks and playgrounds should not have to

worry about close encounters of the canine kind.

To go one step further – even absent a clearly stated "no dog" designation, if you're in a location where dogs are not expressly allowed *or* prohibited and someone is uncomfortable with the presence of your canine companion, it's best to make a graceful exit.

Still another all-too-common breach of leash etiquette is careless leash-handling.

"Oops! I accidentally dropped my leash and my 70-pound Labrador pounced playfully on your 7-pound Pomeranian. I'll pay the vet bill."

"Oh dear! I wasn't paying attention and my retractable leash wrapped around your bare legs and now you have a rope burn where the cord rubbed when my dog took off. Clumsy me!"

"Oh my, I wasn't looking and our leashes got tangled while our dogs were greeting and now they're fighting. So sorry!"

You get the picture. Make sure you're not the dog owner standing in it!

Wherever you and your dog legally amble, be aware of the rules, and observe the body language and respect the sensitivities of other humans. If a worried parent anxiously gathers her children to her skirts like a mother hen, give that family a wide berth – they clearly aren't "into" dogs. If you and your furry friend are patronizing an outdoor café, sit at the fringes of the seating area with your dog lying on the outside so she's unlikely to annoy other diners with her mere well-behaved presence. Don't allow your dog to lift his leg on the bushes at the shop entrance; take him to a remote location in the parking lot. If he defecates, pull the ever-present plastic bag out of your pocket and pick it up – along with a few others that a less responsible dog owner has left behind. Pay attention to the rules of walking etiquette so no one is given just cause to complain about your dog's behavior.

Let's not risk our dogs' limited access by being foolish, rude, or careless with our dogs' public behavior – or our own.

Teaching your dog to walk politely on leash is more than just a convenience. When you can walk in public with your dog following your moves like a dance partner, he's more likely to stay out of trouble. (This introduces one of my favorite peeves: walking etiquette; see sidebar, on prior page.)

### Teaching "Let's walk"

Remember that your dog's leash is not a steering wheel or handle. It's a safety belt, intended to prevent your dog from leaving. It's not to be used to pull him around, nor should he drag you along behind him.



**Very nice! Leash and clicker in left hand, treats in right hand (hidden from dog). Loose leash, dog at side. Click!**



**Deliver the treat in the location where you want him to be (as seen above), not in front of you so he trips you.**



**Make sure you are not the one who is pulling! A tight grip can make your dog anxious and cause him to pull.**



**If your dog starts pulling, stop and "be a tree." When he looks at or comes back to you, click, treat, and go on.**



**If your dog starts to move out in front of you, turn in an about face. Don't jerk your dog; alert him with a chirp . . .**



**. . . with him now behind you (or back at your side) and the leash slack, click! and treat.**

Whether you're teaching "Heel," or the less formal "Let's walk!" the correct position for the part of the leash that stretches from you to the dog is slack, hanging down in a valley. Be sure when your dog is with you that you keep the leash slack. If you keep it tight, he'll think tension in the leash is normal and correct.

For left-side walking, start with your dog sitting by your left side. I suggest holding leash and clicker in your left hand (same side as the dog) and having a good supply of treats in your right hand. For right-side walking, just switch all the equipment to opposite hands. Make sure there's enough slack in the leash so it stays loose when your dog is in the reinforcement zone you've identified for polite walking. You can also use a waist-belt or otherwise attach your dog's leash to your person, as long as he's not big enough to knock you down and drag you.

Use your "Let's walk!" cue in a cheerful tone of voice and start walking forward. The instant your dog begins to move forward with you, use an audible marker, such as the click! of a clicker or the word, "Yes!" and give your dog a treat. (The click or "Yes!" is used to "mark" the behavior you want the dog to repeat, and the treat reinforces that behavior.)

At first, click! and treat very rapidly, with almost every step. Remember, you're not teaching "Heel!" right now. Click! and treat as long as there's no tension in the leash, although I do suggest you choose one side and reinforce on that side only, to keep him from crossing back and forth in front of you. When your dog realizes it's worthwhile to stay within a designated radius of his generous, treat-dispensing machine (you!), you can gradually reduce the rate of reinforcement.

Careful! If you reduce the rate too quickly or too predictably, you'll lose the behavior. As you gradually reduce the rate of reinforcement, be sure to click! and treat randomly so your dog never knows for sure when the next treat is coming. If he knows you're going to reinforce every tenth step, he can get careless for nine steps, and zero back in on you on the tenth. This phenomenon is called an interval scallop or a post-reinforcement pause. We

humans are creatures of habit, and easily fall into predictable patterns. And our dogs are masters at identifying patterns.

The manner in which you hold and deliver your treats is critical to success with polite walking. When you walk, have the treats in your hand but hidden behind your hip on the side opposite your dog. If you hold them in your hand on the same side where your dog can see or smell them, it will be harder to "fade" (slowly eliminate) the presence of the treats later on. If you hold them in front of you, your dog will keep stepping in front of you to watch your hand (treats), and you'll keep stepping on him.

To deliver treats, wait for a second after the click! as you keep walking, then bring your hand across the front of your body and feed the treat. Quickly move your hand behind your hip as soon as you've delivered the treat. Feeding the treat in the location where you want your dog to be reinforces that position. If you're teaching him to walk on the left, feed on the left side. If you're teaching him to walk on the right, feed on the right. If you feed the treat in front of you, you'll reinforce that position, and you'll be stepping on him again.

Remember to click!, then give him a treat after a brief pause. If you begin to move your treat hand toward him before the click!, he's just thinking about food rather than what he did to make you click the clicker.

For the same reason, you want to lure (hold the treat in the position where you'd like him to be) as little as possible during leash walking. Luring will keep him in position, but it interferes with his ability to think. Your goal is to get him to realize that walking in the desired reinforcement zone makes you click! the clicker, and earns him a reward.

### Teaching the "Heel"

If your goal is a show-ring heel, continue to shape for a more precise position as previously described, until your dog will walk reliably with his shoulder in line with your leg. Then change your cue from "Let's walk!" to "Heel!" so your dog can distinguish between "now we're going for a

relaxed stroll,” and “now we’re working for that perfect 200-point score.”

Of course, it sounds good in theory, but can’t possibly be that simple. There will be times when your dog forges ahead of you and tightens the leash, or stops to sniff something of interest as you walk past him. There are positive solutions for those challenges as well.

When you have to pass a very tempting distraction, go ahead and lure, briefly, to get your dog past it. Put a tasty treat at the end of his nose; the more tempting the distraction, the higher value the treat and walk him past. As his polite walking behavior improves, your need for luring should diminish.

### **About face**

Direction changes can be useful in teaching polite leash walking. When your dog starts to move out in front of you, before he gets to the end of his leash turn around and walk in the opposite direction.

Do this gently; you don’t want him to hit the end of the leash with a jerk if he doesn’t turn with you! As you turn, use your cheerful voice and a kissy noise to let him know you’ve changed direction. When he notices and turns to come with you, click! and offer a treat. He’s now behind you, and you’ll have lots of opportunities to click! and treat while he’s in the loose-leash zone as he catches up and walks with you.

### **Be a tree**

There will be times when your dog pulls ahead of you on a tight leash. This is a great opportunity to play “Be a tree.” When the leash tightens, stop walking. Just stand still like a tree and wait. No cues or verbal corrections to your dog. Be sure to hug your leash arm to your side so he can’t pull you forward.

Eventually, he’ll wonder why his forward progress has stopped, and look back at you to see why you’re not coming. When he does, the leash will slacken. In that instant, click! and feed him a treat at your side. The click! marks the loose leash behavior; he’ll have to return to

the reinforcement zone to get the treat. Then move forward again, using a higher rate of reinforcement if necessary, until he’s walking politely with you again.

### **Penalty yards**

If “Be a tree” is not working, add “Penalty yards.” Your dog usually pulls to get somewhere or to get to something. If he won’t look back at you when you make like a tree, back up slowly with gentle pressure on the leash, no jerking, so he’s moving farther away from his goal. This is negative punishment; his pulling on leash behavior makes the good thing go farther away. When the leash slackens, click! and treat, or simply resume progress toward the good thing as his reward.

### **Go sniff!**

Sniffing is a natural, normal dog behavior. If you never let your dog sniff, you’re thwarting this important hard-wired behavior. He may become frustrated and aroused if he’s constantly thwarted, so when you’re doing polite walking together, sometimes give him permission to sniff.

If he stops to sniff keep walking, putting gentle pressure on his leash to bring him with you, giving him a click! and treat as soon as he moves forward. When you know you’re approaching a good sniffing spot, however, you can give him permission by saying “Go sniff!” Give him enough leash to reach the spot without pulling, even running forward with him if necessary. You can also use “Go sniff” as a reinforcer for a stretch of nice leash walking!

# Walking an Excited Dog

## Five Things to do When Your Dog Gets Overexcited for a Walk

By Pat Miller, CPDT-KA, CDBC

You contemplate taking your dog for a walk with mixed emotions. You love the idea of going for a companionable stroll through the neighborhood together, but it's a major hassle to get out the door. When you pick up his leash he becomes the Tasmanian Devil – body slamming you, racing around the foyer, and bouncing off the plate glass door with such intensity you're afraid he'll crash right through it. Here are five suggestions for turning this potential disaster into the enjoyable outing you dream of.

**1.** Exercise first. Spend 15-20 minutes tossing a ball for your dog in the backyard, playing “Run upstairs to get a treat from the Manners Minder,” or providing intense mental exercise with a heavy duty shaping session. You'll take the edge off his excitement, reduce his energy level, and make leashing-up and walking more relaxed and enjoyable for both of you.

**2.** Teach him to “Say please.” Reinforce your dog's “sit” behavior so thoroughly that “sit” becomes his default behavior – the behavior he chooses to offer when he doesn't know what else to do. Then wait for him to sit (say “please”) to make all good things happen: sit for his dinner bowl; sit to be petted; sit for you to throw his ball; sit to have his leash put on; and sit to make the door open.

**3.** Pick up his leash throughout the day. He gets amped up when you touch his leash because it always means the two of you are going for a walk. Of course he gets excited! If you pick up his leash numerous times throughout the day, sometimes draping it over your neck and wearing it for a while, sometimes carrying it from room to room,

sometimes picking it up and putting it back down, sometimes clipping it on his collar and then unclipping it, the leash will no longer be a reliable predictor of walks, and he won't have any reason to get all excited about it. Note: This will take a while. Hope springs eternal in the canine heart.

**4.** Use negative punishment. No, that's not a bonk on the head. It means setting up the situation so that doing the behavior you don't want causes a good thing to go away. Here's how it would work in this case: If, when you pick up the leash, he goes bonkers (the behavior you don't want), say “Oops!” in a cheerful tone of voice (what's known as a “no reward marker,” it simply tells him no reward is forthcoming), set the leash down, and walk away. When he settles down, pick the leash up again. If he sits (say please!), proceed with attaching the leash and going for a walk. If he winds up again, do another “Oops!” and set the leash down. You're teaching him that getting excited makes the opportunity for a walk go away; staying calm makes walks happen.

**5.** Reduce the significance of other “walk cues.” Other things you do as part of your walk preparation routine can also feed his energy – getting out treats, putting on your jacket, grabbing your cell phone and keys . . . The more you randomize your ritual, the less these steps contribute to his growing excitement over the pending event, and the calmer he'll stay as you leash him and walk out the door. For example, put your keys and cell phone in your jacket pocket before you eat breakfast. Happy walking!



**Good things come to those who wait – and they come even sooner to those who help! You'd never guess from this photo that this young dog is active and obsessed with tennis balls. She's learned**

**well that in order to go out and play, she must remain absolutely calm while her harness is put on.**

# How to Train Proper Leash Walking - Pull Over!

## How to reform a puller into a more pleasant walking companion.

By Pat Miller, CPDT-KA, CDBC

One of the more frustrating experiences for positive dog trainers is watching their clients being dragged by their dogs across the parking lot toward their cars, just moments after training class is dismissed. “Dang,” we sometimes think, “Will they ever teach their dogs to walk politely on-leash? What part of ‘Don’t reinforce your dog for pulling!’ didn’t they hear?”

Of course, it’s equally frustrating for dog owners when their dogs drag them. And the training solution – stopping every time the dog pulls – gets tiresome. Owners often wonder if they will ever be able to go anywhere without handfuls of dog treats in their pockets. In some cases, owners are actually injured when their dogs yank on their arms, or even pull them off their feet. Many dogs have their social outings severely restricted, simply because their owners have difficulty controlling them on-leash.

If none of us want dogs to pull, then why is it that so many dogs do pull? There are several reasons:

- Their humans haven’t managed to reinforce polite leash walking strongly enough to overcome the high-value competing reinforcers in their dogs’ environments.
- Pulling is sometimes reinforced (by allowing the dog to go where he wants when he pulls) and behaviors that are intermittently reinforced become very durable/resistant to extinction (it’s hard to make then go away).



**Even small and medium-sized dogs can pull hard enough to make walks uncomfortable or impossible for their owners. Reducing and eliminating pulling can take time, especially if the dog has pulled for months or years. But it’s so worth the investment of time and trouble!**

- Dogs are confused by owners who sometimes want their dogs to walk in perfect heel position, and sometimes let their dogs wander, sniff, and yes, pull.
- It’s just not a natural behavior. Unlike sit, down, touch, jump, and many of the other behaviors we put on cue, dogs rarely plod sedately along in a straight line of their own accord. Since it’s not a behavior that comes naturally to them, we have to work hard to make it reinforcing and convince them it’s a behavior worth offering.

### What you can do . . .

- Have a clear mental image of the leash-walking behavior you strive to train.
- Prevent your dog from being reinforced for pulling on the leash by stopping, backing up, or walking the other direction when your dog pulls.
- Provide generous and varied reinforcement for approximations of the leash-walking behavior you want, in order to shape your end result.



## Avoidance behavior

Training your dog to walk politely on-leash used to be so simple, some folks say. When he stepped out of position you simply yanked, hard, on his choke or prong collar. He learned to march lock-step next to you to avoid being garroted, and all was well.

Only it wasn't that simple. I used to train the "old" way, and we still had plenty of owners dragged across the parking lot by their dogs after class. Besides, dogs get hurt that way.

Some of the same owners who are inconsistent about reinforcement now were just as inconsistent about punishment then. Others were (rightfully) horrified at the prospect of yanking on their dogs' necks hard enough to suppress natural sniffing and pulling behaviors, and they just ignored our instructions to "jerk harder!"

At any rate, many dogs who were "trained" to walk politely on-leash were really only trained to avoid the punishment of the collar, which is why dogs still wore their choke chains in the obedience competition ring (many still do) as a not-so-subtle reminder of what could happen if they stepped out of line. This, despite the American Kennel Club's odd pretense that you're not allowed to use "training equipment" in the ring. What is a choke chain if not training equipment? And we all know dog owners who still walk their dogs in prong collars months – even years – after completing old-fashioned training classes. The dog didn't really learn how to walk politely on-leash; it's just avoidance behavior; he doesn't want those prongs to dig into his neck!

## A partnership

Trainers and owners who subscribe to a positive approach to training are committed to making the process a partnership, with the dog willingly and happily participating in the behaviors asked of him. The exact opposite of the avoidance model, positive training asks the dog to voluntarily choose to offer the behavior so we can reinforce him for his choice.



**It's *much* easier to teach puppies to walk on a loose leash than it is to teach dogs who have a lot of pulling practice. Start your pup out right (preferably in a positive puppy kindergarten class), stay consistent, and she may never learn to pull.**

The less natural and more complicated the behavior, the more practice – and reinforcement – the dog needs, to make the behavior a well-conditioned habit. Failures of leash training are most often a function of insufficient amount and value of reinforcement, lack of commitment to the necessary amount of practice, and impatience (increasing distraction and decreasing reinforcement too quickly).

## Attention!

Realize that attention and focus behaviors are a hugely important piece of polite leash walking, and ones that you can practice with your dog separately from the actual leash-walking part. If your dog is paying attention to you, he's not trying to sniff the bush you're passing. You can practice attention exercises with your dog any place, any time, simply by reinforcing him with treats, attention, or a favorite toy any time he voluntarily glances your way. Shape for longer duration of attention by very gradually (a second or two increase at a time) waiting a little longer before you reinforce him for looking at you.

To get your dog's attention when he hasn't offered it voluntarily, teach him that a "Look at me!" cue is followed by a high value reinforcer. Say "Watch!" or whatever you want your cue to be, and feed a piece of something very tasty. When he has made a strong classical association

with the cue (“Watch!” makes chicken happen!) you will be able to use your “Watch” cue to get his attention, even if he’s on-leash and distracted by a scent, a scampering squirrel, or the sight of another dog.

### **Age differences**

Of course, polite walking lessons are best taught in puppyhood, before your baby dog has the opportunity to be repeatedly reinforced for pulling. Most young puppies naturally cling to the heels of their humans because they’re not confident enough to explore the world on their own. Start reinforcing this wonderful behavior early and often, and you build a foundation of a polite walking behavior that will make future leash training much easier for you. Your pup doesn’t even have to be on-leash for you to reinforce him for walking with you; just convince him from day one that being close to you while you walk makes very good things happen.

Once again, this proves the value of enrolling your puppy in a good, positive puppy training class as soon as possible. Sometime between the age of eight weeks and 16 weeks your pup will likely get bolder, and more willing to leave you to investigate his surroundings. A well-run positive puppy class is the ideal controlled environment in which to be able to reinforce him for walking with you even when there’s really interesting stuff nearby – like other puppies and humans.

When choke chains were de rigueur, training classes didn’t take puppies until the age of early adolescence, at six months, in part due to the potential for damage to tender puppy tracheas from enthusiastic jerks on the leash. With the advent of gentler training methods it has become perfectly safe – and appropriate – to start puppies in class at the age of eight weeks, as long as they are kept current on vaccinations throughout the class.

If it’s too late to start early, it’s still not too late to teach your dog polite leash-walking. It just means you’ll need more diligence and commitment to the training process to convince your adult dog that pulling on the leash no longer pays off. You will likely experience more and stronger pulling; you may need higher-value reinforcers

and a higher rate of reinforcement; and you will probably find your dog reverting to pulling behavior more easily around novel or highly rewarding stimuli.

When you replace an existing unwanted behavior (pulling) with an incompatible one (walking politely) the original behavior never completely goes away (extinguishes). It lurks silently in the background, waiting for an opportunity to be triggered again (what’s called a “spontaneous recovery”). If that happens, you have to do the work, again, to prevent reinforcement for the pulling, and to reinforce the incompatible behavior that you prefer in its place.

If you’re prompt and consistent about it, pulling should extinguish again with relative ease. If you’re inconsistent – if you sometimes reinforce pulling by allowing the dog to move forward with a tight leash – it’s even harder to extinguish pulling behavior. Trainers actually put some behaviors on an “intermittent schedule of reinforcement” in order to make them very “durable” (resistant to extinction). On an intermittent schedule, your dog learns if he just does the behavior often enough, like playing a slot machine, eventually the reinforcement will come.

### **Separate but equal**

Does this mean your dog always has to walk in step by your side, never looking to the right or left? Not at all. You can teach your dog two different leash-walking behaviors; you just have to use two different cues, being clear about which behavior you reinforce at any given time, and making sure neither one involves reinforcing your dog for pulling.

For my dogs, “Heel!” means, “Do that pretty obedience walking where you prance by my left side, gaze adoringly into my eyes and sit with your shoulder by my left knee when I stop.” “Let’s walk!” means “We’re heading in the same direction and you can wander and sniff a little as long as you don’t pull.” That way, we can go on some walks in tune with my agenda: get from Point A to Point B in the most efficient manner; and some that are in tune with my dog’s agenda: taking time to stop and smell the pee-mail.

How do you teach your dog to walk politely? First, have a clear mental image of the behavior you want. Second, prevent your dog from being reinforced for behavior you don't want. Next, generously reinforce approximations of the behavior you do want; it's a shaping process. I teach my dogs two leash-walking behaviors:

### How to heel

My mental image of "Heel" is my dog walking at my left side with her shoulder in line with my knee. She watches me closely so she can read my body language and anticipate my movements. She turns when I turn, changes speed when I go faster or slower, and stops and sits when I stop.

■ I prevent her from being reinforced for pulling by stopping or even backing up when she tightens the leash. I try to prevent her from reaching the end of the leash by using a high rate of reinforcement when she's within the bounds of the leash-length. As training progresses, I reinforce (with a click! or another marker such as the word "Yes!" and a treat) only

for closer and closer approximations to actual heel position.

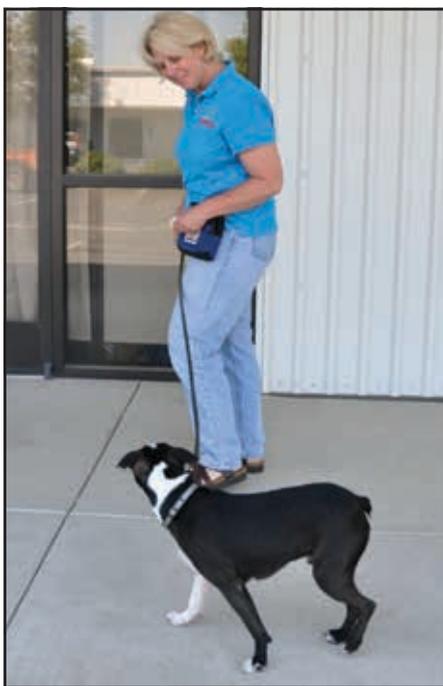
■ Initially, I may reinforce (click and treat) her any time she's close to the position I'd like her to be in, on my left side, as we walk. I also click and treat for any attention (direct eye contact) she gives me. I'll add the "Heel" cue when she's staying reasonably close to my left leg.

■ I talk to her in a cheerful tone to keep her happy and attentive. I also change speed and direction frequently to keep the exercise interesting for her. I want her to think that "Heel!" is a fun game, not a boring trudge in a circle.

■ As she tends to stay closer and closer to my left side (because that's where I deliver the treats) I gradually raise the criteria for her to earn a reward (click and treat), by looking for (and clicking and treating) increasingly closer approximations of a perfect heel, until she eventually is walking in perfect heel position, her shoulder at my left knee. I also reinforce (click and



Trainer Sarah Richardson, of Chico, California, starts a training session with Thomas the Boston Terrier, who is transfixed with everything but Sarah.



Sarah engages Thomas with bright "happy talk." The moment he turns to look at her, she marks the moment with a click and gives him a treat.



Sarah uses a high rate of reinforcement – delivering more treats, faster – the closer Thomas comes to the heel position. She also keeps up the praise.

treat) her for sitting when we halt, and gradually shape the sit so she learns that to sit in a perfect heel position as well.

### Let's walk

This is the behavior most dog owners (at least those who aren't into rally and obedience competitions) want from their dogs: a nice, leisurely stroll around the block with canine as compatible companion – not glued to the leg, but also not dragging the owner down the sidewalk.

■ Here's my mental image: my dog ranges within 5.5 feet of me on her 6-foot leash, on my left side. She stops and sniffs if she wants, but also responds if I ask for her attention. If I give her the "Let's walk" cue, she moves forward with me again.

■ I prevent her from being reinforced for pulling by stopping or even backing up when she tightens the leash. I try to prevent her from reaching the end of the leash by using a high rate of reinforcement when she's within the leash-length.

■ As training progresses I reduce the rate of reinforcement so that, eventually, my dog needs only very occasional clicks and treats on our walks. Of course, I always increase rate of reinforcement if I think circumstances demand it – such as the appearance of very exciting distractions.

■ Since this is a less precise behavior than "Heel," I don't have to spend time shaping to a very specific position. I do like my dogs to stay on one side rather than criss-crossing back-and-forth or worse, wrapping around me, so I shape for a left-side "Let's walk" by gradually raising criteria until I'm reinforcing only loose-leash walking on my left side.

### Technique

I'll leave you with a final word or three on technique:

■ Remember to click for behavior (Click! That behavior just earned you a treat!) and feed for position. If, for example, you're shaping "Heel" in the early stages, you may click for a behavior that's still far from perfect heel position, but if



Thomas responds as much to Sarah's verbal encouragement as the high-value treats. She varies her pace and direction to keep him interested.



Note: Pat Miller recommends that you use your right hand to feed treats, so the dog doesn't fixate on your hand.

It's important to deliver the treats to your dog in the exact place you'd like him to be when heeling: at the left seam of your pants.



Thomas stops and sits (without being cued to do so) when Sarah stops. Click, praise, and jackpot! This is the start of a truly beautiful behavior for Thomas.

you feed the treat at the side of your left knee, you'll encourage your dog to stay closer to that perfect spot.

■ Many trainers carry their treat in the left hand to encourage left-side walking. This is actually a bit of luring, and makes it harder to eventually fade out the presence of the treat. I prefer to hold treats in my right hand (leash in my left) with my hand out of sight behind my right hip, and deliver across my front to the side of my left knee after I click. This way your dog has to think about where he needs to be to earn the click, not just follow the tempting scent of the treat in your left hand.

■ I don't generally wear a treat bag; I prefer to wear loose clothing where I can stash bags of treats in pockets. A treat bag is a flashing neon sign to your dog that now he has the opportunity to earn treats. I'd rather my dogs know they may be reinforced at any time, not just when I'm wearing the bag.

■ Vary your reinforcers. As the late positive trainer Patty Ruzzo frequently said, be variable and unpredictable. Don't always make it about food treats. If your dog never knows when, where, or how you might reinforce him, he has to stay attentive to you; he won't want to miss anything! My personal choice is this: If I click my dog gets a food treat; if I use some other reinforcer I use my verbal "Yes!" marker. Now, go walk your dog! Thanks to Sarah Richardson, CPDT-KA, CDBC, of The Canine Connection, in Chico, California, for modeling the techniques discussed in this article.

# Tools of the Trade

The basic tools you need to teach your dog to walk politely don't change, despite advances in technology and understanding of canine cognition. Here are example of tools I like, and tools I avoid.

LIKE

LEASHES

DON'T LIKE

**For regular use:** 6-foot leather, hemp, cotton, or nylon. These are comfortable for your hands, long enough to allow leash to be slack, and not so long you have spaghetti in your hands.

**For occasional use:** 20 to 40-foot long line, for use when walking with your dog in open areas. These allow you to reinforce polite walking with a "go free" run after a bunny or ball.

**For limited use:** 2 to 4-foot leash, for keeping your dog close when walking in close quarters around other dogs or humans.

**Chain leash:** Can hurt your hands.

**Retractable leash:** Reinforces dogs for pulling; can allow accidental, unintended freedom; can tangle around other dogs and humans. Can amputate digits.

**Stretch (bungee) leash:** Reinforces dogs for pulling; can allow unintentional contact with other dogs and humans.



LIKE

CONNECTING LEASH TO DOG

DON'T LIKE

**Flat collar:** Cotton, hemp, leather, nylon. Includes martingale collars. Sole purpose is to hold tags and allow attachment of leash for restraint; not used aversively.

**Front clip harness:** Now a wide variety of brands available, my favorite is now the No-Pull Freedom Harness, available from Wiggles, Wags and Whiskers ([wiggleswagswhiskers.com](http://wiggleswagswhiskers.com) or 866-WIG-WAGS). With two points of attachment, this front-clip allows for physical control if your dog pulls, the back-clip for normal leash walking. Other preferred brands are the Sense-ible and Sense-ation harnesses (available from [softtouchconcepts.com](http://softtouchconcepts.com) or 866-305-6145).



**Waist belt:** Technically, this attaches a dog to a human, but it's still useful in preventing reinforcement for pulling. When you hold a leash and your dog pulls, your arm moves forward – reinforcement! It's easier to bend your knees and brace your body against a pull. Two sources for waist belts I like are [whitepineoutfitters.com](http://whitepineoutfitters.com) (715-372-5627) and Sarah Kalnajs' [bluedogtraining.com](http://bluedogtraining.com) (608-213-5304). **Do not use a waist belt if your dog is large enough to pull you down and drag you.**



**Aversive collars:** Shock (also called "electronic" and "e"-collars), prong collars, choke chains. I dislike these for obvious reasons: they all work by avoidance – the application of an aversive to get the dog to stop pulling.

**Head halters:** Although they have some useful application and many positive trainers use them, most dogs find head halters very aversive. (In all fairness, some dogs also find front-clip harnesses very aversive, but the percentage is quite small compared to those who hate head halters.) In order to use a head halter successfully, you must condition your dog to love it; for some dogs this takes a considerable amount of conditioning, and some dogs never learn to love them. For a video on conditioning your dog to a head halter, see Jean Donaldson's excellent video at [abronline.org/videos.php](http://abronline.org/videos.php), then click on "Conditioning an Emotional Response."

**No-pull harnesses:** These harnesses (as opposed to front-clip harnesses) tighten under the armpits. This novel, somewhat aversive sensation slows the dog down. They are usually complicated to put on the dog, and many dogs learn to ignore the novel stimulus fairly quickly.

LIKE

REINFORCERS

ALSO LIKE!

Since "reinforcer" implies something the dog will work to acquire (he likes it!) the ones I don't like are whatever the dog doesn't like. It's important to remember that it doesn't matter how much you like it (like hugging or petting your dog) – if the dog doesn't, it's not a reinforcer. Some reinforcers that many dogs find valuable enough to work for are:

**Good quality treats.** Of course, some dogs will also work happily for poor quality treats (garbage food) but I prefer to avoid those if possible. Note that "good-quality treats" include a broad range of "people food" – chicken, steak, salmon, and more, as well as high-quality treats that are made for dogs.

**Happy praise and petting.** Some dogs really are reinforced by petting and praise – but not all. We humans find it very reinforcing to talk to and touch our dogs, so we do it a lot, even when our dogs don't necessarily love it. If you want to use petting and/or praise to reinforce your dog's leash behavior, be honest with yourself about whether your dog really loves it. Not just tolerates it, but loves it. In fact, have an unbiased dog-person give you an honest appraisal about whether your dog likes it enough to make it a useful reinforcer.

**Run/chase.** Lots of dogs find a game of "run after my human" a very high-value reinforcer. If yours does, you can use a "Chase me!"

cue to reward your dog for a stretch of good leash manners. Be sure to run fast so your dog really gets happy-rompy as he gallops after you. It's also a good reinforcer for his response to your "Watch me" cue.

**Play with a toy.** There is huge reinforcement value in getting your dog very excited, maybe even a little obsessed, about favorite playthings – a tug toy, a squeaky, a ball... Agility competitors know this well – watch how many whip out a tug toy at the end of an agility run. "Tug leashes" (part leash, part tug toy) are increasingly popular; see [cleanrun.com](http://cleanrun.com) and type "leashes tugging" into the "search" box. Or call them at 800-311-6503.)



**Go sniff.** If you're asking your dog to ignore tempting distractions for a stretch of polite walking, use the distraction as a reinforcer when you're ready to give him a break from being attentive to you.

**Any other favored activity.** Splash in the creek, jump in the pond, roll in deer poop, dig in the groundhog hole, lift your leg on a fire hydrant, greet the neighbor dog through the fence, say hi to the baby in the stroller (with Mom's permission, of course), chase after a squirrel – all of these favorite activities, and more, can be used as reinforcers for polite walking. Be creative with your leash walking reinforcers – your dog will love you for it!

# Utilizing Target Training for Better Leash Walking

## Use target training to teach your dog to walk without pulling, open and close doors, go to his bed, and much more.

By Pat Miller, CPDT-KA, CDBC

Does your dog know how to target? If not, the two of you may be missing out on one of the most versatile behaviors to come along since the rise in popularity of the positive dog training philosophy.

Targeting simply means teaching your dog to touch a designated body part to a designated spot the end of a commercially produced target stick, your hand, an object, a location, or anything at all. While much targeting is done with the dog's nose as the designated body part, you can



Cooper is 11 years old and he picked up nose-targeting in about a minute and a half. We're going to build his skill at targeting to keep his attention on us as we pass fences that contain barking dogs, which usually makes him anxious and reactive.

actually teach your dog to touch with a front or hind foot, his hip, shoulder, ear, or any other moveable piece of his anatomy.

We teach nose targeting in my Basic Adult and Puppy classes. Whenever I introduce the exercise to a new group I get puzzled stares from most of the humans in the class. I can just see them thinking, "Why on earth would I want to teach my dog to do that?!" proof that the concept of targeting still has miles to go before gaining familiarity and acceptance in the mainstream pet dog community.

The list of reasons why you want to teach your dog to touch is as long as your arm, and then some. From the serious to the sublime, targeting is useful and fun for canines and humans alike. You can use targeting to teach good manners and dog behaviors such as "Go to your place" and to help your dog learn polite leash walking. "Touch the target" can be used as an emergency recall, or your dog's cue to ask to go outside.

It also has widespread application for a number of service dog behaviors, can be used to teach agility dogs to hit the contact zones, and give search dogs a tool to communicate that they've located sign of the missing person (or pet). Finally, targeting can come into play with an endless variety of entertaining tricks and games. There's something for everyone.

### Getting Ready

It's almost imperative that you use a reward marker the click! of a clicker or some other quick, sharp sound or word for fast and effective target training. The "touch" behavior happens so quickly that it's difficult for the dog to understand what

### What you can do . . .

- Teach your dog basic targeting with nose and paw and apply them to his basic good manners behaviors.
- Consider targeting as an alternative tool for solving training challenges that have proven difficult with other techniques, such as pulling on leash.
- Demonstrate the joys of targeting to your dog-owning friends; get together for targeting parties!



he's being reinforced for absent a conditioned sound that marks the instant of rewardable behavior. If you have not already done so, start by "charging" your clicker teaching your dog that "click!" (or whatever sound you choose to use) means he just earned a reward. Note: If you want to use a verbal marker instead of a clicker, I suggest not using the word "Good." We frequently tell our dogs they're good dogs just because we love them. Your reward marker needs to have a very specific meaning: "That behavior just earned a treat!" You don't want to have to feed your dog a treat every time you tell him he's a good dog! I suggest using the word "Yes!" or even the word "Click!" as verbal markers.

Charging the clicker is one of the easiest things you'll ever teach your dog. It's classic Pavlov (classical conditioning) simply giving the dog a strong positive association between the click or other marker and yummy food. So, assuming you use a clicker, just "click!" it a half-dozen to a dozen times, following each click with a tasty treat, and you will soon be good to go. To test if the clicker is "charged," wait for your dog to look away and click the clicker once. His head should swivel back to you in anticipation of the treat. If it doesn't, supply yourself with treats that are more irresistible, and click and treat a few more times.

A small percentage of dogs are afraid of the sound of the clicker. When you first introduce it, click it inside a pocket to muffle the sound a bit. If at any time you notice an adverse reaction to the clicker from your dog, charge and use a verbal marker instead.

### Basic nose targeting

The easiest body part to start with is the nose or a front paw, since dogs use those two body parts almost exclusively to explore their world. My preference is nose targeting the one we teach in our beginner classes because it's easy to elicit the behavior, and doesn't reinforce dogs who might already be a little too free with the use of their paws. Foot is my second choice for an easy and useful targeting behavior.

You can capture targeting to your hand, which means getting the complete "touch" behavior,



This Cane Corso pup tries to take the ball on the end of the target stick into her mouth. After being clicked and rewarded for just touching the ball, not mouthing it, she catches on.



At six months of age, the pup is big and strong and getting bigger and stronger all the time. But with the target stick, teaching her to heel off-leash is a snap!

clicking and treating when he does or you can shape it which means clicking and treating for "successive approximations" of moving his nose closer and closer to your hand.

Dogs tend to naturally sniff an offered hand, so to "capture" a touch, offer your open palm to your dog at nose level with your fingers pointing toward the ground. If your dog thinks this is an invitation to "Shake," offer your closed fist instead.

When he sniffs your offered hand, mark the desired behavior with the click! of a clicker (or verbal marker, such as "Yes!") and give the dog a

treat. Repeat until you see him deliberately bump his nose into your hand because he's figured out he can make you click and treat by touching you. Then add your verbal cue (for example, "Touch!") just before his nose touches. In short order you'll be able to prompt him to target to your hand.

Of course, it's not always quite that easy. Your dog may sniff the hand a few times and then stop, either because your hand is no longer interesting to him, or because he's just focusing on the source of the treats. If he needs a jump start, rub something tasty on your hand and offer it for a sniff or a lick. You're on your way!

Once you've established the targeting behavior to your hand, you can transfer it to another object. Hold the target object in your hand, cue the behavior, and give him a click and treat when he touches the target. Fade the presence of your hand by moving it away from the target object until he'll touch it by itself.

Practice targeting to enough different objects, and your dog will happily touch any object you indicate, the first time you ask. You can even name several objects and teach him to touch different ones on cue, a behavior called target discrimination.

Any time you want to add a new cue for a behavior, use the new cue, followed by the old one. When you name an object, you're really just giving that specific object a new cue. For example, if you set a gallon water jug on the floor and say "Touch!" your dog touches it. Now say "Jug, touch!" After enough repetitions ("enough" will vary, depending on the dog and how touch-savvy he is), you can drop the "Touch" cue and just say "Jug!" to get your dog to touch the water bottle.

### Applied Targeting

Ready to start making use of your dog's new behavior? Try these:

- **Polite leash walking.** This is one of the most useful applications of targeting. When your dog starts to lag or move too far ahead of you, position your target hand or the end of the target

stick where you'd like the dog to be (traditionally at your left side) and ask him to "Touch!" Click and treat when he's in position.

To keep him there, give your "Touch" cue more frequently, and reinforce randomly very frequently at first, then less so as he gets better at polite walking. If you have a small dog and don't want to bend over for him to touch your hand, teach him to touch a target stick and offer that as you walk, instead.

- **Close a door/drawer.** Teach your dog to target to a plastic disk (like a cottage cheese container lid) in your hand. Then stick the lid to a cupboard door or drawer with rubber glue or double-sided tape at your dog's nose level, and ask him to touch it there.

You may need to have your hand near the lid at first, and fade the presence of your hand or not, if your dog is really adept at targeting. When he'll consistently touch the lid on cue, shape for harder touches by only clicking the ones that move the door, at least a little. Eventually he'll close the door all the way.

If you don't want a plastic lid on your cupboard forever, fade its presence by cutting it into increasingly smaller circles, until there's no lid left and your dog has transferred the "touch" to the door itself.

- **Turn on/off a lamp.** Gotta love those touch on/touch off lamps; they're perfect for target training! Show your dog the lamp and ask him to "Touch!" If your dog still needs some assistance, put your hand behind the lamp to help him touch it and gradually fade the presence of your hand.

Be careful with this one! I had a friend whose husband accused her of not leaving the light on when she went to bed before he did until they realized their Sheltie was turning off the light after her mistress fell asleep.

- **Go to your place.** Get out another cottage cheese lid (since you cut up the last one) and stick it where you want your dog's "place" to be. Ask him to target to the lid from increasing distances,

until you can send him to his spot from across the room, and eventually even from another room.

When he's targeting to his spot easily, start asking him to lie down when he gets there. Then change his cue for the behavior to "Place!" –or whatever cue you prefer by using the new cue first, followed by the old cue, or "Place Touch!" Eventually you can drop the "touch" and he'll go to his spot and lie down when you say "Place!"

You can teach him that one particular place is his spot, or you can generalize the behavior and teach him that anywhere you stick a cottage cheese lid is his spot.

■ **Play ball.** Teach your dog to push a large ball with his nose one he can't pick up in his mouth. The hard plastic Jolly Ball is perfect for this, and comes in a variety of sizes from small to very large. When he's learned this one you can sit on the floor across from him and the two of you can roll the ball back and forth a great game to play when your dog needs exercise and it's too cold or stormy to go outside. This behavior can also turn your dog into a great babysitter as long as you remember that dogs and small children must always be under direct adult supervision.

■ **Be brave.** This is another application of classical conditioning helping your dog develop an association between two different things. Most dogs love targeting once they've learned it. What's not to love? You're like a treat vending machine your dog pushes the button (your hand), he gets a treat. He pushes the button, he gets a treat. As a result, he has a very positive association a "Yay!!" feeling when you ask him to touch.

Now, say you're walking down the street with your dog on leash and you have to a garbage collection truck. As you approach, the worker drops a metal garbage can, sending it clattering across the sidewalk 25 feet in front of you. Your dog happens to be a little fearful of loud noises and is now afraid to walk past the can, even though the garbage truck is long gone.



Dogs with longer noses may be better candidates for nose-targeting! This Pug presses what she can of her nose – her lips, actually – to a target on a door, while keeping her eyes on the treat she's about to get.



As the criterion for a click! and treat was increased to "move the door by pushing it," the Pug got stuck. A tiny push on the door from a helper was needed before she understood that she had to push harder and maintain contact as the door moved to earn the click and reward.

You offer your hand and ask your dog to touch. His brain goes "Yay! Targeting!" and he takes a step forward to touch your hand. You target him past the garbage can, and since he can't be happy about targeting and afraid of the can at the same time, and because his association with targeting is so positive, not only do you get him past the can, but the positive association has rubbed off and now he thinks garbage cans are pretty cool, too.

### Paw Targeting

Some behaviors work better as paw targets than nose targets, especially things that require a little more "oomph" behind the touch turning appliances on and off, for example. Others work equally well either way, and if you teach you dog both, you can choose which one to ask for.

## Right On Target

If you've been bitten by the targeting bug, chances are good that you, like this article, have only scratched the surface. Authors Mandy Book and Cheryl S. Smith take an in-depth look at targeting – including targeting with little-used body parts such as hind paws, hips, and ears! – in this excellent book on the subject. Filled with positive training techniques, detailed descriptions, and more ways to target than you can dream of, this is the perfect addition to your library if you're looking for more fun and creative ways to target with your dog.



- **Five more minutes.** Pushing the snooze button on the alarm an obvious application, but don't let him make you late for work!

- **Go to your place.** Instead of a lid on the wall, teach him to target with his paws to a rug or mat on the floor.

- **Turning off the TV remote.** For an additional challenge, teach him to do this only after you fall asleep watching TV!

For dogs who are naturally “pawsy,” paw targeting is a breeze. Put something on the floor, and when your dog paws at it, click and treat. When he's pawing at it reliably, add a verbal cue. Be sure to use a different cue from the one you use for his nose! I use “Foot!” to ask my dogs to target with a paw, “Touch!” for the nose.

If your dog's not a paw-natural, you can “shape” a foot touch. Start by clicking any movement of one paw while your dog stands or sits in front of you. Pick just one paw or you could end up shaping a tap dance! At first you might just get tiny paw movements, but when your dog figures out what you're clicking for, his paw movements will become more deliberate and more expansive.

When he's doing significant paw movement, add your “Foot” cue, then place an object on the floor. At first click if his paw lands anywhere near the object, then eventually only if it actually touches the object. Finally, add a new cue for the specific object you're asking him to touch with his paw. Some paw-touch applications include:

- **Playing soccer.** You already taught him to push a ball with his nose. Now use a different cue for paw-soccer, and you've got another good energy-eating game.

- **Playing a keyboard.** This is a great crowd-pleaser for my Scottie, Dubhy; he sits up on a chair and plays an electronic keyboard with his paws. He actually started with a nose-touch on a plastic kiddie piano and graduated to the keyboard.

Some of my favorite targeting applications are just for fun. At shaping camp we teach our dogs to turn on a smiley-face push light because it's cute. One of my clients went one better, however. Matt Conaty discovered a great target object at a chain office supply store a push-button gadget. Now when his Jack Russell Terrier, Bally, pushes the button, a recorded voice says “That was easy!” Indeed it was. And fun, too!



Tricks such as high-five, pattycake, and shake hands can all be taught easily with paw targeting.

# Teach Your Dog to Walk on Leash

## Teach Your Dog to Walk on a Loose Leash to Make Your Walks More Fun

By Pat Miller, CPDT-KA, CDBC

Walking politely at your side doesn't seem like it should be so difficult to teach a dog, but it often proves to be the most challenging behavior for dog owners to achieve. Dogs who are letter-perfect with their sits and downs, targeting, and "leave it" exercises in the training center happily drag their owners across the parking lot to and from their cars before and after class.

Why do so many dogs pull on leash? Because they can. Many dogs learn, from the time they're wee pups, that pulling on the leash gets them where they want to go. They pull, owner follows. There are a number of other reasons that dogs pull:



Not every dog will pay such rapt attention to you (rather than his environment) in hopes of earning a treat, but you might be surprised at how much your dog will improve his polite walking skills if he tasty treats occasionally when he's walking by you.

The Whole  Dog Journal

### WHAT YOU CAN DO . . .

- Commit to teaching your dog polite leash walking so you'll enjoy taking her more places and doing more things with her.
- Be consistent about reinforcing loose leash walking and **not** reinforcing leash-pulling.
- Insist that everyone who walks your dog on leash follow the same procedures you use to properly reinforce polite leash walking.

■ We are slow and boring, and the world is infinitely exciting and rewarding. If you take your dog for a hike in a safe place off leash, chances are good he'll run several miles for every mile you trudge on your pathetic two human legs.

■ It's not a natural behavior. Rarely do dogs plod sedately side by side. They dash, dart, gallop, romp, run, and trot, but rarely do they plod, unless you have a senior citizen who's feeling his years.

■ Lack of consistency. Although they may understand the concept of polite leash training and would like their dogs to be a pleasure to walk, most owners are also eager to get where they're going, sometimes. If you insist on a loose leash most of the time, but allow him to pull when you're in a hurry or your attention is elsewhere, pulling is likely to be his first behavior choice when he really wants to get somewhere.

■ Behaviors that are intermittently reinforced are very durable. If a dog has learned to pull and is occasionally rewarded for this (by getting to reach what he is pulling toward), he will continue to pull whenever the opportunity arises.

■ Sometimes the dog pulls because the owner never gives him slack in the leash. Many owners



Start your dog's on-leash lessons OFF-leash. This gives him the freedom to discover the location of the most rewarding position for him to walk by you, without interference from the leash.



Feed him the treats from the side on which you want him to walk. Offer them with your hand behind your knee to keep him from crossing in front of and tripping you to reach the treats.

suffer from “Floating Arm Syndrome” – no matter how many times you remind the owner to keep her arm at her side in order to keep slack in the leash, that arm mysteriously levitates to shoulder height, and the leash tightens, even when the dog is walking politely by her side.

■ If I attach a rope to your belt and pull, you're likely to pull back. If I push, there's a good chance you'll push back. This is the “opposition reflex,” a natural response that enables us to maintain equilibrium and stay upright. Dogs have it too, and it kicks in when the leash tightens on their collar – they pull against it.

■ It's not important enough. Some owners rarely put a leash on their dogs because they rarely take them anywhere. For these owners, it's just not a high priority behavior to practice – so they don't.

Perhaps it was my early “old-fashioned” obedience training, but I have a real aversion to a tight leash – I find it very annoying to have my dog yanking my shoulder out of the socket. Even though I live on a farm, where dogs don't often have to be leashed, it's worth it to me to practice.

### Polite walking versus “heel”

Old-fashioned training classes assumed that everyone aspired to the level of precision required

for obedience ring competition. We taught students to bark the “Heel!” command and stride forward, using leash “pops” or “corrections” – both euphemisms for punishing the dog with a sharp jerk on the choke collar if he dared stray an inch out of perfect heel position.

You can still find similar old-fashioned training classes today, but increasingly you'll encounter pet dog training classes, where a cheerful “Let's Walk!” cue replaces the “Heel!” command, and clicks and treats for reasonably polite walking replace physical punishment for minor missteps.

“Heel” means “walk precisely beside me.” However, a growing number of positive trainers are earning obedience and rally titles for their dogs with enviably high scores by teaching their dogs to walk precisely by their sides without ever jerking on a collar. Rather, sits, heel position, and other required exercises are all taught by shaping, clicking, and positive reinforcement – treats, play, and praise, with the trainer gradually fading the use of clicks and treats before setting foot into the show ring.

Whether your goal is winning trophies and titles in competition or strolling around the block in harmony with your canine pal, you can use the following dog-friendly training techniques and avoid potentially spine-damaging yanks on your dog's collar. It's best to practice in short sessions

– perhaps 5 to 15 minutes apiece, and to quit while you're ahead – when you're having some success and you and your dog are both enjoying the training game.

### Free walking

Start with your dog off leash in a safely enclosed area, indoors or out. Yes, you can teach your dog to walk on leash by working without a leash! Have a good supply of tasty treats, and your clicker or other reward marker handy.

Start walking around the enclosed area. Any time your dog is within three feet of you, click! (or use another reward marker, such as the word "Yes!") and give your dog a treat. Your dog will discover that it's very rewarding to stay near you and begin to walk with you, at least some of the time. Use a high rate of reinforcement – lots of clicks and treats – accompanied by cheerful praise, to convince your dog you're more fun and rewarding than the world around him.

When your dog starts to "hang" with you as you walk, pick which side you want him to walk on and start clicking only if he's on that side. At first, click and treat whenever he's closer to your chosen side. As he begins to spend more time on that side, click and treat for positions that come closer and closer to your goal walking position. This is called "shaping" – breaking a desired behavior into small steps and reinforcing approximations of the final behavior, gradually tightening the criteria until you eventually have the final goal behavior.

You can use other reinforcers besides food. Pairing your click! and treat with cheerful praise will give your dog a positive association with voice rewards, and help you eventually fade (get rid of) the need for the click and treat. You can also use toys and play as rewards. Hide a small squeaky toy or tug rope in your pocket, and after a stretch of exceptionally nice walking, whip it out, squeak and toss, or play a bit of tug as your dog's reward. Keep him guessing!

Choosing one side for polite walking will keep your dog from crossing back and forth in front of you and tripping you up. Traditionally, dogs

are taught to walk on the left side – possibly a carryover from the time when owners routinely carried and used rifles in their right hands while hunting with their dogs. While some dog sports still hold with this tradition, notably obedience and rally, others, such as agility and canine freestyle (dancing with your dog), ask the dog to work on both sides. Choose the side that works for you and your training goals, and later you can train to the second side as well, if you desire.

When your dog is frequently walking by your side, it's time to add the leash.

### Leash walking

You can start with the leash attached and skip the free walking exercise if you want, but practicing off leash first helps you avoid falling victim to many of the reasons dogs pull on leash. Neither you nor your dog can pull on the leash if it's not there!

Remember that your dog's leash is not a steering wheel or handle. It's a safety belt, intended to prevent your dog from leaving. It's not to be used to pull him around. To position him by your side to begin walking, rather than dragging him there, use treats and body language to show him where you want him to be.

For left-side walking, start with your dog sitting by your left side. I suggest holding leash and clicker in your left hand (same side as the dog) and having a good supply of treats in your right hand. Make sure there's enough slack in the leash so it stays loose when your dog is in the reinforcement zone you've identified for polite walking. You can also use a waist-belt or otherwise attach your dog's leash to your body, as long as he's not big enough to knock you down and drag you.

Use your "Let's walk!" cue in a cheerful tone of voice and start walking forward. The instant your dog begins to move forward with you, click! and treat. At first, click! and treat very rapidly – almost every step. When your dog is attentively focused on his new, generous, treat-dispensing machine (you!), you can gradually reduce the rate of reinforcement.

Careful! If you reduce the rate too quickly or too predictably, you'll lose the behavior. As you gradually reduce the rate of reinforcement, be sure to click! and treat randomly – so your dog never knows for sure when the next one's

coming. If he knows you're going to reinforce every tenth step, he can quit paying attention for nine steps, and zero back in on you on the tenth. This phenomenon is called an interval scallop. We humans are creatures of habit, and easily fall

## Leash Walking Tools

There are scads of tools on the market that purport to help you attain that elusive polite walking behavior. Some dog owners plan to use their tool of choice on a daily basis to manage their pullers; others may intend to train their dogs to walk politely and eventually wean them off the tool. Either goal is fine.

Some of the currently popular tools work better than others. Here's our take on several of them:

**Front-clip control harnesses:** Marketed by various companies as the SENSE-Ation Harness, Sensible Harness, K9 Freedom Harness, and Easy-Walk Harness, this is our favorite leash-walking aid. It looks like a regular harness except the leash attaches in front instead of over the shoulders. When the dog pulls, the tension in front of the dog's chest reorients him back toward the



handler. The harness is easy to put on, and dogs seem to accept it well – there's no adjustment period, and it works to reduce pulling for many dogs immediately, and continues to work well as a management tool over time, if that's the owner's goal. Watch for chafing in the dog's armpits.

**Head halters/head collars:** Like a halter on a horse, the head halter goes over the dog's head and with one exception, the leash attaches under the chin. As with front-clip harnesses, when the dog pulls, the pressure on his head reorients him back toward the handler. Popular brands are the Gentle Leader, the Halti, and the Snoot Loop. The New Trix halter is a bit different – the leash attaches behind the head, and the halter tightens

when the dog pulls – ostensibly making use of the opposition reflex to encourage the dog to stop pulling.



Considered a positive tool by many trainers, we're not fond of head halters except in limited circumstances to control a biting dog's head.

Many dogs resist the head halter – sometimes violently, even

after a reasonable adjustment period. As much as it *looks* like a positive training tool to humans, if dogs don't like it, then it's not positive to *them*.

**Pressure harnesses:** These work by increasing pressure of the straps around the dog's barrel and under the arms when the leash tightens. One such product is the Sporn Pull-Stop. They can be complicated to put on the dog, with various straps that go under, around, and through the dog's legs. They may work well at first when the dog responds to the novelty of the harness pressure, but dogs tend to return to pulling when the novelty wears off – better as a training tool than a management tool. We're not crazy about these, due to their complexity and short-term effect.



**Stretch leashes:** These leashes are made of an elastic material, or contain a section of elastic that stretches when the leash tightens. These can be useful for dogs who may lunge to the end of the leash and risk damage to the spine. We don't find them particularly useful otherwise for teaching polite walking.

**Other collars:** There are numerous collars that rely on the application of pain or discomfort to attain polite walking behavior. These include the choke chain, prong collar, and various shock collars (also known as "e-collars"). We don't consider any of these to be dog-friendly training tools, and don't endorse their use.



into predictable patterns. Our dogs are masters at identifying patterns.

The manner in which you hold and deliver your treats is critical to success with polite walking. When you walk, have the treats in your right hand but hidden behind your right hip. If you hold them in your left hand where your dog can see or smell them, it will be harder to fade treats later on. If you hold them in front of you in your right hand, your dog will keep stepping in front of you to watch your hand (treats), and you'll keep stepping on him.

To deliver treats, wait for a second or two after the click! as you keep walking, then bring your right hand across the front of your body and feed the treat just behind your left knee. Quickly move your hand behind your right hip as soon as you've delivered the treat. Feeding the treat where you want your dog to be – on your left side – reinforces that position. If you feed the treat in front of you, you'll reinforce that position, and you'll be stepping on him again.

Remember to click!, then treat after a brief pause. If you begin to move your treat hand toward him before the click!, he's just thinking about food rather than what he did to make you click the clicker. For the same reason, you want to lure as little as possible during leash walking. Luring will keep him in position, but it interferes with his ability to think. Your goal is to get him to realize that walking in the desired reinforcement zone makes you click! the clicker and earns him a reward.

If your goal is a show-ring heel, continue to shape for a more precise position as previously described, until your dog will walk reliably with his shoulder in line with your leg. Then change your cue from "Let's Walk!" to "Heel!" so your dog can distinguish between "now we're going for a relaxed stroll," and "now we're working for that perfect 200-point score."

### The lure of the lure

Of course, it's not always that simple. There will be times when your dog forges ahead of you and tightens the leash, or stops to sniff something of

interest as you walk past him. There are positive solutions for those challenges as well.

When you have to pass a very tempting distraction, use a lure, briefly, to get your dog past the distraction. Put a tasty treat at the end of his nose (the more tempting the distraction, the higher-value the treat must be) and walk him past. As his polite walking behavior improves, your need for luring should diminish.

### About face

Direction changes can be very useful in teaching polite leash walking. When your dog starts to move out in front of you, before he gets to the end of his leash, turn around and walk in the opposite direction.

Do this gently; you don't want him to hit the end of the leash with a jerk if he doesn't turn with you! As you turn, use a cheerful tone and a kissing noise to let him know you've changed direction. When he notices and turns to come with you, click! and offer a treat behind your left knee. He's now behind you, so you'll have ample opportunity to click! and treat while he's in the zone as he catches up to you.

### Be a tree

There will be times when your dog pulls ahead of you on a tight leash. This is a great opportunity to play "Be a tree." When the leash tightens, stop walking. Just stand still – like a tree – and wait. No cues or verbal corrections to your dog. Be sure to hug your leash arm to your side so he can't pull you forward.

Eventually, he'll wonder why his forward progress has stopped, and look back at you to see why you're not coming. When he does, the leash will slacken. In that instant, click! and feed him a treat



If your dog starts to rush ahead of you, try just stopping. Click and treat when he turns back to you and slacks the leash.

behind your left knee. The click! marks the loose leash behavior, and he'll have to return to the reinforcement zone to get it. Then move forward again, using a higher rate of reinforcement if necessary, until he's again walking politely with you.

### **Penalty yards**

If "Be a tree" is not working, add "penalty yards." Your dog usually pulls to get somewhere – or to get to something. If he won't look back at you when you make like a tree, back up slowly – with gentle pressure on the leash, no jerking, so he's moving farther away from his goal. This is negative punishment – his pulling on leash behavior makes the good thing go farther away. When the leash slackens, click! and treat, or simply resume progress toward the good thing as his reward.

### **Go sniff!**

Sniffing is a natural, normal dog behavior. If you never let your dog sniff, you're thwarting this hard-wired behavior. He may become frustrated and aroused if he's constantly thwarted, so when you're doing polite walking together, you can sometimes give him permission to sniff.

If he stops to sniff keep walking, putting gentle pressure on his leash to bring him with you, giving him a click! and treat as soon as he moves forward. When you know you're approaching a good sniffing spot, however, you can give him permission by saying "Go sniff!" Give him enough leash to reach the spot without pulling, even running forward with him if necessary. You can also use "Go sniff" as a reinforcer for a stretch of nice leash walking!

### **Proofing**

Feed him the treats from the side on which you want him to walk. Offer them with your hand behind your knee to keep him from crossing in front of and tripping you to reach the treats.

Proofing is the process of solidifying polite leash-walking behavior in the presence of distractions. This works best with controlled distractions, starting at a distance where the temptation is not strong enough to compel your dog to investigate.

Practice his leash-walking behavior at a distance that works, then gradually bring the distraction closer. Increase the rate of reinforcement or the value of the reinforcer as needed, but try to avoid bringing the distractor so close you have to use a lure to get your dog past it. As you practice with various temptations at closer distances, your dog will learn to keep working with you and you'll be able to reduce the rate of reinforcement again.

It's up to you to decide whether you want your dog to walk politely on leash or heel precisely at your side. Dogs want good stuff, and they do what works to make it happen. If walking on a loose leash makes good stuff happen for your dog, the two of you will stroll happily side-by-side into the future together.

# Fitness Together

## How to turn your dog's walk into a workout

By Mardi Richmond, MA, CPDT-KA

I confess: I have a hard time fitting in enough exercise for myself and my dog. Nothing earth-shattering about this admission; I think not getting enough exercise is a universal condition. Even though my dog and I walk daily, life and age just keep creeping up, making it harder and harder for me to stay fit. And, my high-energy herding dog seems to always need just a little more in the way of activity than I have time and energy to provide.

You can imagine how I feel if I try to sneak out of the house and head off to the gym without her. That look! You probably know the one: perked up ears, soft eyes, and the head tilt that asks, “Can’t I please come?” Of course, just heading out for a regular walk isn’t really the answer either; dog walks are not always the best exercise. On our daily walks, my dog enjoys sniffing and checking p-mail. We both stop and talk to neighbors. I admire the gardens while she checks out the



Not everyone has access to open space where they can jog with their dog off-leash – or a dog who is trained well enough to stay at his or her side. The combination is fitness heaven for many dog owners.

squirrels. She probably fares a little better than I do exercise-wise because she inevitably talks me into chucking the ball at the park or snapping the leash off for a little wave-chasing at the beach. But both of us could use more.

So when I recently heard about a movement to turn dog walks into a more gym-like workout, I thought, what a great idea!

### **Dogs make great personal trainers!**

This is not news for those who hike or run with their dogs. But you don’t have to be a serious athlete to gain the benefit of dog as personal trainer. Dogs can be terrific fitness partners for all activity levels. They seldom cancel last minute, and are not likely to let you cancel either. Dogs thrive on routine, so if you get distracted or procrastinate, your dog will likely remind you when it is time to get moving.

For both of you, working out together may bring significant health benefits such as a lower risk of heart disease, diabetes, arthritis, and other chronic conditions. You may sleep better, your weight may improve, and your stress levels may go down. The extra activity and mental stimulation may also help your dog relax and behave better, too.

Since you won’t be splitting your energy between the gym and your dog, workout walks may lead to more together time, more activity overall for your dog, and greater opportunities for practicing basic skills.

### **Get your dog on board**

One of the great things about the workout walk is that it really doesn’t take a lot of training for your dog. However, there are a few basics that will help you get the most from your exercise time together.

If your dog has enjoyed leisurely walks, complete with lots of stopping and sniffing, you can insure the success of your workout by taking the time to teach your dog that the workout walk is a different activity. It may take your dog a few sessions to learn the new rules. Take your time at first and focus on your dog’s skills (instead of on

the exercising) and you will both get more out of the workout down the line.

Consider also that some of your walks may be workout walks, but other walks may remain casual, full of sniffing and exploring. How will your dog know which is which?

In our household, we have found it helpful to use a cue to let our dog know which type of walk is afoot. We may take a sniffing and potty walk in the morning, and a workout walk in the afternoon, and some of our walks are a combo of both. If we say, "Your choice!" and head out in a leisurely fashion, our dog knows she can weigh in on which path we follow and sniff and explore to her heart's content. If we say, "Let's walk!" and step off at a fast stride and with purpose, she knows we will be moving quickly, and the sniffing will need to wait until we take a break. By cueing our dog at the start of the walk, or when we are switching walking modes within a walk, we help her understand what is expected.

### Learn to move together

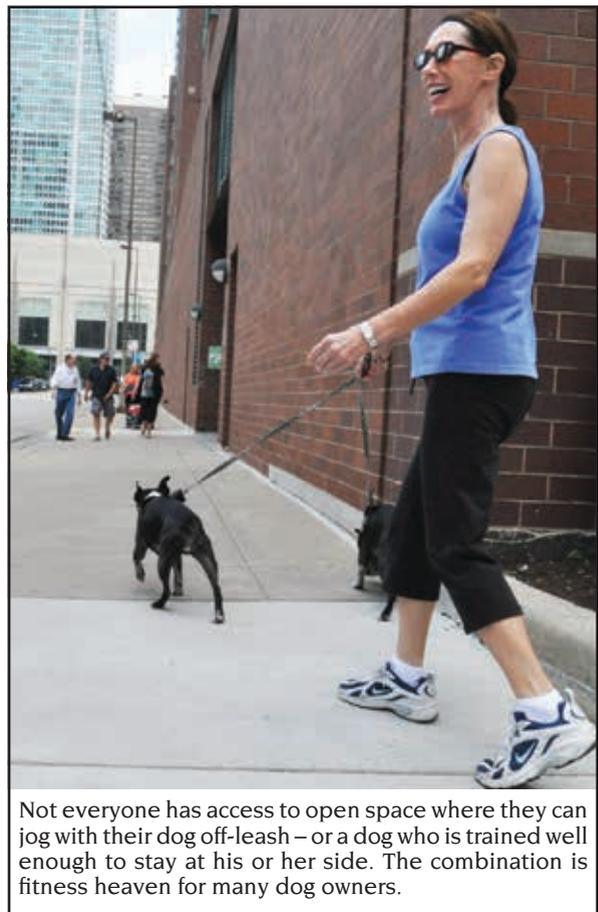
A great skill for a dog to attain for a workout walk is the ability to move in tandem with you. When we are out for a stroll with our dogs, a lot of us are pretty happy with them walking in front, behind, or even off to the side as long as the leash is loose and they are not pulling us off our feet. However, when you are walking, jogging, or running with your dog for a workout, having him walk close to you in the "shoulder at knee" heel position can be a great advantage. Your dog can see where you are going and can move, turn, or change speeds more easily. The heel position sets you up to move as one. It also helps reduce the possibility of tripping over each other.

If your dog doesn't know this behavior, you will need to teach it to him before you head out on your exercise walks. Start in a quiet environment where your dog will not be tempted by great smells or other distractions. Teach your dog where you would like him to be by stepping out ahead of your dog and encouraging him to follow. As your dog catches up, click and treat when his shoulder is in line with your leg. Then, while he is focused on the treat, quickly step off again and

repeat. Once your dog gets the idea, add in a few steps before you click and treat.

Expect that your dog will have a harder time once you start to walk together away from your low distraction environment. Great smells on a walk, for example, may be some of the toughest distractions your dog will have to deal with. Try keeping the leash a little shorter than you might normally to prevent your dog digging into a great smell or moving out ahead. But if your dog does move ahead of you, simply back up or turn the other direction (with a very gentle pressure on the leash) until your dog returns to your side, then click and treat and move forward again. If your dog lags behind, make a fun or exciting noise to get his attention, then click and treat when he catches up.

Once your dog has the idea, try using the great smells on a walk as the reward. Ask your dog to



Not everyone has access to open space where they can jog with their dog off-leash – or a dog who is trained well enough to stay at his or her side. The combination is fitness heaven for many dog owners.

“Let’s walk,” and move together quickly (travel just a few feet for a novice dogs and as much as a few blocks for experienced dogs). Then give the cue to “Go sniff!” as a reward.

Tip: If your dog doesn’t have a lot of experience moving quickly or running with you, he or she may, at first, get overexcited and jump up or playfully grab at you when you move quickly – especially young dogs and herding dogs! To eliminate this problem from the start, at first take just one or two quick steps, click (or use another “reward marker” such as the word “Yes!”) while your dog’s feet are on the ground, and follow by giving him a treat low – at his chest height. Gradually add in more steps and faster speeds as your dog gets the concept of moving with you without jumping up.

### **Stay for the stretch!**

Another important skill for your dog to have for workout walks is the ability to wait in one spot while you do an activity without him (for example, a down stay while you do a few quick calf-stretches or knee lifts). Pick a position your dog will find comfortable in most situations (it can be a stand, sit or down) and practice at home first while you do exercise-like behaviors.

For example, if the position you choose is a sit, have your dog sit while you raise your arms over your head, bend over and touch your toes, or jump up and down. Gradually build up your dog’s ability to wait quietly while you do several activities over the course of one to two minutes. Don’t expect, when you are on your workout walks, that your dog will hold a position in public for more than a minute or two. It is much harder out in the world than at home! Besides, you’ll both be happier if your dog is moving more than staying.

### **Put the work into the workout**

Walking is one of the best forms of exercise there is, but for workout walks to be a fitness building experience, you will need to do more than just a regular walk at your regular pace. As with any workout, aiming for a variety of aerobic activity, some strength building, and some flexibility exercises will give you a well-rounded fitness routine.

Keep in mind that most health experts recommend that we exercise at a moderate intensity. What does that mean? For the human half of the team, a good rule of thumb is that if you can talk while you walk, you are moving at about the right pace. However, each of us is an individual, so you may want to talk with your health care provider or fitness trainer to develop your personal goals.

There are several strategies for turning a basic dog walk into a fitness-building workout. A great idea is to vary your approach and try for one or more of the below suggestions on different days of the week.

**Step up the pace.** Perhaps this is obvious – but it is also one of the best strategies for building fitness. When you head out for a walk, warm up for the first 5 to 10 minutes, and then challenge yourself to move at a quicker pace than you normally would.

**Go long.** Increasing distance is another great strategy. Make some days your long walk days, and increase your normal distance or time.

**Try intervals.** Interval training is when you take small chunks of time – say 30 seconds to several minutes – and work out at a higher intensity, followed by a rest cycle. So, for example, on a walk, you could walk fast or even jog for one block getting your heart rate up, and the next two blocks walk at a normal speed to let your heart rate recover (go back to normal).

**Climb to new heights.** Walking hills (assuming your knees and back can handle it!) are a great way to add difficulty to your workout and also some strength training for your legs.

While out on your walk, at a park or other quiet location, give your dog a sniff break or ask for a stay while you do some calisthenics, stretching or strength building exercises. Try squats, lunges, calf-raises. Add in some vertical push-ups off of a building or pole and some leg-lifts and tricep dips on a park bench for a full body workout.

These are tips that will get both you and your dog moving in a fitness direction, but it may not

sound like much fun for your canine pal. In order to make it a positive experience for you both, add in some fun time.

### Let's play!

Remember the workout walk is for your dog too! It is important to reward dogs – especially when they are just learning about workout walks – but too many treats when your dog is exercising may be counter productive (and might cause a tummy ache!). So consider using very small treats, and instead, adding in more play time. Playtime rewards during a workout walk might include brief games of tug or a short chase game.

In addition, adding play to a workout walk might just increase your fitness! Don't take a break from exercising while your dog runs in the park, for example; join in the fun. Try the following games to keep you moving and your dog having fun:

**Ball racing wind sprints.** If your dog loves to chase a ball or toy, don't just stand there while he runs. You can have your dog wait while you toss the ball, then race together to see who gets there first.

If your dog needs more exercise than you (mine does!), toss the ball in one direction and then instead of standing still waiting for your dog to come back to you, run the other way. When your dog catches up, repeat in the opposite direction. If you aren't into running, try doing other exercises, such as squats or jumping jacks while your dog chases the ball.

Raise your heart rate Frisbee. Have you ever seen those Frisbee dog demonstrations? If you have, you've also seen just how quickly the handlers are moving! You, too, can turn a relaxed game of Frisbee into a heart rate booster.

Try using two flying discs. (The soft type stuff into a fanny pack easily and can be brought out at good times during your workout walk. For the safest and most-throwable discs, see WDJ's review of flying toys for dogs in the August 2012 issue.) As soon as your dog catches the first, ask for a drop and toss the second. While your dog is racing after the second Frisbee, you race to collect the first. Continue on in this manner until you

both collapse into a happy puddle! I guarantee that this game is fun as well as heart-pumping!

Tug for your upper body. If your dog enjoys tug games, consider incorporating them into your workout too. Even a small dog can add some gentle resistance and help with upper body strengthening. You can also try tug-stay-run games to add more movement for you both.

### When you want more than a walk . . .

For many of us, a walking workout offers a simple and easy way to add fitness building into our time with our dogs. But options for getting active with your dog abound. If you and your dog enjoy the outdoors, hiking, skijoring and canoeing are all fun and dog-friendly choices. Into training and dog sports? Agility can be a great workout for both dog and handler. Sprinting around a course will get your heart rate up, and the competitive aspect can be a great fitness motivator.

For a lower-impact sport, musical freestyle can get your body moving. How about canine boot camp classes? In these classes, you and your dog engage in a full hour of fitness together. Or how about Doga, the yoga classes where downward dog takes on a whole new meaning?

However, if (like me), you struggle to get enough exercise, yet you want to add fitness into something you already do every day, the workout walk can't be beat. It is a fun and interesting way to exercise, and most dogs won't let you forget when it is time to go out and get active!

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