



WELCOME FETCHIN' VOLUNTEERS AND FOSTERS!

Fetchin' Retrievers Rescue Waggin' Wednesday Zoom Social

Loose Leash Walking
A How-To

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY LOOSE LEASH WALKING?

Your house, your rules.

For some, the name may be the whole criteria: out for a walk with your dog with no tension on the leash. The dog may be in front, at heel, or trailing behind.

For some it may be more stringent criteria, like walking on the left side within 2ft of the handler with no tension.

Neither is “wrong.” Some types may be situational and you can teach the same dog several different types of walking.



I recommend one priority for loose leash walking: it is the dog’s responsibility to keep an eye on you and stay within an acceptable distance.

Consistency is key to making progress on loose leash walking training. The more you allow pulling “just this once” to get where you’re going, the longer it will take to teach these skills.

Rather than think of this as a walk where the dog gets to enjoy doing whatever they want, think of walks as a group activity we (dog and handler) are doing together. Dogs are social animals. They will find value in fulfillment in doing these activities as a partnership just as much or more than being left to their own devices.

Emotional regulation and neutrality/self control training will come into play in all your training.

If your dog is too excited in proximity to their trigger, they cannot maintain their self control.

Some reactivity targeted training should be used on reactive dogs (Control Unleashed, Fenzi Circle Method, and others)

SIDEWALK STYLE - AT HEEL

- Method 1: Cue the position
 - Using a lure,
 - say your Cue (Heel, Side, With Me, Let's Go) and put the lure to the dog's nose.
 - Use the lure to bring the dog's head alongside the seam of your pants. Mark when in position and deliver treat.
 - Use a release word (Go Sniff, Free) and prompt the dog to move away (I often use a Search Game). When ready, re-cue your Heel and lure the dog back to your side. Repeat.
 - Over time, add steps to the criteria before marking and rewarding. "Heel" -> side position -> steps -> Mark and treat
 - Include breaks from walking at heel. Use release cues like Free!. You can prompt the dog to move away with another search game or simply stand and wait for them to do another activity (sniffing, peeing, etc.) Recue your Heel when you're ready and continue walking together.
- Method 2: Free shaping
 - Set up your training session in a fairly small area but space to move around
 - Move away from your dog or prompt them to come to your vicinity
 - Mark and reward when the dog is at your side
 - Move in different directions, mark and reward if the dog stays with you.
 - Turn/move the opposite direction of the dog if they go off ahead of you
 - Mark and reward when they are at your side
- All methods should focus on extending the amount of time a dog stays with you, not stopping and fixing when they get out of position
- <https://youtube.com/shorts/9LIM1UITVHk> Leo - No Cue circle method

LOOSE LEASH FREE WALK – PROXIMITY BASED

- When you're aiming to teach your dog to walk at a distance or with the goal of eventually being reliable offleash, it is vital that you have laid the foundations for eager engagement with you as well as expectations on what is acceptable behavior outside the house
- First, begin your training by building solid **Engagement** (attention/check in with handler)
 - Throughout daily activities, use Yes! Marker, and treats if available, to give your dog feedback when they voluntarily offer attention/look at you. We need to build value for them to focus on the handler. First inside, then outside the house in less controlled environments.
 - Work on a long line in the backyard/low stress setting with the goal of practicing having your dog learn to keep an eye on your movements.
 - Face in the opposite direction of where the dog is headed and begin to walk away. You can use a cue like Let's Go if desired, but you can also stay silent and let the dog work out what to do through feedback when they do something right.
 - When the dog looks/moves toward you, give him your Yes! (and treats as proximity allows) when they offer attention and voluntarily changes direction to follow you.
 - Keep moving in unpredictable directions to keep your dog engaged, excited, and motivated to keep watching you
 - If the dog loses focus and hits the end of the leash facing away from you, turn your body away and wait for them to make the decision to re-engage with you. Mark with Yes! when they look or turn back. You can make noises or prompt the dog's attention, but it's important not to pull on the leash to move the dog. Pulling both motivates the dog to fight the pressure, does not allow them to make a decision or "good choice," and the dog will start to abdicate responsibility of their behavior to you and leash pressure

LOOSE LEASH FREE WALK – PROXIMITY BASED (CONT)

How To Teach a Dog to Free Walk Ahead of You

- While on leash, use your cue. Toss a treat in front of you to prompt the dog to move out if needed, but generally wait for them to wander ahead on their own. Say the cue once then wait. The dog won't know what you mean, but their attention span is pretty short so a bit of patience usually results in the dog wandering away. Allowing the movement forward is all the feedback they need for that specific cue.
- Set your criteria for this type of walking and be consistent
- For example:
 - Ahead of handler but no tension on leash. If the dog puts tension on the leash, forward motion is stopped. Forward motion is not allowed again until the dog offers attention to the handler and puts slack on the leash. Mark attention with Yes! and allow forward motion. Repeat as needed. The more you allow pulling “just this once” to get where you’re going, the longer it will take to teach these skills.
 - Choose a distance such as 20ft or so (this can change over time when they are ready for more responsibility). Use a long line to keep the dog in this radius until they rarely/never put tension on the line.
 - For example, when I teach offleash/free walk progression to offleash, it looks like:
 1. Mark and reward on a 20ft line for frequent check ins and no tension on leash. We are not moving forward if the dog is too fixated on the environment or there is tension on the line.
 2. Start using a longer line while maintaining the criteria that the dog should stay within about 20ft of you. Ideally you would hold the end of the longer line and the slack can drag on the ground, but you have control if you need to bring the dog back within the criteria.
 3. Start using the longer line as a drag line, ie. drop it in the ground but have plenty of slack in the handler's vicinity to step on leash and stop the dog's forward progression if they leave criteria
 4. Once the dog is solid at staying within the criteria, start fading out the leash by using progressively shorter drag lines until they are reliable to not use at all

Offleash is not allowed until the Recall (come when called) is solid. Come back next week for how to teach Recall!

<https://youtube.com/shorts/8nNoCmiB9p0> Percy and Duckie - Engagement on a Long Line

<https://youtube.com/shorts/X8FLAcQyy98?feature=share>- Duckie - Engagement +Neutrality – Goose Challenges Self Control

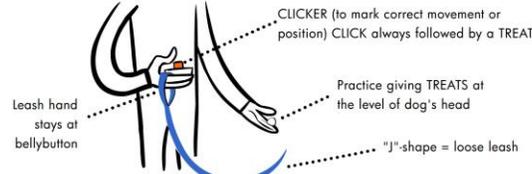
<https://youtube.com/shorts/FpyKNnty3p4> Leo – Engagement +Neutrality

TEACHING YOUR DOG TO WALK POLITELY ON LEASH

PART ONE: Start in a small, boring space. Go at your dog's pace.

The most important step in teaching your dog to walk politely on leash is showing your dog where you want him to be while he is on leash.

To make things easier for your dog, start practicing in a small, boring space. This improves the odds that your dog will stay close to you.



PRACTICE WITH NO DOG

Practice clicking and feeding a treat at your pant seam, at the level of your dog's head.

PRACTICE WITH DOG

Practice holding the leash at your belly button as you click and feed.

1



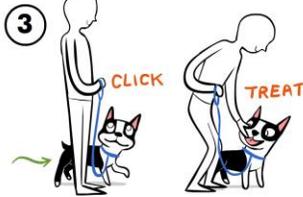
Click and treat rapidly a few times in the correct position.

2



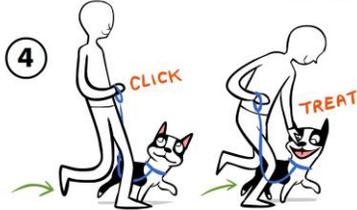
Move slightly out of heel position and wait for your dog to move closer to you.

3



As soon as your dog moves even the tiniest step closer to you, click and feed at the "ideal" head position.

4



Repeat until your dog moves into heel position every time you move out of it.

5



Gradually take more and more steps between clicks and treats. If your dog gets confused, go back to just one step and then increase the number of steps more slowly to help him understand.

6



Then start changing direction and speed.

7

Next, move to a larger or more interesting space, and start over from STEP 1

When your dog can handle STEP 6 in the new space, move to another new space, starting over from STEP 1 again.

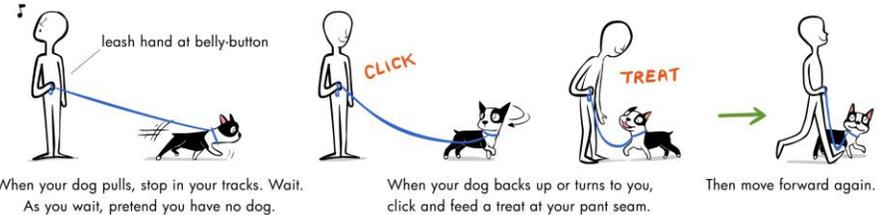
TEACHING YOUR DOG TO WALK POLITELY ON LEASH

PART TWO: Help! My Dog Is Pulling!

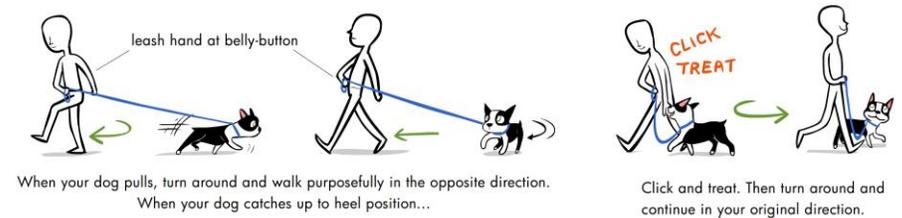


If pulling on the leash gets your dog where he wants to go, he'll keep pulling. To avoid teaching your dog that pulling is a good strategy, use one of the techniques described below.

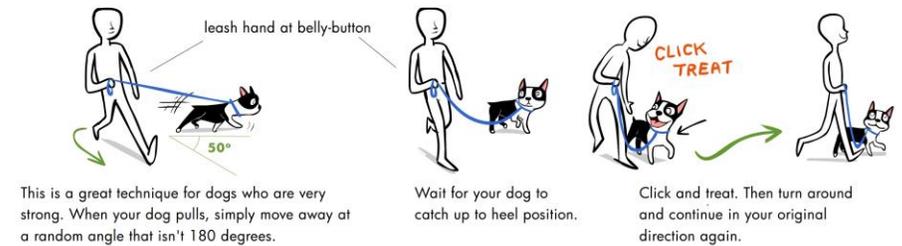
TECHNIQUE 1: "I AM A ROCK"



TECHNIQUE 2: "BACK & FORTH"



TECHNIQUE 3: "OFF AT AN ANGLE"



If your dog keeps pulling, the environment is probably too exciting. Go back to teaching your dog polite leash walking in a less exciting place. Then build up gradually to walking on leash in the exciting environment again. Remember to go back to PART ONE every time you practice in a new place.