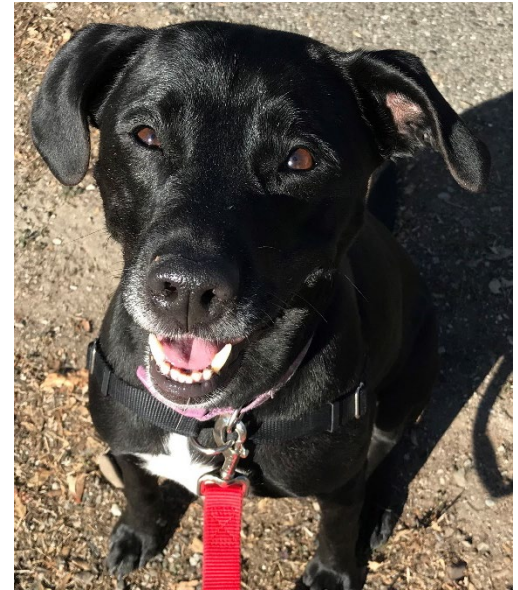


WALKING YOUR DOG

An enjoyable walk with a dog will look different for each dog/handler team. It will also look different depending on the location and circumstances of that particular walk. For example, you might be happy if your arm isn't dislocated during a neighborhood jaunt, but in a crowded area, you might be very pleased if your dog can stay with you through the distractions without missing a beat.

Connection with our dogs is at the root of a pleasant walk and loss of that connection often creates unpleasant experiences.

While walking our dog is a mandatory part of living with a dog, often times what humans want and what dogs want from a walk can be in conflict. It need not be that way, if we take a closer look at the whole business of walking with our dogs and what foundation skills might be needed.



Plan for a Successful Walk:

Before we get into techniques for walking your dog, it's important to do a bit of homework first.

- Determine if the environment is good for your puppy or untrained dog. Assessing the environment means, you can slow down when needed and let the dog understand the environment, rather than being constantly told to leave it alone.
- Respond appropriately to other dogs. It is very poor canine greeting to have one dog frontally approach another dog. Gregarious dogs and shy dogs need to learn a frontal approach is something you will not tolerate. Lateral movement (crossing the street—going up a driveway—lots of stopping) is a better way to walk. It takes a lot of familiarization, practice and learning to ignore such dogs. If your dog bombards other dogs, step aside and do not contribute to the problem.
- Walk at the right speed for you and your dog. Not all old dogs walk slowly! Any training that requires a dog to move at an unnatural pace is going to cause stress. Dogs are not good at forced consistent pacing, especially on hard pavement. When there is a stride difference between our dogs, and us our dogs should not be made to suffer and match our pace all of the time. Depending on the dog, take a break—stop-sniff-jog-zig zag your pattern and stroll.
- Take some time to practice NOT yanking back on the lead and keep it short when needed. Carry your arms in a relaxed fashion and keep that lead secure in your hand.



- Set a boundary and keep it! There is a significant yet subtle difference between the dog pulling you and you pulling the dog. The more the dog is pulled the more he is likely to pull. The opposition reflex (movement against pressure) which is triggered by the leash pressure. You set a boundary – STOP – angle your body away from your dog and JUST STAND STILL. Be a little elastic to avoid a sudden jerk. This boundary tells your dog we will go no further in that direction. ☑ Reconnect and join up to continue! As the dog completes his investigation, he will look to you and likely move toward you so be prepared to move. Look for the dog to reconnect with you and join your walk. You can make this moment more tangible by rewarding with food at your side while in motion. (This is from the book “Every Day, Every Dog” by Kay Laurence.)

Sit at Your Side

You have probably taught your dog how to sit while he is in front of you looking at your face. We also need to teach him how to sit at your side. Roughly, the dog should be on either your left or right side with his shoulder parallel to your hip.

At first glance, having your dog learn how to sit at your side, rather than directly in front of you seems to have little to do with walking. However, it is a good skill for both dog and handler to learn. The entire premise of changing a behavior (i.e. pulling on leash) is to teach the dog an acceptable behavior in its stead (acceptable alternative behavior). In this case, having your dog at your side when you walk is a very nice behavior.

You can teach your dog one particular side where you prefer that he walk or you can eventually teach both sides. If you plan to do agility, we recommend teaching your dog to work off either side of your body. This example will teach a left side sit (reverse the instructions for the right side) with the dog parallel to your body, his shoulder aligned with your hip.

Teaching Sit at Your Side:

Be kind to your dog and practice Step One (the handler luring motion) before you try it with your dog.

Step One: Training the Handler

1. Base Position: Shoulders should be square and facing forward. Both feet are facing forward. Your left hand should be at your side.
2. Practice Leg Movement: Assuming a left side sit, keep your right foot planted and step straight back with your left leg. Shoulders should remain more or less square and facing forward and both feet are facing forward. Return to base position by moving left foot forward.



3. Add Hand Movement: Add your left hand moving back to lure imaginary dog while simultaneously stepping back with the left leg. Lure your imaginary dog back as far as your hand can comfortably go. Return to base position by simultaneously moving left foot forward and returning your left hand to your side.

4. Add the "Sit" Cue: a. Move your left hand back to lure imaginary dog while simultaneously stepping back with the left leg. b. Return to base position by moving left foot forward and your left hand to your side. As you move back into base position, continue to lure your imaginary dog and bring your left hand up to cue the dog to "Sit" at your side. c. Note: Begin the "Sit" lure with your hand on the left side of your body, even with your hip, rather than in front of your body. 5. Repeat a few times until you are fluid without the dog.

Step Two: Training with your Dog 1. Preparation: You should have a lure of sufficient size and softness to handle some nibbles from your dog. The dog should be roughly in front of and facing you. He doesn't have to be in any particular position. In fact, it may be better if he isn't in a sit since some dogs try to maintain their sit. 2. Lure dog to the back: While maintaining good lure form (dog nose to treat), lure the dog straight back while simultaneously stepping back with your left leg and extending your left hand back as far as possible. Give the dog the treat in this position (your left leg/hand extended back and dog lured well behind you. He should be parallel and facing the opposite direction of your body). Repeat 2 – 3 times or until dog is smoothly following the lure. 3. Add the step forward/sit combination: Lure the dog back as in step 2. Keeping the dog's nose to the lure as you step back to base position. This turns the dog left (or in towards you) and brings the dog up parallel to your side. Lift your hand to give the "Sit" cue. Ensure that the reward comes from the hand closest to the dog. 4. The dog should sit until released; however, many won't be able to do this the first time around.

Troubleshooting: A dog who is maintaining his sit is actually trying very hard to understand what you want. Help him by getting him out of the sit and moving before you ask for the luring behavior.

Another way to work with the walking with handler behavior:

Attention Walking: 1. Start off with the dog in front of you and walk backwards several steps, ensuring that you have your dog's attention using your voice and a lure. 2. After several steps of walking backwards, turn clockwise 180 degrees and continue in the same direction, but now facing forward. This puts the dog on your left side. 3. After no more than a couple of steps, lure your dog with the soft food in the hand nearest the dog. Come to a slow stop and lure your dog into a "Sit" at your side. 4. When walking backwards, be very engaging with your dog. Repeat several times. 5. After a few days of practice, start adding more forward steps before you ask for the side sit. 6. If you lose your dog's attention when walking forward, make a rapid 90 degree turn to the right and quickly move away from him. Your dog should notice your abrupt departure and turn his head (mark this behavior) and try to catch up (deliver the reward when he arrives at your side). You are marking his attention and rewarding both attention and the desired position at your side.