

Loose Leash Techniques

Pulling on leash is a common problem because it's a normal canine behaviour. Dogs pull because they wish to investigate the world and we're holding them back. A dog that pulls on leash is not a bad dog – it's a normal dog. And a dog that heels nicely beside you is not a good dog – it's a trained dog. This is because a dog will do what comes naturally until it's taught to do something else. Here are a few options to teach your dog to walk nicely beside you.

Red Light – Green Light

The rule for this exercise is very simple – never walk when the leash is tight. If the leash is loose you may proceed. If the leash is tight you can choose from the following:

- Stop and wait for your dog to come back to you or loosen the leash on its own.



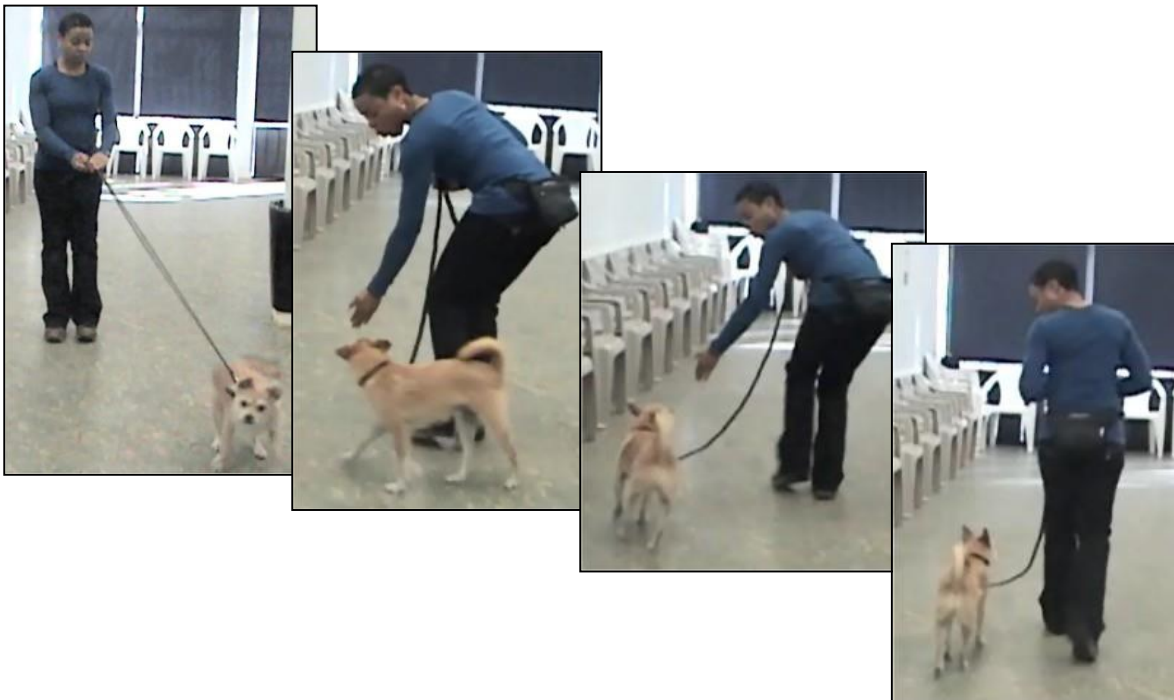
Loose Leash Techniques

- Call or otherwise entice your dog to come back to you before moving forward on the loose leash.



Change Direction

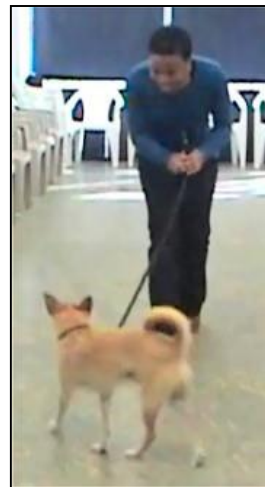
Change direction causing your dog to approach from behind you. You'll notice that Cordelia does not pull or correct her dog with the leash. Instead she uses her voice and treats.



Loose Leash Techniques

Back Up

Stop and begin to back up causing the dog to turn and approach you. At no time are you to use the leash to jerk, steer, pull or punish the dog.



Loose Leash Techniques

Creating a Basic Heel

1. If you plan on competing in obedience trials you'll need to heel your dog on the left. If you walk your dog on your left, hold your leash in your right hand. If you walk your dog on the right, hold your leash in your left hand.



2. Hold your training treats in the other hand – this will be the hand closest to your dog.

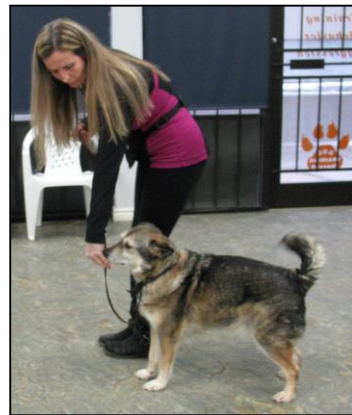


Loose Leash Techniques

3. Using your treat, lure your dog behind you.



4. Turn the dog around and lure it into a basic heel position.



5. Ask your dog to sit, reward and release.



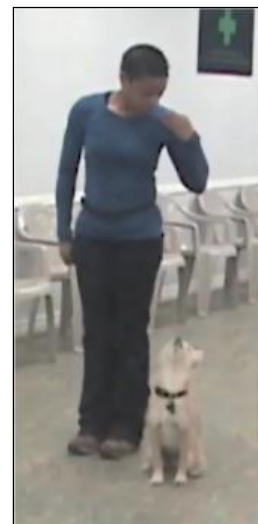
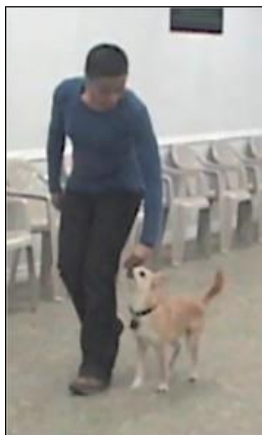
Basic Heel Position

Loose Leash Techniques

Step & Sit

When competing in obedience trials, heel is a very specific position and any deviation from that position will cost you points. With pet dog training, most dog owners aren't concerned about obedience trial standards. They aren't concerned about forging, lagging, crowding, heeling wide or a crooked sit, all they want is for their dog to walk on one side without pulling and sit when they stop. So when I refer to a "basic" heel position I am referring to your dog on one side without pulling.

1. Begin with your dog sitting in a basic heel position (see page 5).
2. Allow your dog to sniff a treat then move it toward your eyes, luring your dog's attention toward your face. (See "*Watch Me*" handout)
3. Take one step then lure your dog into a sit beside you.
4. Reward your dog.
5. When your dog is moving with you and remaining in a basic heel position, then take two steps before stopping and rewarding your dog, then three, four, etc.



Cordelia is using her treat to lure Scruffy's attention to her face as she performs the Step & Sit

Loose Leash Techniques

Note

- In positive reinforcement training the leash is not used to jerk, steer, pull or punish the dog. Our dogs are learning through cause and effect and repetition that pulling does not work to get us moving, only a loose leash does. This will speed up the learning process for your dog as it requires it to think and make choices, and leaves you no option other than to apply your techniques. We use the loose leash exercises to shape our dog's on-leash behaviour with patience and consistency. The leash should only be used for safety and when you use techniques, you don't need tools.
- Make sure you save your rewards for when your dog is walking beside you and the leash is loose. If you lure your dog back beside you and give it a treat for returning to you, it may learn to pull on leash in order to get treats.

Walking in Heel

1. Begin with your dog sitting in a basic heel position (see page 5).
2. Use your "watch me" cue to get your dog focusing on you (see "*Watch Me*" handout).
3. Give your cue of choice – I use "let's go" and start walking forward at a brisk walk while using your treat to lure your dog's attention back when it wanders.
4. When your dog is walking quietly beside you on a loose leash with its paws on the ground, especially if it makes eye contact, give your reward marker "YES" and reward your dog with a treat.
5. Every time you stop, ask your dog to sit and reward your dog with a treat.

Note

- Don't wait too long to reward the loose leash behaviour. When your dog is walking on a loose leash for a few seconds, reward it. Then you can require your dog to walk on a loose leash for a bit longer before rewarding. Gradually require your dog to walk nicely for longer periods of time before earning a treat or stopping for a sit.
- If you lose your dog's attention, use your treat to lure it back.

Loose Leash Techniques

- Make sure your dog is quiet, its paws are on the ground and the leash is loose before giving your reward marker to avoid unintentionally rewarding unwanted behaviour such as barking or jumping up.

Other Options

For your dog to maintain a loose leash it needs to be aware of where you are at all times and adjust to your turns and speed changes. To regain your dog's attention when it's pulling on leash you can choose from the following:

1. Back Up – Quickly back up until your dog walks toward you and the leash is loose then continue forward again (see page 3).
2. Change Direction – If your dog is walking on your left – turn to your right and proceed at a brisk walk in the opposite direction. If your dog is walking on your right – turn to your left. By turning in the opposite direction your dog will remain on the outside allowing you to avoid tripping over your dog or leash as you turn (see page 2).



Loose Leash Walking