

## More Loose Leash Exercises

It was Dr. Ian Dunbar who said, “There are as many ways to train a dog as there are dog trainers.” It’s so true. As long as the tool or technique doesn’t involve intimidation or cause stress, anxiety, fear or pain it can be added to your toolbox. Since every dog is different, a good trainer needs to be creative and flexible in order to meet the various needs of their clients.

Over the years I’ve learned many tips that help teach loose leash walking. If you’re having problems keeping your dog’s focus on leash, these techniques will help you have fun while solving your problem. Enjoy!

### 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.



Margaret Ann Frank & Harley

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



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



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



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

### Basic Heel Position



### Luring

Luring is the quickest and easiest way to introduce your dog to walking beside you on a loose leash.

Begin by creating a basic heel as shown above.

When your dog is sitting beside you in heel position, allow your dog to sniff your training treat. Keeping the treat at your dog's nose, walk forward a few steps then stop and sit your dog.

### Watch Me

Teach your dog to "watch me" on cue (See the "Watch Me" handout).

Begin with your dog sitting in a basic heel position on your left hand side.

After allowing your dog to sniff the treat, slowly move it from your dog's nose to your eyes.

Walk forward slowly moving the treat between your dog's nose and your eyes as much as necessary to keep your dog focused on you as you move forward.

When your dog is able to stay in heel position gradually integrate turns and speed changes.

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At this point you can begin to hold your treat at your chest instead of at your eyes. Your dog will still be looking at you and you'll soon be able to begin the process of fading the treats.

### Treat at Arm's Length

With your dog standing in front of you, give your cue and signal to sit.

When your dog is sitting, show it a treat then hold your hand away from your body. Your dog's eyes will follow the treat.

Ignore your dog until it looks away from the treat and makes eye contact with you. Mark the moment with a "YES!" reward marker and give your dog a treat.



Repeat this until your dog stays focused on your eyes instead of the treat.

Now you can place your dog in heel position.

When you step forward your dog will stay in heel position as it attempts to maintain eye contact.

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### 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.



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



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### About Turn

Begin with your dog sitting on your left hand side.

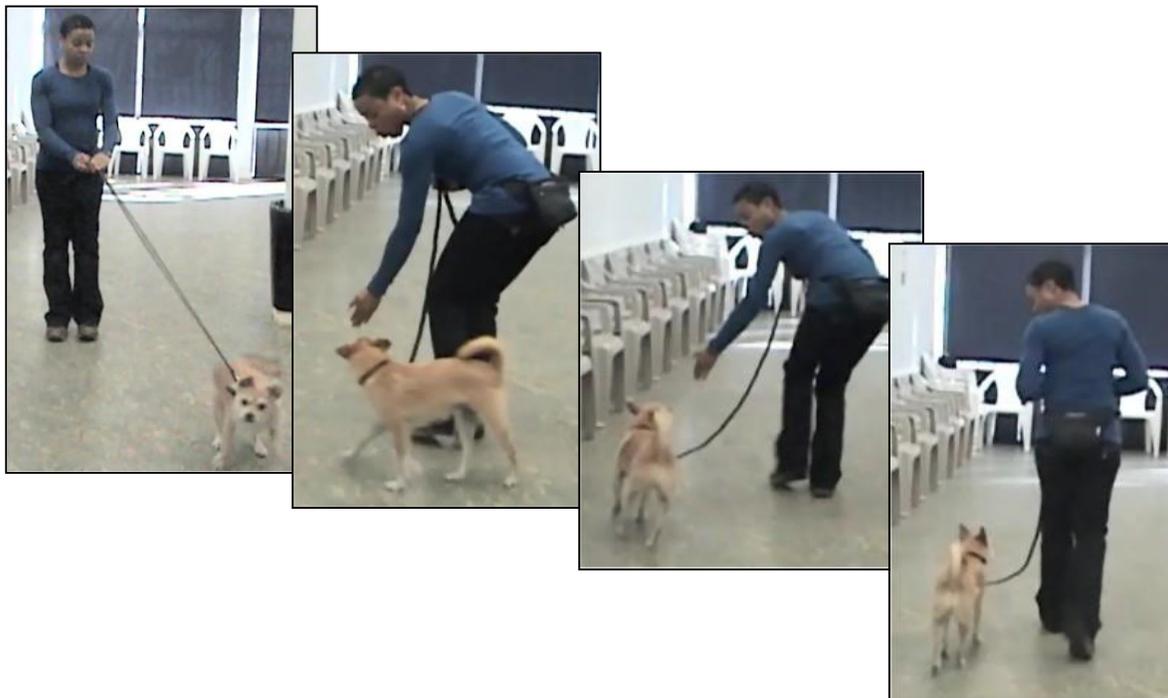
Start this exercise in front of your home.

Give the cue “forward” or “let’s go” (Save “heel” for an exact heel position).

When your dog forges ahead of you, *before the leash goes tight*, cue your dog with “watch me” and quickly turn to the right (About turn) and head in the opposite direction. If you walk your dog on your right you’ll turn to your left.

Lures can be used to move your dog into the turn. Turn every time your dog forges ahead or pulls on leash, gradually moving further from home base as your leash remains loose or making two about turns if you wish to keep going in the same direction.

Changing direction causes 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.



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### Back Up (Greg Ceci – IPDTA-CDT)

When your dog passes you or pulls on leash, stop and begin to back-up causing your dog to turn and approach you. At no time are you to use the leash to jerk, steer, pull or punish the dog. Use your “watch me” cue to let your dog know you are about to do something.



## More Loose Leash Exercises

### 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.

Begin with your dog sitting in a basic heel position (See page 3).

Allow your dog to sniff a treat then move it toward your eyes, luring your dog's attention to your face (See "*Watch Me*" handout).

Take one step then lure your dog into a sit beside you.

Reward your dog.

When your dog is moving with you and remaining in a basic heel position, 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

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### Speed Changes

Constantly changing your speed will teach your dog to focus because your movements are unpredictable.

### Keep Away

This exercise must be performed in a secured environment.

Begin with your dog sitting on your left hand side.

Show your dog a toy or treat then run away from your dog.

As it catches up with you and comes into position on your left hand side, mark the moment with a “YES!” and treat, then run away again.

### Check In

Begin with your dog sitting in a basic heel position on your left hand side.

Ignore your dog, giving your “YES!” reward marker and a treat or toy or praising the dog only when it looks at you.

Use this technique at a slow walk, gradually building up to a normal pace, gradually integrating about turns and speed changes.

### Mark the Moment

Use your “YES!” reward marker to mark the moment the leash is loose as often as possible then gradually fade the reward marker and treat.

### Throw Reward

Begin with your dog on leash with both of you standing still.

At the beginning, your dog will target other things in the environment that are interesting, just ignore it.

When it looks at you give an excited “YES!” reward marker and toss a treat reward on the ground.

Your dog learns that if it looks at you it will be rewarded with something better to target on the ground.

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The idea of this exercise is to not ask or tell the dog to do anything but instead to reinforce him for offering you the desired behaviour.

### Crate Control

Begin with your dog in a crate, on leash.

Gradually open the door when your dog is sitting calmly; and quickly, but gently close it when it gets up.

When the door is open and your dog remains sitting, invite it out and begin to work with one of the above techniques directly in front of the crate.

When the leash goes tight immediately return your dog to the crate and start again.

With repetition your dog will learn that a tight leash means it ends up back in the crate; thus it will avoid allowing the leash to tighten in order to retain its freedom.

### Targeting

Teach your dog to target your hand, a target stick, clothespin or other applicable target on your left hand side.

Use the target to keep your dog in position while walking and gradually fade the target. For a targeting demonstration visit:  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GVC6GjTlyTc>

### Shaping

Use your reward marker followed by a treat as you guide your dog through successive approximations as it gets closer and closer to heel position. For a shaping demonstration visit: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sncMQ-R9RmY>

### Walking in Heel

Begin with your dog sitting in a basic heel position (See page 3).

Use your “Watch Me” cue to get your dog focusing on you (See “*Watch Me*” handout).

## More Loose Leash Exercises

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.

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.

Every time you stop, ask your dog to sit and reward your dog with a treat.

### 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 loose leash exercises to shape our dog’s on-leash behaviour with patience and consistency. The leash should only be used for safety because 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.
- 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 or change direction.
- 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. Using your reward marker will prevent this confusion.

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### 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 7).
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 6).

### Loose Leash Walking



### References

Red Light – Green Light – Dr. Ian Dunbar  
Clicker Training – Gary Wilkes  
Step and Sit – Dr. Ian Dunbar  
Keep Away – Allan Bauman, CAPPDT Conference Workshop notes Toronto  
Watch Me – Dr. Ian Dunbar / Philly Hennessey  
Check In – Allan Bauman, CAPPDT Conference Workshop notes Toronto  
Mark the Moment – Karen Pryor  
Throw Reward – Allan Bauman, CAPPDT Conference Workshop notes Toronto