

# Leash Training

Basic Canine Education



## CARE SHEET

Developed with and approved by a Qualified Veterinarian

Long walks with your dog are a great exercise, and a great way to increase your bond with your dog. But sometimes it can be hard to tell who's walking whom! Teaching your dog to walk politely on a leash is the first step in creating a lifetime of good exercise and fun.

### Equipment Needed:

#### Collar:

**Buckle collar:** Will not control dogs that are untrained; best for leaving on dog to hold ID tags and licenses.

**Chain collar:** Also called training collar or choke chain; only tightens when you give a correction; should be draped over neck so it hangs loosely; do not haul the dog around with this type of collar; give short, sharp corrections to get attention, then quickly release; the thicker the chain, the milder the correction; never leave on dog unless attached to a leash; never use for tying out.

**Prong collar:** Gives equal correction by pinching, around the dog's neck, and is easier on the trachea than a chain collar. These collars can be harmful and are only for professionals and should not be used without professional supervision. Never leave on your dog unsupervised; never use for tying out.

**Head halter:** Wraps over nose and behind ears; works like a horse halter; controlling the head controls the body; works on dog's submission instincts; dog must be trained to accept the halter and not to paw at it or try to rub it off; especially good for dogs that are strong pullers; not for use on extremely short-muzzled breeds.

**Harness:** Not recommended with strong pullers; may increase pulling tendencies; transfers all of dog's pulling power to leash.

**No-pull harness:** Must be used with care; can cause injury to legs and shoulders if used improperly.

#### Leash:

**Leather or cotton:** Easy to grip; check with each usage for signs of wear or strain.

**Nylon:** Can color coordinate with dog's collar; check with each usage for signs of wear or strain.

**Chain:** Does not wear easily; cannot be chewed; never wrap around your hand as injury can occur if your dog suddenly attempts to bolt.

**Flexi leashes:** Extendable leads ranging from 16 – 28 feet in length; good for trained dogs only.

#### Treats:

Training treats should be small, easily eaten, and exciting. Treats are great ways to encourage your dog's happy participation in the training process.

Instructors recommend six-foot leashes so you can teach your dog commands from a short distance away. But when walking, if you give your dog six full feet, he'll pull out to the end and be much harder to control. If you get a long leash, coil it in your hands and only let out enough so your dog can walk comfortably at your side.

**Basic Pointers** A good canine instructor can help you get started if you are not an experienced trainer.

Dedicate your daily walk time to training sessions for a few weeks. Be consistent. Your dog should not be allowed to walk while pulling on you.

If a dog has been tied out on a chain, he is likely to pull because he is used to pulling on a chain. A leash is just another chain to him and must be introduced to him correctly.

A dog that charges out the front door and then drags you down the road thinks he's in charge. Ask your dog to sit before you open the door, have your dog remain sitting until you let him go out, and then make him **walk** out. You go out first, since you are the leader of the household.

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**Training Puppies** Use a lightweight buckle collar for a puppy. Start by letting him drag the leash around the house for a few minutes. He'll get used to the weight of the clip and leash putting a little pressure on his neck. Occasionally pick up the end of the leash and just hold it. He'll discover that pulling doesn't release the pressure, but 'giving' to the leash does. Be there to supervise so he doesn't get tangled in furniture and get scared. A five-minute session is about all a puppy can handle.

The first time you hold the leash, puppies may get upset and thrash around. Don't pull or try to comfort them. They will adjust quickly. Praise them when they calm down. (If you comfort puppies, you are just confirming in their minds that the leash is a bad thing) Tell them this is a fun game, and soon they'll be wagging their tails and ready for more.

Take advantage of the fact that pups will follow you everywhere. Up until about four months they'll want to be right at your side. After that, they start to test you and explore a little more. Start early and build a good foundation of training for when he becomes a teenager!

When you are ready to actually lead your puppy, start with a pocket full of treats and take just a few steps. She will probably balk and hang back. Encourage him, and crouch down to his level if you need to. You can be pretty big and scary to such a little pup. Stop and praise him whenever he is by your side on a loose leash.

When he pulls out in front, just stop until he turns to see why you aren't following him. Call him to you in a happy voice, praise him for coming, and start walking a few steps again. Pretty soon he'll figure out that he gets lots of treats and praise when he's at your side. Remember, no more than about five minutes, then quit. Make the training session as fun as play time.

**Training Adult Dogs** An adult dog with a history of pulling will require more time to learn not to pull. It takes about 6 weeks to form a new habit and extinguish the old one. At about 4-5 weeks in the training cycle, it's common for him to forget everything you've been working on. Just keep practicing. Behaviorists feel this 'learning plateau' is when learning transfers from short-term memory into long-term memory.

Remember that consistency is the key. Enrolling in a canine education class will give you a very good place to start, but if lessons learned in class are not reinforced or carried through at home, then very little will actually be learned.

Keep training sessions upbeat and fun. Treats and praise create better, quicker results than shouts or punishments. Do not constantly drill in the same pattern or on the same problem. Change directions, speeds, and focus frequently to keep your dog interested and listening.

**Sources** *How to Raise a Puppy You Can Live With* by Clarice Rutherford & David H. Neil  
*Choosing a Dog for Life* by Andrew De Prisco, et al  
*Dog Training in 10 Minutes* by Carol Lea Benjamin

**Note:** The information on this Care Sheet is not a substitute for veterinary care. If you need additional information, please refer to the above sources or contact your veterinarian as appropriate.