



From Dusk Till Dog LLC

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Loose Leash Walking – teaching your dog to walk on a loose leash and to avoid pulling. We recommend shooting for having your dog in the “bubble.” This means your dog is next to you, or slightly behind you, or slightly in front of you, as long as the leash is loose.

Baseline Tasks to Cover Before Beginning Training Outside

- “Yes” as a reward marker. (“Yes” = Treat)
- Be good at verbal prompting – this includes kissy sounds or any other verbal sounds to help get your dog’s attention and redirect them. These are sounds other than your dog’s name.
- Proper equipment:
 - We recommend the Freedom Non-Pull Harness for all dogs in our program working on leash skills. If you have a large dog that pulls very hard on leash, we may recommend a head halter at first.
 - If you are currently using any aversive equipment (prong collars, choke chains, shock collars, bark collars, etc.) we require that you discontinue use of such equipment. This equipment has been demonstrated through multiple studies to increase stress, fear, anxiety, and aggression in dogs, especially on leash.
 - We offer a trade-in program in which we can provide discounts on our services/products for your old equipment.
- Treat Pouch – we strongly recommend that you have a treat pouch during training, especially outside on walks. Rewards need to be given to your dog in a very timely fashion, and having food rewards easily accessible is critical for success.
- Understanding the value of food and knowing what *high value* food your dog will willingly take outside with distractions.



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Tips Before Going Outside on The Training Walk

- Try to ensure that your dog is calm and not stressed or overly excited by getting the harness put on. If your dog isn't calm, try to desensitize your dog to the sight of the harness and the process of getting it put on.
- Work with your dog on being calm at the door. Practice having them sit or stand still in a "stay" type of position until you can get the door open and signal them to step out. If your dog is hyper-aroused or stressed by this and is trying to bolt out the door, then work on this before heading outside to practice. If your dog isn't able to focus before you head outside, this may provide more of a challenge for you both once you step out. The goal is to help your dog be calmer and more focused throughout the entire process.
- If possible, we also recommend providing your dog with some physical and mental stimulation prior to the walk. This can be fetch in the yard, doing some rewards training with your dog, using a flirt pole, or any other activity that can help drain some energy. If the walks are your dog's primary source of exercise, it can obviously cause them to be even more excited to let out energy once they are out and may cause more pulling.
- If your dog pulls really hard or you need time to get your training chops down pat, then we recommend working on loose leash walking in the house first, then in the yard, and then outside.
- Important note: You want to completely avoid yanking or jerking on the leash. This will cause your dog to create negative associations outside and can cause leash reactivity long term or just simply cause your dog unnecessary stress with you outside. We want to create positive associations with us holding the leash and help improve their level of focus.
 - Remember, the leash is a seatbelt, not a steering wheel.



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Once You're Outside

- Always have high value rewards with you outside when training. Bring out your big bills for this job in the beginning – think chicken, roast beef, freeze dried liver treats, or dog food roll. The food should be high in value and novel to your dog. Avoid giving the same old biscuits you are giving inside on a regular basis.
- Once you step outside, let your dog sniff for a few moments! Sniffing not only allows your dog to get information about outside, but it decreases stress and mentally stimulates them. Most people forget to let their dog's sniff and this is a crucial step in having a happy walk with your dog.
 - Try to remember that this is your *dog's* walk and training time. We recommend people find their own outlet and source of exercise outside of the dog walks during the training process.
- Keep in mind how to hold the leash. You want only a couple feet of slack on the lead but you want to avoid giving your dog tension, the goal is to have little to no tension on the walks (this is what you're training to get to).
- We recommend keeping the training walks close to your house and on your block for the first few times of training. This will allow you to get your timing, cadence, and movements down with your dog.

Step One For This Training

- It is extremely important to rethink how we train dogs, especially with loose leash walking. We tend to be very quiet on the leash and then very vocal when our dogs do something "wrong." We need to focus less on the wrong and more on the right! If we put all the energy we have into letting the dog know when they are doing well, we could be way ahead of the game on this. Praise and reward your dog a lot for doing well.
 - Praise and reward for your dog when they are walking next to you.
 - Praise and reward when they look back at you on their own.



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- Praise and reward when they respond to their name or your verbal prompts (kissy sounds, etc.)

Basics Loose Leash Exercise 1 – Stop and Go Technique

- First goal is to ensure we are not reinforcing the pulling by accident. When your dog pulls and we let them, then we are reinforcing the behavior.
- Walk with your dog and remember to praise and pay for any good walking behavior.
- If your dog starts to pull, immediately stop in place. Once they stop pulling, use your verbal prompts and body language to signal to your dog to get next to you again. Start again.
 - This is teaching your dog that the consequence of pulling is that we stop and they now can't go that way. It then reinforces that if they walk nicely, they can now reach it.
 - Optional method: You can also do the above step and just stand still until the leash is loose again (without needing to signal to your dog to get next to you) and then start to walk again.
- Repeat, repeat, repeat.

Basics Loose Leash Exercise 2 – Turn Around Technique

- Follow the above technique but now when your dog pulls, immediately start to go in the opposite direction of where they are pulling.
- We recommend using a “let's go” type of cue and avoid yanking the leash. We want your dog to respond to *you* not the fact you pulling the leash. If needed, apply gentle pressure on the leash until your dog starts to turn with you. Praise him when they turn with you.



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Varying the Picture

- Once your dog is listening to you better, then you can begin varying your techniques.
 - If your dog pulls a bit, do a circle with him.
 - Walk in unpredictable patterns – cross the road for no reason, do a figure eight, etc.

Things to Remember

- Teaching a dog who is used to pulling on leash can take time. There are no quick fixes for these behaviors. You want to focus on small successes and go for progress over time. There will be good days and bad days, but you want to work on having more good than bad.
 - The three factors for success:
 - 1) The severity of reactivity – the more intense your dog's pulling and the more conditioned the behavior is, the more work and practiced is involved.
 - 2) A force-free positive reinforcement training plan – using any other type of training can lead to more stress, anxiety, and fear in your dog and long term side effects.
 - 3) Pet parent compliance – ensuring you are following the program properly and practicing on a consistent basis.
- Some positive things to keep in mind during your training:
 - Your dog is not giving you a hard time; they are having a hard time. They don't know they shouldn't be pulling, so focus on teaching and guiding them.



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- Consider you and your dog on the same team. Your opponent is the environment.