

LOOSE-LEASH WALKING

Why train it?

To spare your arms—and your puppy’s trachea. It is not fun or safe for you to have a puppy take you for a walk, and pulling while wearing a collar can actually damage your puppy’s throat.

Since our puppies spend most of their time outside on-leash, training them to walk without pulling is better for everyone.

Why do puppies pull?

To get to whatever is out ahead: Great smells, other puppies, open spaces, fun and adventure.

Pulling gets puppies to what they want faster. As a strategy, it works. This is why it is best to teach puppies loose-leash walking as early as possible. Pulling is rewarding to the puppy, so the more he does it, the harder it is for him to give it up. If you have an expert puller, however, don’t despair. Any puppy can be taught loose-leash walking.

How to train it:

Step 1: Your puppy learns to stand calmly next to you without pulling away.

- Load one hand with treats.
- Praise and treat when your puppy is calm and/or looking at you.
- If your puppy pulls away from you, don’t yank the leash and don’t reel him back in. Stand still and wait until he returns to you. If he is very distracted, call his name.
- When he comes back to you, praise and treat.

Step 2: Your puppy learns to stay close to you while walking.

- With your puppy standing calmly next to you, say his name and, “Let’s go.”
- Praise and treat after the first step, as long as your puppy doesn’t dash forward.
- Keep walking and praise/treat every other step.
- Gradually increase the number of steps in between rewards.
- If your puppy starts pulling, stop and wait until there is some slack in the leash again. Then take a step with him and reward him quickly for walking near you. Or you can turn around and go the other direction, treating when he catches up to your side.
- Keep him guessing. Sometimes reward after 1 step, sometimes after 5, then again after 2, then after 7.

Training Tip: Try practicing loose-leash walking after your puppy has had some vigorous exercise. He will be much easier to work with then.

Troubleshooting: If your puppy pulls and you don’t get a chance to treat, apply red light/ green light. As soon as your puppy pulls and the leash goes tight, stop. Wait for the leash to loosen even just a little bit and then walk forward. Be prepared to stop again if your puppy pulls again so the leash tightens. Your puppy needs to learn that a tight leash is a red light that stops the walk. A loose leash is a green light that means more walking.