

Walking Equipment and Leash Manners

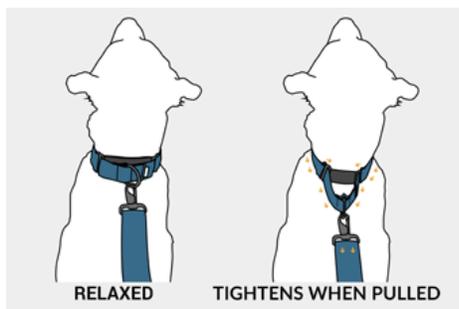
Walking without pulling on the leash is a behavior that may take a while to really instill in your dog, especially if they've been pulling on a leash for several years. Dog do not walk ahead of us because they are trying to be in charge, they simply walk faster than us! So you are not only creating a new habit of walking slower; you are breaking an old habit of walking at their natural pace.



Before you can expect to have your dog strolling politely by your side while out on walks, you need to make sure you can physically keep control of them while out and about. If your dog is strong, or has a habit of suddenly darting towards things and pulling you off balance, you may need the assistance of a special piece of equipment until your dog has developed better manners.

Equipment:

Martingale Collars –Pictured below, left. These collars hang loose, but tighten when the dog pulls. They differ from choke chains in that they only tighten to a certain point that the owner sets. If these decrease pulling in your dog, it is because the pressure on their throat is very uncomfortable.



No Pull Harnesses –Most harnesses actually make it *easier* for dogs to pull, but 'no pull' harnesses are specifically made to decrease pulling. Common no pull harnesses are the Easy Walk Harness (pictured above, center), and the Freedom harness (pictured above, right). The difference between these are that the Easy Walk is made to turn the dog around when they pull, so the leash clips onto the chest, while the Freedom Harness has two places to clip the leash (on the back and the chest) and works by tightening behind your dog's front legs when they pull.

Head Collars –These are for very strong dogs or dogs that lunge. These are not muzzles! They are similar to horse halters; they go around the muzzle and clip behind the ears. These put pressure on the muzzle when the dog pulls, making it uncomfortable and decreasing pulling while



giving the owner more control over the dog. Some common head collars are the Gentle Leader (pictured above) and the Halti.

Choke Chains and Prong Collars – These types of collars work by applying pressure either around the entire neck and throat (choke chain) or to certain points all around the neck/throat (prong collar). Choke chains tighten continuously when pulled, thus there is a risk of strangulation to the dog, and with prong collars there is a risk of misuse that can result in deep wounds around the neck (see image right).



As with any training equipment, tools should be used responsibly, and owners need to be aware that some tools get results by causing severe discomfort and pain to the dog. The goal of using any tool is to one day not need it anymore. Simply throwing a harness on your dog to stop them from pulling is not actually teaching them to walk nicely. So, how can you teach your dog this very important behavior?

Teaching your dog not to pull

- 1. Start in low distracting environments, such as your home or fenced in yard.** No leashes needed yet!
 - a. Simply walk around in random directions. When your dog comes up to walk within 3 feet of you, give them a treat and keep walking.
 - b. As long as your dog walks along with you, keep handing them a treat and praise them.
 - c. If the treats are interesting enough, your dog will start to remain within the 3 foot “bubble” around you, learning that staying close pays off!
- 2. Add the leash**
 - a. Follow the above exercise, but now put your dog on leash and hold it. Reward them for walking within 3 feet of you.
- 3. Teach your dog that pulling is counter-productive: “Be a Tree” Method**
 - a. Continue with the above exercises, but now, if your dog walks to the end of their leash and tightens it, plant your feet and stop moving.
 - b. Do not let your dog pull you around. Be a tree! Don’t bend or budge.
 - c. Encourage your dog to turn back towards you by gently calling them. Once they turn towards you and the leash becomes loose, mark the behavior by saying “Yes!” and then start to walk again.
 - d. As soon as you feel your dog pull on the leash again, repeat. Stop, get them to turn back towards you, say “Yes” once the leash is loose, then walk.
 - e. This should teach your dog that putting tension on the leash no longer gets them what they want, but keeping it loose does!
- 4. Teach your dog that pulling is counter-productive: The “Step Back” Method**
 - a. This is a more *reactive* way to teach your dog that pulling does the opposite of what they want.

- b. As soon as your dog pulls their leash tight, you must immediately walk in the opposite direction until they start walking towards you, loosening up on the leash.
 - i. *Tip: Hold the handle of the leash with both hands. Keep both elbows tucked into your sides as you walk in the opposite direction. This creates a smoother tension and is easier on your arms.*
- c. Do not tug or yank on the leash –this is bad for your dog’s neck and throat.
- d. As soon as your dog loosens up on the leash (they do not have to come all the way back to you), say “Yes!” and go back to walking normally.
- e. Make sure you always face the direction you want to walk in.
 - i. If your dog pulls off to the west, walk sideways in the east direction, but keep your body facing the direction you ultimately want to go, like north.



5. Teach your dog that not pulling is rewarding!

- a. This is the most *proactive* way to teach a dog not to pull. Always bring super yummy treats on your walks for this method.
- b. Similar to the first exercise, reward your dog whenever they are walking within 3 feet of you/when their leash is hanging loosely.
- c. If you plan on teaching your dog to “heel” you can start building a foundation for this now by rewarding your dog heavily when they walk directly beside you, as pictured to the right.
- d. If your dog runs ahead of you, show them a treat and lure them back to your side –your dog should make a big U-turn and end up with their head next to your leg, facing the same direction you are facing



6. Teaching your dog to heel

- a. Give your dog a treat only when they are walking directly beside you. Start by only taking 3 or 4 steps then giving your dog a treat, and gradually build it up to more and more steps per treat.
- b. Once your dog is reliably remaining beside you for at least 10 steps in a row, you can start adding in the verbal cue “heel” if you want.
 - i. Get your dog into position next to you
 - ii. Say “heel” then start walking
 - iii. As long as your dog remains next to you for about 10 steps, give them a treat
- c. Continue this while you gradually build up how many steps your dog takes to get the treat. Make it random along the way –maybe they get a treat for 10 steps in heel, then for 12 steps, then for 8 steps, then for 15 steps, etc.
- d. Keep these training sessions short. When you’ve finished, give your dog a finished signal like “all done!” or “go play”.