

K9 Magazine Master Class Series

How to Stop Your Dog Pulling on the Lead



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About the Authors:

This book has been carefully prepared, researched and edited by a member/members of our team of canine information experts. Our authors are, first and foremost, passionate about dogs and share a mutual satisfaction in assisting people who are experiencing problems with their pets. Our works have been read by more than 12 million pet owners globally.

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Cure Your Dog's Desire to Pull

Teaching your dog the benefits of not pulling on the lead.

This is a very common problem for many dog owners and a very frustrating one too, most owners will just put up with their dog pulling them down the road and probably think there is little they can do to stop it, but just think if you have a big powerful dog, such as a Dobermann or German Shepherd, it will certainly not be the most pleasurable experience to have him pull you all the way to the park! Not to mention dangerous.

Some dog owners are so frustrated with this problem that they no longer want to walk their dog as they find it such hard work and not to mention embarrassing!



Many dogs pull not because they want to annoy their owner, but just because they want to get to their destination as quickly as possible, they are looking forward to seeing the other dogs and play with them, they can scent mark or do whatever it is they do when they're off their lead, so in a way it is a self-rewarding behaviour so if you can show your dog that it can be a rewarding experience to be walking by your side then this behaviour can be eliminated. All you need is the time and patience and dedication to do the necessary

training and also you will need to be consistent.

Many people ask the question, how long will it take to train my dog to walk nicely on the lead, and the answer depends largely on how much time you are willing to put in and also how long the dog has been pulling. If you have a young puppy then it probably won't take as long as it would with an older dog as this behaviour will already be ingrained and he will have to re-learn how to walk nicely by your side.

Also when you are training a dog to do anything you must stick to the same method as if you are inconsistent in what you are doing then this will only serve the purpose of confusing your dog which is not what you want, and is just going to make your job harder. You can of course try one method for a significant amount of time and if this is not working for you and your dog, then you can try something else but do not confuse the dog by doing different things.

Use a flat collar and a nylon or rope lead, something that is comfortable for both you and your dog. Do not use an extending lead for training as you will find that you may not have enough control.

One method to train your dog not to pull on the lead would be clicker training, this is reward based and is known as positive reinforcement it is a fast and effective form of training, a clicker is a small box that has a noisemaker inside it, you can purchase these at most pet shops, the basic principle being that you click when the dog has performed the correct behaviour although the clicker may not be for everyone, you may find that your dog is sound sensitive and gets nervous or anxious when the clicker is produced or maybe it is that you are just not comfortable with this form of training.

If this is the case then you can just use this same method without the clicker but use a word such as 'good' instead. Never hold the clicker near your dogs ear as it will be too loud for him, you can hold it behind your back so that the sound is a little muffled. Always remember that if your dog performs any behaviour that you don't want, you should not punish your dog just ignore it and carry on as if it never happened.

Before you attach the lead to your dog's collar make sure that you first get him to sit and stay and that he is calm, when you leave the house make sure that you go through the front door first, decide which side you want your dog to walk on and stick to it, I always prefer my dog to walk on the left and then hold the lead across your body in the opposite hand. Have some treats with you, these should be held in your left hand, or the same side on which your dog is walking.

When your dog is standing next to you, show your dog that you have a treat, to get his attention, do not give him a cue word, such as 'heel' until your dog is reliable enough at performing the behaviour you want, then you can add the verbal command to the click.

Start to walk, do not let your dog sniff at things and zigzag in front of you, remember that you are in charge not your dog, if your dog pulls to get in front of you, then immediately change direction but keep hold of the lead, the dog should be behind you for a second or two, when your dog catches up to you and is by your side where you want him to be then click and give him a treat, but you must have good timing as you don't want to reward the wrong thing.

It is very important when you are using the clicker that you click immediately when the correct behaviour occurs so that your dog knows that he has done the right thing, however if you do happen

to click by mistake then give your dog a treat regardless as whenever you click the dog will start to associate this with a treat and will expect one and as this training method has no punishments it will not harm your dog.

Keep doing this and your dog will soon learn that walking nicely by your side earns him a nice tasty treat. When you first start teaching any new behaviour you must click and reward every time but as your dog gets more reliable you can reduce the rewards and also you can then replace the clicker with the cue word 'heel' as your dog will understand that when you say the word 'heel' you mean "stay by my side and walk nicely". When teaching the above method, in the beginning you may only be able to walk a step or two, so you will need to make sure you leave yourself plenty of time.

You could also use a different method called lure and reward, which is that you set off with your dog, you should have a loose lead and as soon as your dog pulls and tries to get in front of you then you should immediately stop.

Make sure that you have plenty of nice tasty treats with you, and hold them at hip height, your dog might try and jump up and take the treat out of your hand, if he does then just ignore him and carry on or you can hold the treats a little higher, and then once you have lured your dog back to your side with the treats then you can set off again, if your dog starts to come to you and the lead is loose then reward him, basically with this method you are rewarding your dog for being on a loose lead rather than a tight lead, so he will learn that there is no benefit to being on a tight lead and he doesn't go anywhere unless the lead is loose.

There are some training aids available on the market which should only be used whilst you are not training. If you are using a

Headcollar there will be no need for corrections. The headcollar works by attaching your dog's lead through a loop under your dog's chin and controlling the head rather than the neck and this will prevent your dog from being able to pull.

You can also purchase a harness, which works by controlling the dog's shoulders and this helps to prevent your dog from pulling. The idea behind training aids is that your dog can be walked on these between training sessions, as if you let your dog pull on his flat collar and lead you will undo all your hard work.

Always train on the flat collar and eventually you will not have to use the training aids as your dog will be reliable enough to walk on his flat collar and lead without pulling.

Never try to force or scare your dog into doing something as this will only serve to make your dog aggressive and scared of you, which is something that you don't want.

Do be very careful not to jerk the lead or you will hurt your dog.

Always make sure that you practice where there are no distractions then when you think that your dog is offering the correct behaviour, then you can move onto places where there are some distractions but not too many, add them in gradually, also when you add more distractions it is wise to give your dog some treats that he doesn't get very often, we call these 'higher value treats', otherwise you may find that your dog won't be interested or motivated.

If you find that your dog isn't motivated by food, use something else such as a toy, however this may take a little longer than using food.

If you are using treats to train your dog always remember to reduce

your dogs food intake as you don't want your dog to become overweight.

Always remember to end your training sessions on a good note, and do 2 – 3 short training sessions a day rather than just one long one, as this will only cause your dog to get bored and lose concentration in what you are trying to teach him.

Also if anyone else either friends or family are going to embark on any training with your dog then make sure they all train your dog in exactly the same way as you have been doing, as this will help with the training and also you don't want to confuse the dog by everyone doing different things.

Remember to be consistent and your hard work will eventually pay off and it will no longer be stressful to walk your dog, but a pleasure.

VALUABLE RESOURCES:

So, now you've read what you need to do to have a happy, obedient, well behaved companion. Here are some of our most highly recommended suppliers who can enhance and make the experience even easier for you:

Dog training equipment from Amazon

