

Stop your dog from pulling on the leash

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It is summer! The sun is out, the air is fresh and everyone is outside. It is a perfect day for you and your dog to take a walk around the lake so you grab your dog and your leash and off you go. However, three steps into your walk your dog starts to pull. After all, there are so many things to sniff and see! Taking a walk with your dog should be a pleasant experience. However, for many of us it is pull-a-thon.

Fortunately, there are many practical tips that will help you teach your dog to walk without pulling. Additionally, there are numerous, highly effective products on the market that make the job of teaching your dog not to pull much easier.

Often, the dog that is pulling is simply going at a pace that feels comfortable to him. Most dogs natural pace is much faster than our own. When we require a dog walk at a pace that is comfortable to us, we are asking him to slow down considerably. If you have ever had to walk with your grandparents, you know how incredibly hard and frustrating this can be! It makes good sense to tire your dog out PRIOR to going for a walk. Play fetch with him until he is pooped or let him race around the back yard chasing the squirrels. A tired dog is a slower dog! Additionally, it will help your dog if you can walk faster. Think about it as an aerobic workout!

The universal dog truth is that dogs do what works for them, not for you. If you can make walking on a leash nicely pay off for your dog, he will happily oblige. So, when your dog *is* walking nicely, you need to praise the heck out of him. Verbal praise and petting are good, but treats are even better!

So now you have a tired dog, you're ready for your speed walk, and you've got treats in your pocket. What can go wrong? Just about everything! The world is full of interesting sites and smells and as soon as the walk starts your dog will want to experience all of them at the same time! Don't get discouraged. Instead, start practicing loose leash walking in your yard and around your block. These places are "old news" to your dog so your chances of success will be greater here. Your goal is to get your dog pattered to walking without pulling. Only then will you be ready for the big leagues.

So what do you do when your dog pulls? You stop dead. I tell clients to "become a tree". Don't pull back on your dog's leash when he is forging ahead, simply stop and hold tight. Soon, your dog will figure out that he isn't going anywhere and will look back at you. As soon as this happens, encourage him to take a few steps towards you. Now, the leash has slack in it again and the walk can continue forward. The rule is: When your dog forges, the walk ends. When he puts slack in the leash then the walk starts again. When he is walking nicely, treats and praise are abundant.

If you are thinking that this sounds like a lot of work, stop worrying. Luckily, there are head halters such as Gentle Leaders and Halti's that help the process immensely. These devices act like bridals and control the dog's head, when you control the head, you control the body. That is why you never see choke chains and prong collars on cattle, horses, or llamas. These animals are just too strong for those devices. The only way to control such large animals is by controlling where their heads go. Gentle Leaders and Halti's are fantastic inventions and are extremely effective.

If you have a small dog that pulls, you also need to be concerned. Your miniature poodle is not going to pull your arm out of its socket, but he very well might do damage to himself. Many dogs develop trachea damage due to incessant pulling. If you have a small dog, and you are not motivated to teach him not to pull, then a harness would be recommended. Harnesses often make dogs pull more, but if you have a little dog, this isn't a huge problem. In addition, the pressure from the pulling is redirected to the dog's chest, not his throat.

Teaching your dog to walk nicely on a leash is important to his ongoing enjoyment of life and socialization. A dog that pulls like crazy won't be taken places and won't experience all that life has to offer.