



Teaching a dog to walk nicely with a loose leash should be a compromise between owner and dog. **It takes time and patience.**

Key to success:

Never allow your dog to pull on the leash. If you continue walking with a tight leash or pull back, the dog learns that pulling gets results—movement and exploration—reinforcing the behavior.



GETTING STARTED

1.

Start in a controlled environment.

- Choose a familiar area with low distractions.
- Stand still and reward when the leash is slack (clip hanging under the collar/chin).

2.

Establish good walking habits.

- Hold the leash with both hands, keeping arms relaxed below your waist.
- When your dog looks at you, say “Yes” and give a treat.
- Use the phrase “Let’s go” to start walking.
- Take a few steps and reward for walking without pulling.

3.

Stop walking when the leash is tight.

- If your dog pulls forward, do not pull back.
- Lean slightly backward or take a step back to maintain balance.
- Anchor your hands against your body and wait until the leash loosens.
- When your dog looks back at you, say “Yes” and reward near your body.

4.

Gradually increase distance.

- Continue reinforcing good behavior as you walk farther.
- Repeat the process until your dog consistently walks on a loose leash.



WALKING PAST A DISTRACTION



1.

Practice with a controlled distraction.

- Place a treat or toy 15-20 feet away.
- Start with your dog sitting and focused on you.
- Say “Let’s Go” and walk toward the treat.

2.

Reinforce loose leash walking.

- If the leash stays loose, keep walking.
- If your dog lunges, stop and wait for the leash to slacken.
- Continue forward only when there’s no pulling.

3.

Apply to real-life distractions.

- Use the same method when approaching people or dogs.
- Have your dog sit before greeting.
- If your dog jumps or won’t sit, the person should ignore and walk away.

Tips for success

- Exercise your dog before walks to use up energy and reduce pulling (e.g., playing fetch).
- Ensure your dog is hungry so that rewards are more appealing; use kibble mixed with high-value treats as rewards.
- Use well-fitted equipment to prevent pulling:
 - Head halters (such as Gentle Leader, Halti, Canny Collar, and Snoot Loop) turn the dog’s head when pulling.
 - No-pull harnesses (such as Freedom No-Pull, Sensible, Sensation, and Sporn) apply pressure to discourage pulling.
- Gradually introduce and securely fit the equipment to prevent escape.

Still need help?

Visit the Behavior Resource Library at ashevillehumane.org. We also offer six-week training courses to help prepare your pooch for a paw-some lifetime at your side.



ashevillehumane.org/behavior-resources

