

Dog Training by PJ

5303 Louie Lane #19, Reno, Nevada 89511

www.dogtrainingbypj.com

775-828-0748

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How to Teach Your Puppy, Adolescent or Adult Dog to Walk Politely on a Leash (Loose Leash Walking)

HOW TO TEACH A LOOSE LEASH WALK - Walking on a leash is one of the most challenging things to teach our puppy because we are slow, boring and because *pulling on the leash* seems to get them where they want to go. Remember puppies and dogs just want to run around, sniff, chase things, eat things and experience the endless variety of scents, sights and sounds the surroundings has to offer. We, on the other hand, trudge along on the boring sidewalks expecting them to plod along with us and ignore all the temptations around them. Unfortunately, most of the puppies have already been walking on a leash and pulling the entire time - remember that which is REWARDED (allowed to occur) will CONTINUE TO OCCUR.

When you tolerate your puppy pulling they are learning that pulling gets them to where they want to be, or *PULLING IS REWARDED!* If this pulling has already become a deeply "ingrained" habit, the sooner you stop rewarding the puppy for pulling the easier it will be to teach him to walk nicely and loosely on a leash. Begin to think of walking your puppy as a training game, rather than exercise or destination outings.

Remember you teaching a good behavior, so when you begin walking is not for exercise, but you are teaching teach them how to walk politely.

- Keep the sessions short at first, if walking is necessary to relieve himself, then try using a *Gentle Leader®* (head halter) or the *SofTouch Concepts SENSE-ation® No Pull Harness*. Ask your positive reinforcement trainer for some help. Join a class with Dog Training by PJ.
- Begin in a small, secured, safe area without the leash. Place a treat directly in front of puppy's nose, take a step, reward, and take a step, reward.
- Each time the puppy automatically looks at you, reward! You will be "catching" the behavior of walking politely without the leash and then "transfer the information" to using a leash.

- Each time the puppy gets ahead of you, STOP, make "kissy" noise - when the puppy looks back to you, encourage puppy to return by patting leg, or taking a step backwards.
- When the puppy is looking at you - you "tell them" that staying close to you gives them a "treat bar is open" message and when the puppy gets ahead of you the "treat bar closes!" Simply close your fist to "close the treat bar."
- When your puppy/dog begins to willingly follow you, then add a verbal cue, "walk with me," "let's go," or "walkies."
- When the walking improves, now, gradually add distractions, toys all over the floor, doorbell ringing, opening the front door, or other distractions (be creative.)
- When the puppy gets better inside the house then you are ready to introduce the leash.
- Oftentimes when the puppy sees their leash they act all silly - instead of wrestling with them trying to put the leash on to the collar - have the puppy sit - and only clip the leash while the puppy remains seated. If the puppy continues to do the dances, STOP, WAIT and ask again for the SIT.
- If he jumps up from the sit, put the leash down, walk away - wait - try again - the puppy will eventually learn that silly or dances only make the leash go and you go away.
- Soon the puppy will learn in order to walk he must sit politely first. By the way, you are giving the puppy a *Life Reward* instead of a treat for sitting politely - the walk.
- **This exercise is very treat intense at first.**
- *Now*, open the door, give your "cue", and step outside. If your puppy hits the end of the leash - STOP! Be patient. Don't jerk, just stand still and wait for the puppy to look back at you.
- The *instant* the puppy looks at you say "YES" and treat!
- Be sure the puppy has to return to you in order to get the treat. Now that the leash is again loose, take a step, give your cue and immediately mark the good no pull behavior with the "YES!" and reward! Look for opportunities to say the "YES! And REWARD" method.
- *Remember when a behavior is reinforced, it typically is repeated; when it is not reinforced, the behavior usually is extinguished or doesn't increase in strength. Therefore, if you are not rewarding the puppy for paying attention to you - the puppy will look elsewhere for a reward (i.e., ground, another dog, a person, etc.)*

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- **Directional Changes** can help to keep the puppy interested in you and allow you plenty of opportunities to say the "YES! And REWARD" method. The intention is not to jerk the puppy around but to have the puppy learn to pay attention to you when you are walking.
- **Engage your puppy** - can you bow (play bow) and get your puppy or adolescent dog "engaged with you?" Try it - you will be surprised!

***IMPORTANT REMINDER:** This is teaching a life-long behavior - be patient - short, consist, no pulling walks is what it is all about - tolerate the pulling and the puppy soon to be an adult dog will pull its way through life - usually resulting in the dog NEVER being taken for walks. It takes time, however, teaching this skilled behavior is well worth the many years of enjoying a walk with your adult dog.*