



www.wihumane.org

Loose Leash Walking

Walking with your dog should be fun and relaxing for both of you. If your canine companion is constantly pulling on leash, walking is more of a chore. “Loose leash walking” means *walk with me while keeping slack in the leash (no pulling)*. This is not the strict “heel” cue used in obedience trials.

Equipment needed:

- A 6-foot *non-retractable* leash
- Collar – see reverse side for collar options
- Treats

You can use various methods to teach dogs to walk without pulling on leash. No single method works for all dogs. Here are some overall guidelines before we look at several methods:

- Until your dog learns to walk without pulling, consider all walks training sessions. Keep training sessions frequent, short and fun for your dog.
- Since loose-leash training sessions will be too short and slow to provide adequate exercise, find other ways to exercise your dog until he’s mastered loose-leash walking. You’ll succeed more quickly if you find a way to tire your dog out *before* taking him on a training walk. Dogs often pull because they’re full of excess energy. Before you train, play fetch in a hallway or your backyard, play a vigorous game of tug or have a dog play-date with some dog buddies.
- Teaching a dog to walk without pulling requires plenty of rewards. Use highly desirable treats that your dog doesn’t get at other times. Soft treats are best so your dog can eat them quickly and continue training. Most dogs love wieners, cheese, cooked chicken or ham, small jerky treats or freeze-dried liver. Chop all treats into small peanut-sized cubes.
- Walk at a quick pace. If your dog trots or runs, she’ll have fewer opportunities to catch a whiff of something enticing, and she’ll be less inclined to stop and eliminate every few steps. Additionally, you are far more interesting to your dog when you move quickly.

Option One: Red Light, Green Light -

Walk in your intended direction. The instant your dog reaches the end of his leash and pulls, red light! — stop in your tracks and wait. When he stops pulling and puts slack in the leash (maybe he turns to see what you’re doing and this makes the leash a little slack), call him back to you. When he does, say “Yes,” give him a treat and resume walking (green light). If your dog looks up at you in anticipation of more tasty treats, quickly say “Yes,” and give him one *while you keep walking*. If he pulls again, repeat the red-light step above. As you’re walking, reward your dog frequently for staying next to you or slightly ahead and for looking up at you.

Option Two: Lure and Reward –

Start with your dog standing at your left side. With several treats enclosed in your left hand, hold your left hand right in front of your dog’s nose (within 1 inch of it). Say “Let’s walk,” and walk in your intended direction. Every few seconds, pop a small treat into your dog’s mouth and praise her for walking along at your pace. You’ll need to frequently reload your hand with treats from your left pocket or from a treat pouch attached to your waist. If she pulls ahead or to the side, immediately stop. Get your dog’s attention by calling her name again. Then put the treat-loaded hand back in front of her nose and start walking again. Go a little bit farther every day that you practice. After at least a week of daily practice

with lured walking, stop luring her along with your treat-loaded hand, and instead just carry your empty left hand in a natural position at your waist with elbow bent. Say "Let's walk," and reward her, about every other step you take, with a treat that you get from your left pocket or waist treat pouch. When she can walk along without pulling for several minutes, begin gradually increasing - over many daily training sessions - the number of steps you go in between treats so that your dog is walking longer distances between rewards. Reward her every other step at first, then every 5 steps, then every 10, and so on. Eventually, you should be able to walk with your hand comfortably at your side, periodically (every minute or so) reaching into your pocket to grab a treat to reward your dog.

The selection of collars and gizmos are endless and can be overwhelming. Here at the Wisconsin Humane Society we put several collars to the test and we came up with our top picks!

The Weiss Walkie™ is a great tool for dog guardians and animal shelters that want an easy, dog-friendly way to walk their dogs immediately without pulling (no training required). The Weiss Walkie™ works like a harness to reduce pulling comfortably and humanely. It is a simple loop that does not have any buckles to adjust and attaches to a dog's regular buckle collar.

The SENSE-ible Harness™ or the SENSE-ation™ Harness is a no-pull harness that works immediately (no training required), painlessly, and effectively to reduce pulling. The leash connection ring is located on the *center* of the chest strap so that when your dog pulls, he feels a sensation behind his front legs that will cause him to cease pulling. This functions similarly to the Weiss Walkie, except the dog does not need to be wearing a collar and there are buckles that need to be fitted for this harness to work correctly.

The Gentle Leader® Headcollar is designed to encourage the dog to stop pulling, to stop lunging, prevent jumping, and can assist with some behavior problems. When fitted properly, your dog is free to open his mouth to eat, drink, pant, fetch, bark and even bite - except when you close his mouth by pulling on the leash. Unlike the harnesses above, this headcollar can **not** be placed on the dog for immediate use. The dog needs time to get accustomed to how this feels before using it to manage their behavior. The Gentle Leader® is NOT a muzzle. *Muzzles are generally not recommended, and are only used in certain circumstances under the guidance of a trainer or behaviorist. If you think you need a muzzle, please contact the Wisconsin Humane Society Behavior Department for further assistance (414-431-6173).*

The Martingale collar was originally designed for dogs whose necks are larger than their heads (like sighthounds) but they have gained popularity among all dog owners. It is a flat nylon collar that has a short no slip loop made of either nylon or chain. This is appropriate for dogs that slip out of their traditional buckle collar. This collar is fitted to the exact size of the dog's neck when the dog collar is in the *closed* position. When the martingale loop is tightened by the leash, the collar should then be snug, but will *not* constrict the airway when fitted properly. This is different than a choke chain that constricts the throat and does not allow the dog to breathe. Choke chains are considered inhumane and we do not endorse their use.

Loose Leash Walking is a skill that takes time, patience and consistency. If you find your dog is having a difficult time with this exercise, the environment may be too distracting. You can go to a quieter area, increase the value of your treats or try a different collar.

Please stop by the **Animal Antics** supply store at the Wisconsin Humane Society to purchase one of the above products or to find out more information.

Check our calendar for our 6-week Manners Classes and 1-week workshop of *STOP the PULLING* if you would like hands-on practice and instruction. <http://www.wihumane.org>