

Loose Leash Walking



Walking attached to a person, at a human's pace, and not pulling towards distractions is a PhD level skill for most dogs. Luckily, we can use humane training tools and techniques to help get them that loose leash walking degree!

1. Exercise the dog BEFORE the walk

- Isn't the walk the exercise? For a healthy dog walking at a human pace on a short leash isn't exercise (but if we allow them to sniff, it can be enrichment!). So play with them in the house or backyard first!

2. Change tools:

- Front Clip Harnesses
 - How to fit a front clip harness. <https://youtu.be/ccO4iMquWRI>
We recommend clipping the leash to both the harness and the collar for added safety.
- Head Halter: If the front clip harness isn't helping enough or you have an extra-strong dog, try a head halter. Condition these tools first, as many dogs find something on their face very bothersome.
- Longer Leashes:
 - Allows for more sniffing
 - Allows you both more freedom of movement, which will cut down on pulling

- Shock, choke, and prong collars are not recommended and can contribute to fearful or aggressive behavior.

3. Practice makes perfect!

- In the same way that you wouldn't play in a big game without practicing first, dogs need to practice hard skills in low distraction environments before taking their skills on the road!
- Start by leash walking your dog inside the house, rewarding them for every few steps they take by your side. Then move into the backyard, then the front yard, then the neighborhood.
- Use positive reinforcement to show the dog where you'd like them to walk. Take many tiny treats with you on walks and reward them for staying near and checking in.
- While working, stop moving when your dog pulls hard, and continue moving as soon as he releases the pressure slightly.

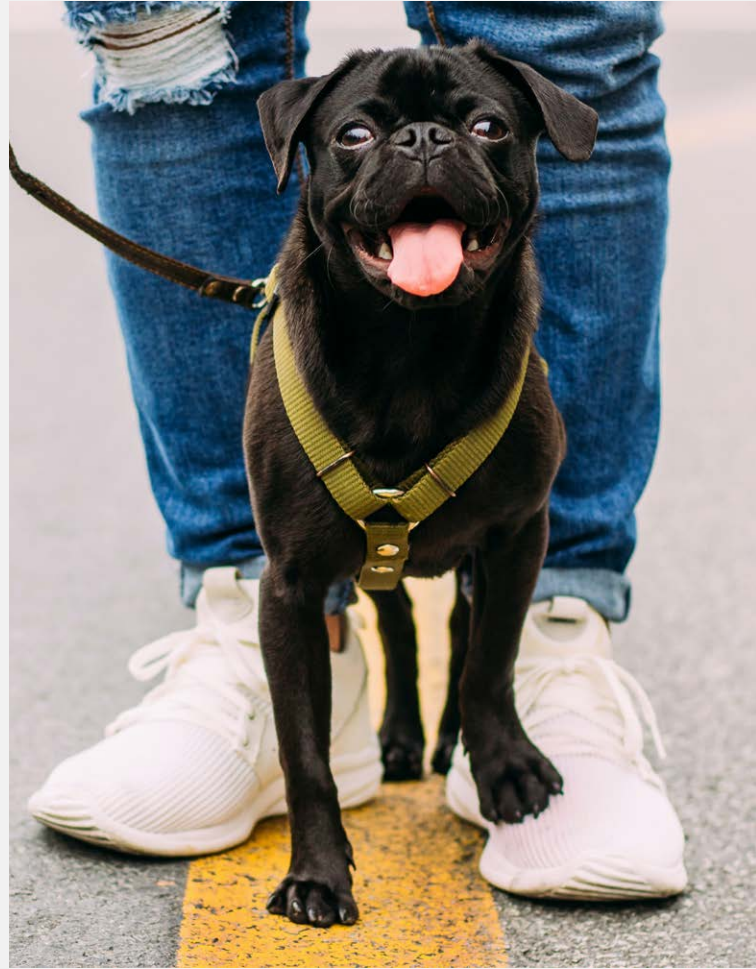
4. Let them sniff!

- We live in a visual world, but dogs live in a chemical one. Not sniffing on walks would be like you walking around the beautiful grand canyon with a blindfold. Not nearly as much fun!
- Sniffing lowers heart rate, which has a calming effect. It can leave your dogs feeling calm and satisfied after a walk instead of excited and wound up.

(Source: <http://www.dogfieldstudy.com/en>)

5. Reevaluate your goals:

- We walk dogs for them, not for us. Keep in mind as we navigate the world with our dogs.
- It might seem normal to have our dog walk behind us. The reality is that type of walk may not meet our dogs' needs.
- Find a happy medium; Somewhere between not dragged down the road and happily sniffing. It is healthy for your dog to have some freedom of movement and make some choices about where to go.



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