

## Leash Game - Drag It

### Introducing Movement with the Leash

It is important to get your puppy used to a leash being attached to the collar or harness. Playing games allows your puppy to focus elsewhere and learn not to bite the leash but ignore it.

It is time to start moving about. You are going to randomly move around, encouraging your puppy to follow you and capturing all good behaviors your puppy offers. This game builds the concepts of proximity, relationship, your value, focus, plus it helps your pup learn to ignore the leash, even if she steps on it. This game also prepares your puppy for that tactile experience of a leash touching the feet, for training strategies in the future will require dragging a long line.

### Drag It Game

1. Start inside the house - in a large room or hallway.
2. Allow the leash to drag on the floor. If at any time your puppy grabs or starts to chew on the leash, distract her - you can use an Attention Sound (your cue, voice, clapping, etc.) to get your puppy to look back up at you. You can also cue any of the cues your puppy knows - Name, Sit, Follow a Lure, etc.
3. When you first begin, focus on marking and rewarding good behavior choices - looking up at you, sitting when you stop, four paws on the floor, etc.
4. Don't expect your puppy to walk a straight line - they can't. Following you and staying near you is the skill you are first developing. So change direction often and help build focus first. Walk sideways or backwards. Use following a lure to guide your puppy to move with you. Over time, you can begin to raise the expectation of having your puppy default to a particular side by using following a lure and rewarding at the side of that leg and begin to work on the baby steps of walking with manners. There will be more games to work on that, too.
5. Start to walk and say, "let's go" or "let's walk." Make sounds to encourage your puppy to follow you - "puppy, puppy" or make kissing or squeaking sounds, use a jolly voice, pat the side of your leg, etc.
6. Use Following a Lure to guide your puppy around you for turns. Rewards always happen right against a leg in proximity (closeness) to you.
7. Take a few steps and stop moving. As your puppy catches up to you and is ignoring the leash, say your RM and reward with praise/pets and food. Then continue to walk and encourage her to follow. Rewarding a puppy in proximity - remaining close to you, following you - it the first step in building value in you and supports your future efforts with other cues, default behaviors and games.
8. Take this slowly so your puppy has enough practice to understand that following you and being at your side brings wonderful things (your happy voice, petting, praise, and food rewards). Gradually increase the number of steps you take in between rewards.

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9. If your puppy bites at the leash, stop and see if the stopping of movement causes your puppy to release the leash. If not, cue a sit or even use following a lure to redirect your puppy to a desired behavior and reward when she responds correctly. Then cue to keep your puppy busy so that she does not go for the leash again.
10. Reward the behavior you want when it happens, not when cued. If she is following you nicely, mark and reward it! If she sits when you stop, or if she gets ahead but then turns around and comes back to you, mark and reward it! If she's looking up at you, mark and reward it! Capturing desired behaviors like looking at you, staying close, following you, sitting, keeping four paws on the floor all help in drawing focus to you and off the leash. So capture often!!
11. Always reward "check-ins" when your puppy looks up at you. Eye-contact and paying attention to you is fantastic and essential when walking! Remember to also reward your puppy when she is right next to your leg when walking - proximity.
12. If your puppy resists and doesn't follow you, stop. Wait, and continue to encourage her to come to you using a happy voice and encouraging sounds (*do not use the Come cue - she doesn't know it yet!*). You can pat your legs or use sounds to get your pup to return to you. You may even need to crouch down to her level to entice her to go to you. Then praise and reward her when she does. Take a few more steps, repeating the process until she starts to follow you readily.
13. Don't use the leash as a guide. No picking up the leash and pulling her to you, she will just pull back in the opposite direction and could possibly shut down or get frustrated. And, she won't learn that choosing to be near you is better. Just be patient, she'll get there.

## **Drag It Outside**

Practice inside first to minimize distractions. Once your puppy is doing well and following you around consistently, staying within close proximity, and offering eye-contact frequently, you are now ready to play the game outside in the yard.

1. Wander around in the yard, practicing the steps above. Don't hesitate to just follow your puppy around a little bit, she has a lot of new information to process! This is a socialization experience as well. You want all associations with the leash to be good ones, so make it fun and rewarding.
2. With distractions outside, it is best to wait your puppy out and reward any of the desired behaviors when you see them. This allows you flexibility with what you can reward instead of a cue that limits you to just one. Frequent reinforcement with food rewards will help your pup learn to begin focusing more on you. Distractions are hard! Give it time. Use Attention Sounds to encourage your puppy to follow you if you need to.