

## Leash Work

One of the most important skills to teach our puppy is how to walk politely on a leash. Taking your puppy out for a walk is important - it is a part of socialization for your puppy, provides exercise and stimulation, and fosters a good bond between dog and owner. But puppies are so easily distracted and all over the place, so it is important to get them off on the right start.

Teaching Loose Leash Walking is a process. Because puppies are just that, puppies, their filter and attention span is limited (and most can't walk a straight line). The art of walking with manners, subsequently, is broken down into stages to help puppies learn all of the behaviors and decisions that a dog needs to make to walk nicely on leash. Each step is important!

### Collar, Harness and Leash Desensitization

Puppies need to get used to wearing a collar, a harness, and leash. Some take to them quickly while others find it very annoying to have something around their neck or clipped to them. Others think that the leash is a toy or may find it frustrating and bite at it and pull on it. You will want to take steps to get your puppy accustomed to wearing these essential tools so that they can ignore them completely.

- ★ For collars, make sure to purchase a standard buckle or clip collar. There are plenty of styles to choose from; leather and nylon are both great choices.
- ★ Take off the Designs by Danielle decorative collar on your puppy from Desert Willow Aussies. This is a temporary collar and will not be used for general purposes and training.
- ★ Choke chains (slip collars or slip leads) should never be used on a puppy!

### Collars

- Place treats on the floor and while your puppy is easing, buckle the collar on.
- Leave the collar on while you play with your puppy and keep him occupied and attentive to things other than the collar. Then, take the collar off.
- Do this throughout the day for short durations at first. When your puppy is able to ignore the collar, start to increase the amount of time you leave the collar on. You may see your puppy scratch at his neck where the collar is. This is normal.
- Over time you will be able to leave the collar on longer and need to redirect less as your puppy becomes desensitized to the collar around his neck.
- You will adjust the fit so that you can fit two fingers under the collar - no more, no less. You will want to check the fit of the collar regularly and make necessary adjustments as your puppy grows.

### Harnesses

- Don't get a super fancy one. Your puppy is going to out-grow it! Get one that is easy to put on and soft and comfortable.
- Place the harness on the floor. If you have the style where the loop goes over the head, you will place treats on the floor inside the loop. If you have the style where the front paws have to be in the loops, place the treats in the floor just in front of the harness.

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- While your puppy is eating the treats, buckle the harness on.
- You want the fit to be like the collar- two fingers under the starts, no more than that!
- Now play with your puppy and keep him occupied so that it is easier for him to ignore the harness. Redirect and attempts to chew on the harness with **Attention Sounds, Name, Sit, Touch, Look** (what ever your puppy knows at this point) or with a squeaky toy or other toy. Take it off when play time is over.
- DO NOT LEAVE A HARNESS ON YOUR PUPPY! IT WILL GET CHEWED!

### Leash Desensitizing

Hook the leash to the collar or a harness a few times each day and let your puppy drag the leash around for a while as long as you are supervising to prevent it from getting caught on anything. Redirect your puppy's attention off the leash if she tries to bite it or chew it. You want to prevent your puppy from using the leash as a chew toy or tug toy

Keep your puppy occupied with other toys and play so she learns to ignore the leash. If needed, you can spray a chew deterrent on the leash to stop chewing. If a chew deterrent doesn't work, try vanilla extract or tabasco sauce.

Unhook the leash when you are done playing.

### End of Leash Game

It is important to teach your puppy what to do if she reaches the end of the leash. There are a number of acceptable behaviors that you can reward. This exercise runs through them. Be sure to be quick in marking correct behavior, so have your desired behaviors clear in your head before you begin. This exercise can cause frustration, so keep it short (only a few repetitions before giving your puppy a break and doing something fun.

Make sure you play certain games that reinforce coming back to you (Pick Me! or Orientation Games) in conjunction with practicing this exercise.

1. Prepare ahead of time so you have a number of small treats in your pocket or treat pouch.
2. Put your puppy on leash. Hold the end of the leash with your right hand. Take a couple steps away from your puppy to create a little distance. Now you wait to Mark behaviors.
3. If your puppy stick to you "like glue" and remains near you, yeah! Though this means you will need to continue stepping away. See if there is something that might mildly get your pup's attention so she wanders a bit from you.
4. Here are sample behaviors to Mark and reward. The rule is to capture a simple desired behavior that involves you (closer, orientation, or eye-contact). You don't need to be picky yet - this is pre-school!
  1. Puppy sits, leash is loose.
  2. Puppy moves closer to you by backing up.
  3. Puppy looks at you.
  4. Puppy turns and looks at you.

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5. Puppy turns and takes a step or two closer to you.
  6. Puppy turns and comes all the way back to you.
  7. Puppy turns and comes all the way back to you and looks at you.
  8. Puppy turns and comes to the side you want to walk her on and looks at you.
5. Play this game so your puppy learns that coming to your side gives him the best reward.
  6. Once your puppy consistently performs a desired behavior, if it is not returning to you or coming to the appropriate side for walking (if this is what you want), then delay your reward marker until another little step towards your goal is reached. This is called "raising criteria." See the target behaviors above for a good example of criteria steps. Your puppy might need additional or fewer steps than this, so make adjustments as needed.

### **IMPORTANT!**

- Do not yank or pull on the leash to get your puppy to move or to "prompt" correct positioning. If you catch yourself doing this, either put your thumb in your front pant pocket or clip the leash to your belt or treat bag strap so you don't have to hold the leash for the exercise.
- Resist the urge to cue or prompt. This is a game, so no cuing is involved and it is up to your puppy to figure out what behaviors earn rewards, so she will do that specific behavior again and again. This is teaching your puppy to manage her own behavior so you don't have to.