

Walking Orientation

Teaching your dog to orient back to you is super useful to improve focus and to interrupt unwanted behaviors and to get your dog's focus off distractions. It also helps to maintain or gain back focus. Going for walks takes focus. Your dog should have you in their mental picture the entire time. This builds the team. The moment you disappear from your dog's picture is the moment your dog wanders, pulls on the leash, or engages with a distraction.

So, while you are out walking, play your basic orientation games and this variation as well. You can play on leash, on a long line, and off-leash.

Walking Orientation Game

It is so important to play this game when out on walks. It will reinforce the behavior so that you have generalization and reliability, and therefore a better chance of it working when you start coming across higher distractions. It also supports recall and loose leash walking; giving in to lead pressure if you play on leash, and turning back to you if you let go of the leash, accidentally drop the leash, or play off-leash. It teaches your dog to follow you and keep you near. It is also a great game to teach behaviors your want for hiking.

1. Toss a piece of food in front of you for your dog to get.
2. When your dog gets the food and turn back to you, mark the behavior and toss behind you.
3. When your dog goes to get that piece of food, begin walking away from your dog.
4. When your dog catches back up to you, Mark the proximity and toss in front of you again, stopping your walk.
5. Repeat. Repeat. Repeat.
6. As you fine tune your technique, you can get to the point where you won't have to stop walking. If, with your toss, your dog takes longer to find the food and you pass your dog while walking, that is okay. The game can continue on with your dog behind you.
7. If you want to reward from your hand when your dog catches back up to you, that works great, too.
8. Toss within the confines of the leash if you don't have a long line, or are uncomfortable with dropping the leash.

Real Life Walk or Hike Application

1. While walking, things are going to catch your dog's attention; a smell, something moving, etc. Your dog will, and should, sniff things during the walk. After all, they are out to enjoy themselves, too and just walking is boring.
2. So, when your dog stops and sniffs, allow it. When your dog turns back towards you, Mark the orientation and reward from your hand, bringing your dog back to you.
3. This game teaches your dog to ping pong from the environment back to you.
4. Additionally, you also have an opportunity to teach a loose recall for getting your dog to catch up with you. (see below)

Walking Orientation

"Let's Go" - A Loose Recall

If your dog has delayed with sniffing something in the environment, and you don't want to wait around too long, you can teach a cue that means to catch back up with you.

1. Play the Walking Orientation game.
2. With the toss behind you, watch your dog while you are walking, and when your dog has finish getting the food you tossed (just when the head is lifting), say your cue "Let's go." When your dog catches back up to you and is in proximity (close to your side), Mark and reward your dog from your hand.
3. You can also use this cue when you first step off on a walk with the leash. You then Mark and reward your dog for being at your side.
4. It can also be used as a cue when you change directions on a walk.

RULES WITH LONG LINES

1. The dog must be wearing a harness. Do not attach a long line to a collar.
2. Attach the long line to the back clip ring of the harness. If your harness only ha a front clip option, that's okay, just be careful your dog does not take off and get whipped around when he hits the end of the line.
3. Toss within the length of the line.
4. Keep the line loose, allowing it to drag on the ground. Do not pull on the line, allow your dog to make the choice when ready and mark the good decision.
5. Only clip the long line to you if you are physically capable (stable and strong enough) of handling a run-away dog - they can get momentum real quick and pull you over if you're not careful.

Trainer Tip:

If your dog does not find the treat - don't help! Wait him out, and when your dog gives up and returns to you, mark and reward at proximity.