

Walking with Manners - Loose Leash Walking

So, your puppy has completed her series of vaccinations and is now ready to set foot out in the wide world. Now that you can take your puppy for more extensive walks, providing proper exercise will be easier. Remember that when out for walks, use the opportunity to socialize your puppy as well, to new places, people and things. Be careful when approaching unknown dogs. You want to make sure that ALL interactions with dogs are good experiences for your puppy, so it is not always a good idea to have your puppy meet every dog you see. Actually, it is important to have your puppy experience seeing other dogs and just pass by without meeting, so you don't create an expectation of getting to meet and play with every dog she sees.

Choosing the Right Walking Equipment

The right equipment can make walking your puppy much easier, as well as safer. A standard buckle collar is a great place to start, but sometimes exuberant Aussie puppies are big pullers and tend to "choke" themselves with a collar. After some practice with training, if your puppy just seems to be struggling with breathing due to pulling, you may want to consider some specialized equipment. If you need to teach your puppy not to pull, you should use a four-foot or six-foot leash. Use whichever width and material that feels comfortable to you. Retractable leashes, such as the Flexi, or leashes longer than six feet in length don't work well if you're trying to teach your dog not to pull on leash. The Sadie 8 in 1 Security Leash is a great leash to use. It gives you different loops to grip so you can practice with a short leash at first and then lengthen it when appropriate and when you are giving your puppy a break.



Walk in Sync
Harness



Freedom No-Pull Harness with
both back and front clip options.
(my personal favorite)



Do not use a
retractable leash!



Sadie 8 in 1
Security Leash

Suitable Choices

- Regular buckle or snap collar (no slip or choke collars!)
- No-pull harness - you want one that clips at the front AND the back (such as the Freedom No-Pull Harness, Walk in Sync™, or Premier Easy Walk® Harness)
- 6' nylon or leather leash, or Sadie's 8-in-1 Security Leash
- Head Collar : like Walk N' Train or Holt head collars

Head halters and no-pull harnesses can decrease pulling in many dogs enough without any additional training - sometimes. They are effective tools, making walks more pleasant for you and your dog, so some people decide not to train at all, but this isn't always the best decision.

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Just keep in mind that if you choose to use them without training, they won't have any effect on pulling when your dog is *not* wearing the equipment. Over time, your dog may begin to pull more and more as she gets desensitized to the feeling of the equipment. Dogs learn very specifically. If they learn not to pull while wearing a head halter, they won't automatically know not to pull when they're wearing something else, like a flat collar.

Before Starting Your Walk

- 🐾 For walks to be calm and enjoyable, with your puppy in control of herself, it must start that way from the beginning. If she gets wildly excited when you pull out the leash, you need to focus on this first. When you pull out the leash, walk to where you "hook up" your puppy. If she is whining, barking, jumping, spinning, etc., just stand completely still and look away. As soon as you can catch a moment of calmness in your puppy, tell her to sit and stay. Move in a calm manner to hook the leash. At any time if she gets unruly, stop again and wait for calm behavior. Then unhook the leash. Practice hooking and unhooking with calm behavior at various times during the day without actually going out for the walk. This way, when you do go for the walk, it will be a wonderful reward for good behavior. It may seem tedious, but if you are consistent, your hard work will payoff and you will be able to start your walks in a very pleasant manner.
- 🐾 Remember to HOLD the leash in your hand and take up any extra slack you don't want. Do not wrap the leash around your hand or wrist. Many people have suffered broken fingers or dislocated elbows doing this when the dog lunged or pulled suddenly.
- 🐾 Don't allow your puppy to decide when to go and when to stop. If your puppy stops to sniff or just refuses to walk, coax her to you and continue. Then, at some points during your walk, stop and allow your puppy to sniff and explore, then carry on with your walk. Remember, it's the leader who decides which direction to walk, when to start walking, when to stop walking and how fast to walk. Keep it fun and interesting and playful and your puppy will gladly go where you go.
- 🐾 Keep walks fun and rewarding. Always reward your puppy when she "checks in" with you, meaning when she looks at you. Rewards during walks can include verbal praise, petting, or treats. Also reward your puppy when she is at your side and in the correct position. Remember that a behavior that is rewarding to your puppy is strengthened and will be repeated. The more a behavior is rewarded, the more the puppy will offer the behavior. Punishment does not result in predictable changes.
- 🐾 When walking, check your own position. Hold the leash with your hand relaxed at your side or belly button. If you find you are holding that arm out or tense, put your thumb in your front pant pocket and relax. If you are feeling anxious, nervous or frustrated, stop and take a moment to breathe! Remember, how you are feeling travels right down the leash and to your puppy. Fold over any excess leash and hold with the same hand. Don't wrap the slack around your hand or wrist. Allow your puppy to experience the tension because she applies it, and then get reinforcement from you when she comes back to you and releases the tension on her own. Your free hand's primary job is to reward your puppy for doing a good job walking, either by delivering treats or pets and pats of affection.

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🐾 Choose a side you want your dog to walk with you most of the time. This can be either the left or right side unless you plan on competing in obedience or rally, then you must choose the left. Walking a dog on the left side goes back to when formal training started in the military and the soldiers held their guns on the right, so the dog was positioned on the left. You will hold the leash in the hand opposite of the side your dog will walk. I know it seems backwards, but this allows the hand that gives treats to be right next to your puppy so you or your puppy don't have to cross over your body.

Starting Off...

1. Choose which side you want to walk your dog on. Sometimes as puppies, if they seem to favor a side, then allow him to walk on the favored side. If you plan to compete in obedience or rally, walk your dog on your left. If you have a sensitive, timid, or fearful pup choose the right side so that you are in between your pup and passing cars, bikes, people, etc.
2. Hold the leash in the hand opposite of the side your dog walks on. Relax that hand at your side.
3. Have treats positioned so they are easily accessible to the hand that is on the side your dog walks on. This is where treats will be delivered, right next to your leg.
4. Keep the leash short for easy management and training.
5. Don't wrap the leash around your hand. Place your fingers through the loop, gather excess leash up in a loop and hold with your hand.



Treat Trail Technique

1. This technique is very similar to the movement exercises. Start with your puppy sitting at your side. Place a few treats next to your foot on the side you want you puppy to walk on. The leash is in the hand on the opposite side so it drapes across your legs.
2. When your puppy starts to eat the treats at your foot say your Reward Marker and then take one step forward and put more treats on the ground next to your foot.
3. When your puppy follows and starts to eat those treats, praise and repeat the process.

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4. When your puppy is following and staying with you well, increase the number of steps gradually.
5. You will want to stay slightly ahead of your puppy so she doesn't get out in front of you.
6. If she does get ahead of you, use the "touch" command (or lure or use "finish" cue) to get her back to your side and then have her sit, look and begin again.
7. Make sure to not create any tension in the leash when you step forward so the leash always remains loose and doesn't pull on your puppy where she may want to resist.
8. Practice for a good distance that is within your puppy's attention span and then release her out to sniff and explore and get some wiggles out. Then begin the exercise again.

Lure and Reward Technique

1. Start by holding the leash in one hand and with your puppy standing at your opposite side. With several treats in your dog-side hand, hold your baited hand right in front of your puppy's nose (within 1 inch of it). Start walking in your intended direction.
2. Every few seconds, say your Reward Marker and pop a small treat into your puppy's mouth from your baited hand right at your leg and praise her for walking along at your pace. You'll need to frequently reload your hand with treats from your pocket or treat pouch. If she pulls ahead or to the side, immediately stop, get her attention and then lure her back to your side and have her sit.
3. Then put the treat-loaded hand back in front of her nose and start walking again.
4. Practice for a good distance that is within your puppy's attention span and then release her out to sniff and explore and get some wiggles out. Then begin the exercise again.
5. Go a little bit farther every day that you practice. After at least a week or so of daily practice with lured walking. 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 puppy is walking longer distances between rewards. Reward her every other step at first, then every 5 steps, then every 10, and so on.
6. Then, begin bringing your hand to your body in between the moments you treat your puppy - and make sure you catch her while she is still next to you to say your Reward Marker and give her a treat so you are reinforcing your puppy for staying at your side.
7. Eventually, you should be able to walk with your hand comfortably at your side. Reward good position and no pulling with attention and affection, and occasionally reaching into your pocket to grab a treat to reward your puppy. Give your puppy reinforcement for "check-ins." You will notice if you have been diligent with using your Reward Marker to reinforce good positioning, that when you say it, your puppy will turn to look at you!

Stop and Go Technique

1. Start walking in your intended direction. The moment your puppy reaches the end of the leash and starts to pull, STOP and wait. Your puppy may turn to look at you to wonder why you stopped.
2. Call your puppy back to you; say her name, pat your leg, etc. You can even use the Touch cue if your puppy knows it. Be careful if using come. Only use come if you know your

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puppy can and will do it! Then, have her sit. When she does, say your Reward Marker and reward her. Then GO, and continue your walk.

3. Whenever your puppy looks up at you and "checks in," mark it and reward the good behavior. If she pulls again, repeat the process.
4. Remember to randomly reward good position while walking by marking it and rewarding her.
5. If you do this consistently she will learn that 1) if she stays near you or looks at you, she gets your praise and rewards and gets to continue walking, 2) if she pulls on the leash the fun stops and she won't get to go forward any further and has to come back to you and sit.
6. Once your puppy understands the concept of the Stop and Go, stop giving her rewards when you have to get her back to you side and sit. Rewards only come when you are walking and she is at your side.
7. Walk happy. Your voice is rewarding to your puppy. Provide good verbal feedback and encouragement with a happy voice and smiling face.

Technique Four: Reverse

This technique also works very well with harnesses and no-pull harnesses such as the Freedom No-Pull Harness, the Premier Pet Products Easy Walk Harness, or other harness where the leash attaches at the chest. Be careful when you use this technique with any pinch, choke, head halter or limited slip/martingale collar or a standard buckle collar, so as to not put too much pressure on the neck area. Give your dog fair warning that you are going to go in the opposite direction by making a sound or using a word as a "cue."

1. Start walking in your intended direction. Just before your dog gets to the end of the leash, make an attention getting sound such as a kissing sound, or give either your No Reward Marker or pick a new word or sound that indicates to your dog that he has gone far enough and is close to the end of the leash, like "Easy" or even "Hey." This allows your dog, once he learns what the word means, a chance to make the right decision and either return to you or release the tension on the leash.
2. When your dog gets to the end of the leash, stop, and then start walking backwards.
3. Once your dog turns around to follow you again say your Reward Marker and stop walking backwards and extend your left hand out and make a target for your dog to touch. Initially you can reward your dog at this point and then move to the next step. Later you will start fading out treats and use affection and/or praise.
4. Once your dog touches the target, lure him around and into the heeling position next to you and make him sit. You can even add a focus in if you want.
5. Then start walking again and repeat the process over again when necessary.
6. If your dog makes the right decision and stops or slows down or even comes back to you before pulling on the leash, praise him lavishly and give a great reward for making a good decision. You will find that with practice your dog will start making the right decision more

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and more. Be sure to follow the same instructions as above for rewarding your dog when he walks near you without pulling.

Quick Tip:

🐾 It is easiest to use a treat pouch instead of stuffing your pockets with treats. My favorite style of treat pouch is one that straps around my waist instead of clips to my pants. That way, it is easy to use with jeans, shorts and sweats, you can carry everything in one place, and you don't have crumbs in your clothes that a puppy may find and chew holes in your pockets. Doggone Good, Premier, and PetSafe all make pouches with straps. They can be found at pet stores and online.



🐾 If you have a good back and balance and are strong enough, you can use carabiner clips to hook the leash to your belt or treat pouch strap. Now you can walk "hands free." This is a great option if you have an old habit of leash jerking, are using the clicker for training, or just want the additional freedom. Using the Sadie Leash with a clip makes it easy to get the leash at the right length for training and then you can unclip it for puppy breaks and sniffing rewards where you will want the full length of the leash to allow your puppy to potty, sniff and explore. The clip makes it possible to easily adjust lengths without having to unclip the leash from your dog.

TRAINER TIPS:

Focus for Everything: Cue focus a lot while walking, and reward your dog well. By cuing often, you will begin to create a habit in your dog to look at you. In addition, capture every time your dog looks at you on his own and Mark and reward that (treats by your leg). By doing this you will be able to cue leads, and capture more, creating a wonderful habit in your dog for "Checking in."

Duration with Eye-Contact: if your dog offers eye-contact on his own Mark and reward for a great choice. Yeah! If he then maintains eye-contact (looking for another RM and treat) praise him and delay saying your Marker to build duration. After a few seconds or continuous eye-contact, you can again say your RM and reward. Wow! What a good puppy!!

Rewards: Remember that rewards are not just food. Praise is important and a reward. Attention is a reward. Pets are rewards. More freedom is a reward. Sniffing is a reward. Utilize these to your advantage so you don't burn through food as fast. Remember: Calm > Work > Fun = Success!!

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Distractions: Whether it be something they see or something they hear, cue a look every time they notice something. If they are too interested in a distraction and won't look at you, practice the reverse cue first. Then once they are responding better with turning and looking at you earlier, you will be able to stop walking back as much, or just be able to cue - the time just depends on the dog and the level of distraction.

Reinforcing Good Choices: Walk your dog on a shorter leash to begin with. Capture moments of good choices made by your dog - no pulling, eye contact often, walking near you, relaxed and calm... After a good session of your dog WORKING for you, release him to go sniff and be a dog and walk that way for a little while. Then have him return to your side (Finish cue) and have your dog work for you again and release after a job well done. By practicing this way your dog learns to work for the things he likes best, makes better decisions on his own, and becomes more attentive to you and enjoys working for you more. Over time the leash can get longer and longer, and if you've done your job right, your dog will choose you more and the environment less.

Play Games: Walks don't have to be just walking. It is important to practice fundamentals when out and about, and walks are a perfect time to do this. Focus games, orientation games, and proximity games and cues are all perfect games to play to break up the monotony of the walk and reinforce behaviors that support socialization, recall, loose leash walking, coping, confidence, relationship... So don't think of your walks in terms of miles, or destination - it's about quality, not quantity.