

Does Your Dog Take You for a Walk?

When a dog pulls on leash, it can be very frustrating for both of you – and even downright embarrassing! Fortunately, through positive reinforcement techniques, you can teach your dog to *want* to walk with you!

Dogs will only expend energy if there's a reason to do so. Through pulling, dogs are able to obtain real-life rewards, such as sniffing bushes, eating food off the ground, greeting people or other dogs, etc. You can use other rewards, like treats, to show him that it's more worthwhile to walk with a loose leash than it is to pull. The secret to loose leash walking is simple: **don't move in the direction your dog is pulling you. Instead, teach your dog to be aware of their leash and that they have the ability to progress forward as long as their leash is loose.** Here are some tips for loose leash walking:

Invest in proper training equipment:

There are many types of training tools available for teaching your dog not to pull. San Diego Humane Society does not promote the use of aversive training collars such as Choke Chains, Prong Collars or Shock Collars. These types of collars are often used for “corrections” by inflicting pain any time the dog pulls, lunges, barks or performs an undesired behavior. These types of training tools are known for exacerbating behavioral issues such as fear and aggression. What should be a pleasurable and rewarding experience for the dog turns into a scary and painful one.

Instead, try using training equipment that prevents your dog from pulling on leash without using pain. Training tools such as Sensation, Freedom or Easy Walk Harnesses, and Gentle Leaders use slight pressure to help discourage your dog from pulling. Using proper training equipment can reduce pulling by 98% - the other 2% must be taught! San Diego Humane Society uses Sensation Harnesses and Gentle Leaders to train animals at our shelter, as well as participants in our public training programs.

Practice loose leash walking exercises:

- **Attention Exercise:** Reward your dog for checking in with you and giving you eye contact voluntarily.
- **Red Light/Green Light Exercise:** Place a small pile of treats about 4-5 feet away from you and your dog. Wait until there is no tension on the leash and then move forward towards the treats. If your dog pulls and the leash is tight, stop and wait for him to release the tension. Once the leash is loose, start the game again. The goal is to get to the pile of treats on a completely loose leash.
- **Combine attention with Red Light/Green Light:** Once your dog has an understanding of the game above, take the training out on the road. You will no longer need a pile of treats at the end of the rainbow, instead you will reward your dog for checking in (making eye contact) with you while on your walks. If your dog pulls, stop and wait for him to release the pressure. This may take some time at first, but it will pay off in the end!
- **Enroll your dog in a basic obedience class or loose leash walking workshop:** San Diego Humane Society offers training classes for all levels. To register for classes or for more information, please visit www.sdhumane.org, or call our Behavior Helpline at (619) 299-7012 ext. 2244.