

Down Dog Digest



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How to teach your dog to walk nicely In five simple steps

Do you enjoy long, pleasant strolls with your dog, or are your walks full of frustration?

Do you love that feeling of companionship or do you feel unimportant, out of control - a passenger to your pulling pooch?

All dogs will try to pull if allowed because they all walk faster than us humans, even the tiniest chihuahua. So in this issue I'm focusing on how to teach your dog to walk nicely on a loose lead.

But first - what type of dog walker are you? Which description matches you best?

The rusher grabs the lead or harness, clips it on the dog, dashes out of the door, strides away down the road, all the while checking their watch. They spend the walk thinking about what they have to do when they get home. The dog trots or runs alongside, occasionally glancing at the owner, aware of the constant aura of stress.

The Procrastinator thinks about taking the dog for a walk but decides it's too wet, or windy, or sunny, or dark, or cold, or... After all, there's always tomorrow, and they WILL go for a nice long walk to make up then. Honestly. The dog sighs and goes to lie down in his bed, to dream of the lost opportunities.

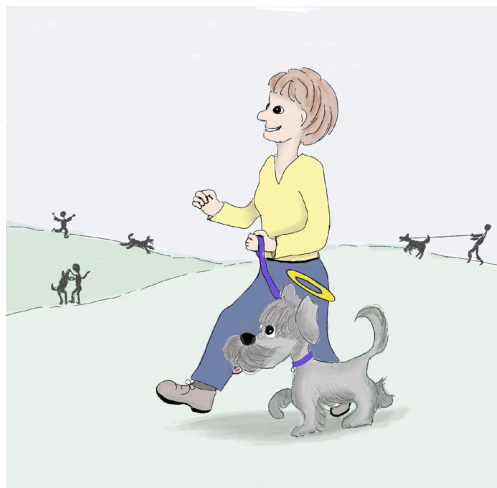
The Power Walker dons athletic gear, straps on their pedometer, grabs the dog and strides off. The route is chosen to suit the athletic needs of the owner. There is no stopping or hesitation, just the regular beat of feet on road round the proscribed route. The dog lags behind as much as possible, trying to have the odd sniff as they whip past enticing posts and bushes.

The Timekeeper sticks to a very clear schedule. They must walk the dog for one hour every morning and night, come rain, hail or shine. They have a morning route and an evening route. Every day is the same. The dog enjoys the time out, but dreams of a change of routine, just sometimes. Just for a change.

The Dreader spends most of the day worrying about taking the dog for a walk. Their fear is about their dog's behaviour. Today might be the day he pulls them over, or breaks his lead and attacks another dog, or runs off and they can't get him back. The owner takes a

deep breath and sets off, alert the whole time for possible hazards and keeping the lead taut and short. The dog spends the time being frustrated he can't get to the enticing smells, other dogs, or have some freedom like his mates in the park.

The Oblivious plugs in their iPhone, dons their headphones and sets off. They love this time out when they can listen to their music



How to teach your dog to walk nicely

or audiobook, not minding that they are taken where their dog wants to go. The dog pulls like a steam train, runs up to bother other dogs, barks at everything and trips up the odd granny.

The Delegator takes their dog out - but it's off lead the whole time. They ignore their dog pestering people, frightening children, bothering other dogs, stealing balls, jumping up, and a myriad of other obnoxious habits. The dog has a whale of a time. Other people and dogs don't. The delegator doesn't care, after all, his dog is getting a good run.

The Down Dog client has learnt how to train their dog to do what they want. They've practised hard and the results have paid off. Their walks are a mix of aerobic exercise and training games and they allow their dog plenty of sniffing. Their dog ignores other dogs and greets people and their dogs politely when allowed. They bask in the joy and delight of owning a pet dog.



Stopping pulling

The best way to stop pulling is to never let it start. The next best way is to start training – now.

Teach your puppy what you want, or re-train your pulling pooch using these same methods. Start in a boring space: indoors is perfect.

Step 1) Eye contact – look at me

Getting your dog's attention is vital. They can't learn if they can't pay attention to you. Have some favourite treats in a small container or treat bag within reach. Wait for your dog to look up at you. As soon as their eyes gaze at yours, praise (say "yes!"), smile and give him a treat.

Throw another treat a short distance away on the floor then wait for your dog to look at you again. Practice this simple game often, everywhere you can around your house and garden. Then add a collar or harness and lead and repeat the game.



Step 2) How to hold a lead

Hold the lead in the hand opposite the side you want your dog to walk. Hold it by your tummy and grab your belt or waistband to "fix" it in position. The lead should be long enough to create a J-shape from your hand to your dog's collar or harness. This leaves the hand closest to your dog to do the training work.

Step 3) Deliver food by leg seam

When your dog looks up at you, praise and quickly deliver a treat to your dog right by your leg, where your trouser seam is (or would be). Repeat several times. Then take a small step and wait for your dog to move closer to you. As soon as they do, praise and treat by your leg. Repeat until your dog moves into position by your leg every time.

Step 4) Change direction and speed

Gradually take more steps between treats. Don't rush this stage – it's always better to give more treats rather than fewer. Once your dog will walk a few steps with you, start to change direction, or change the speed you move. Have fun but keep rewarding your dog frequently.

Step 5) Move training outside

Repeat Steps 1 to 4 in a different space. Move the training into your garden. Try outside your front door or garden gate. If your dog can't do it at home, they won't be able to walk nicely out and about. Take your time and do the training!

Busting dog walk myths

Myth 1: "You must walk your dog for at least an hour every day because your dog needs the exercise"

Partly true. Your dog does need some physical exercise to stay fit and healthy. But often much less than you think.

Younger dogs need more exercise than older dogs, once they are out of puppyhood. Dogs from the hunting, working and herding groups need the most. Border collies and Husky types will take whatever they can get. Some small terriers have Olympic marathon runner stamina.

Other breeds vary hugely in their need for exercise. Most companion dogs are happy with a short half hour dander. Many large and giant breeds may also be happy with shorter walks.

Myth 2: "If your dog is too full of energy you need to walk him more"

There are two reasons for dogs being hyper and not settling: overstimulation, or, surprisingly, boredom. Both types find it difficult to settle in the house, and exhibit unwanted behaviours such as chewing, or nipping, or barking at everything, or jumping all over visitors.

Boredom is linked to a lack of stimulation, so the remedy is simple - do more with your dog.

Dogs who are overstimulated start to crave the "buzz" and so they sometimes cannot relax. Owners think they need more exercise which creates a vicious circle. Such dogs also show compulsive behaviours, such as chasing a ball repeatedly, never wanting to stop, even when they are physically tired.

These dogs need mental tasks to do - practising basic training exercises during walks, plenty of sniff time especially on the way home so they wind down, and feeding in novel ways.

Myth 3: "If your dog is bored, walk more."

Think about your dog's day, How long does he spend eating? How long is he walked for? How

long do you spend playing with him?

For many dogs, the total of those things each day is often around an hour or so. An average dog will sleep for around 16 hours a day. So most dogs have at least 6 hours of the day with nothing to do. We have our work, we read books, watch TV, listen to the radio, browse the internet and chat with friends. We don't have time to be bored. But dogs do.

It's not about more or longer walks. The trick is to do more in the time you spend with your dog. Change your route or go to a new place sometimes. Practice good loose lead walking, revise things you've learnt in class, such as sit, down, stand, wait/stay. Do some wild agility - walking on walls, jumping logs or on and off benches or tables.

Walks don't always need to be longer to help bored dogs. They need to be more fun.

Myth 4: "Walk your dog because he needs the exercise."

Partly true. Of course dogs need some physical exercise, just like us, to keep fit and healthy. Daily walks are important. But the physical benefits are only part of the story. The mental exercise is the most important thing.

Mental work tires your dog much more than physical exercise - 5 minutes mental effort is as tiring as 20 minutes physical exercise. Doing something like asking for sit, or down, every 20-30 paces provides lots of practice and also means you do things in lots of different places. The best mental exercise for your dog is using his nose. Allow your dog to sniff. Lots.

Sniffing is your dog's main sense and he needs to use it. Throw toys or food into longish grass for him to sniff out. Teach him to track back to find things.

Have fun together and enjoy your walks.



Carol's Challenge

This issue your challenge, should you wish to accept it, is: Take our Walkies questionnaire.

1. Daily walks with my dog:

- A) Are a joy and I look forward to them
- B) Are a chore but I walk fairly regularly, even though my dog pulls badly
- C) Are a nightmare - my dog won't walk

2. When I get out my dog's lead or harness:

- A) My dog gets excited at first but calms quickly
- B) My dog becomes a whirling dervish
- C) My dog runs and hides

3. When we get to the door:

- A) My dog sits and waits while I open the door
- B) My dog pushes through the door ahead of me
- C) My dog tries to hang back

4. Once outside:

- A) My dog waits patiently for me then we walk on
- B) My dog is desperate to get going
- C) Outside? I struggle to get outside and if I do, my dog just sits and refuses to move

5. On the walk:

- A) We enjoy our walk. I let my dog sniff regularly
- B) My dog drags me from tree to gatepost.
- C) If I'm lucky, we manage a few steps but I get frustrated and have to drag him to get anywhere

6. During the walk:

- A) My dog and I play and do some training
- B) My dog gets distracted by dogs, cats or birds and tries to chase them
- C) My dog seems to just want to sit and watch

7. When meeting other people on your walk:

- A) My dog ignores them but is happy to say hello
- B) My dog pulls me towards them then jumps all over them. It's embarrassing.
- C) My dog tries to hide behind my legs

8. In general I'd say:

- A) My dog and I have a great time
- B) We get lots of exercise, but I worry my dog will hurt himself with the way he pulls so much
- C) My dog seems to hate walking and he just wants to get back home all the time

Now add up the total number of As, Bs, and Cs you scored.

Check your results below.

Mostly As: Well done. You've obviously taken our Wonderful Walkies or Perfect Pet course, have worked hard and have done the homework. Congratulations and enjoy your walk with your perfect pet.

Mostly Bs: You need some help to make the walk pleasurable for both of you. If your dog gets over excited, pulls like a train, jumps up at everyone, tries to chase things and/or drags you around, it isn't fun - for either of you. Follow the ideas in this newsletter.

Mostly Cs: You've either got a new puppy or rescue dog, or a tiny companion breed. Puppies need loads of time just watching the world happen. But they will walk eventually. Rescue dogs need time to settle into their new environment and also need time to work things out. Some tiny companion breeds just don't want to walk very far (though many do). If your dog seems scared of everything, please ask us for help.

We hope you've enjoyed this Down Dog Digest.

Please feel free to share it with any friends, neighbours or family members you think might find it interesting.

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