

Behavior Solutions: Pulling on the Leash

Being dragged down the street by a dog that does not walk quietly on a leash can drain most of the pleasure out of a walk and make it almost impossible to walk in company.

While your dog gasps and wheezes for air because he is pulling so hard, you are forced to bound toward an interesting scent or a tempting tree. What should be an enjoyable walk turns into a grim tug of war. Pulling on the leash may seem like an unmanageable problem, but by using Starmark's techniques it can be overcome.

Reasons for Pulling on the Leash

A dog pulls on the leash because he is curious and wants to explore his environment, he is excited by something he sees or his owner has reinforced this unruly behavior without realizing it. You may have noticed that the harder you pull on the leash to restrain your dog, the harder he pulls in return. This is instinctual behavior known as the "opposition reflex." This reflex comes in handy when training sled dogs and weight-pulling dogs, but it can be eliminated from your household pet by using Starmark's training techniques.

Some dogs may pull or lunge ahead out of dominance. If your dog is displaying any aggressive behavior, consult with a professional training and behavior specialist.

Effecting a Positive Change

The best way to stop a dog from pulling on the leash is to stop the pulling from becoming a habit in the first place. Even a young puppy can learn to walk quietly on a leash. The Pro-Training Clicker makes teaching puppies to walk on a loose leash fun and easy. When you take your puppy for a walk, first let him relieve himself in a designated

area. Then, choose an area that is free of distractions for your first walk. When your puppy pulls ahead and the leash becomes taut, stop and let him come back toward you until the leash is loose again. Then click and reward him with a treat and praise.

Continue walking when the leash is loose, but whenever it tightens again, stop and repeat the above exercise. Make sure you praise and reward your puppy while he is walking on a loose leash, not just when he lets up after pulling. This will help him clearly understand that it is the calm walking that is rewarded.

Gradually introduce your puppy to areas that have more distractions and reward him with a special treat to keep his attention. This process takes time and patience, but it is well worth it to have a dog that walks by your side instead of dragging you everywhere.

The Pro-Training Clicker works just as effectively for adult dogs as it does for puppies. First let your dog relieve himself in a designated area. Then, choose an area that is free from distractions and walk with him at your normal pace. If the leash becomes tight, turn around immediately and walk in the opposite direction until your dog catches up with you. When the leash becomes loose again, click and reward him with a treat.

Continue walking, and repeat the above exercise whenever your dog forges ahead. Your dog should match his pace to yours, not the other way around. Be sure to praise and reward your dog for the times when he walks by your side on a loose leash.

Gradually introduce your dog to areas with more distractions and reward him with a special treat to keep his attention. This process takes patience and time, but the results are well worth it.

Whether you are teaching a puppy or an adult dog to walk on a loose leash, it is important to allow your dog to relieve himself before you begin your walk. With time, he will learn

that the walk can begin only after he eliminates, which will encourage him to do his business much faster.

Several training aids can help your dog walk calmly by your side. The head collar, which loops around the dog's neck and jaw, works on the principle that where the head goes, the body will follow. If your dog pulls, the head collar will turn his head to the side so that he will not be able to pull you forward. Your dog will soon learn that pulling on the leash will not take him where he wants to go. Make sure to allow time for your dog to become comfortable wearing the head collar around your home before using it on walks.

The Pro-Training Collar is another training aid that provides gentle control when walking on a leash and it can speed results. When your dog pulls against the leash, the circumference of the Pro-Training Collar gets smaller. This makes the collar's scientifically engineered elements compress, creating a mild pressure on your dog's neck, similar to the nip that a mother dog may give her puppy. This pressure does not hurt your dog, but it will deter him from pulling. Always praise and reward your dog for walking on a loose leash. The Pro-Training Collar comes with a step-by-step guide to using it correctly.

Walk This Way

Taking a walk should be a pleasure for both owner and pet, but if your dog pulls on the leash, your frustration and irritation will far outweigh the fun. At Starmark, we believe that a well-behaved dog is a happy dog and a better companion. Each dog is unique, and so is his owner. That's why we offer a variety of techniques, customizing your dog's training experience to suit his personality and your individual needs. Using our training techniques, which emphasize consistency and patience, your dog soon can be walking

quietly by your side on his leash, turning what was once a chore into a welcome chance to unwind.

Trainer Developed: Academy Tested

The certified training and behavior specialists at Starmark's Academy created this behavior solutions guide with you and your dog's needs in mind. Products mentioned in this guide are available at pet supply retailers, as well as online at our web site www.dogtrainingandboardingaustin.com. All products, guides and streaming video lessons are tested and approved by the certified training directors of Starmark Academy, our accredited school for professional dog trainers. It is the hands-on experience of our training division, combined with the vast technical knowledge and experience of the Starmark Academy staff that allows us to bring you useful and unique dog training and behavior solutions. We train dogs just like yours every day; we work with owners just like you every day. Thank you for choosing Starmark, the world leader in pet education. For additional pet solutions and information about our products, please visit Starmark online at our web sites: www.dogtrainingandboardingaustin.com; www.schoolfordogtrainers.com; and www.starmarkacademy.com.

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