



## Loose Leash Walking

Until you perfect your skills of teaching your dog to “heel,” or if you prefer to take a more relaxed approach when walking your dog (allowing him to sniff and explore some ... in other words, just “be a dog”), you will still want your dog to walk in a well-mannered way. This means teaching your dog not to pull ahead of you on the leash.

### Reward Only Appropriate Behavior

When your dog is pulling ahead, it is because they want to get to something . Don’t reward this inappropriate behavior by continuing to move forward. Instead, as soon as they start to create tension on the leash, freeze. It’s not necessary to say anything; just stand completely still, and do not start moving forward again until the tension on the leash slackens. When your dog does releases the tension, reward them by resuming the walk. If you like, you can also offer praise or a treat. Soon your dog will learn that they are not going to get anywhere unless they walk loosely on the leash.

### Ways to Release Tension on the Leash

If your dog needs a bit of extra help learning to release the tension on the leash, you can try the following:

- If the leash gets tight, quickly but gently turn and walk in another direction, or (carefully) start walking backwards. This will make your actions a bit unpredictable and interesting to your dog, and help keep his focus on you.
- Practice leash walking indoors by placing some of your dog’s food on the floor on the opposite side of the room. Allow your dog to approach the food, but only as long as the leash remains loose. As soon as the leash tightens, freeze, and don’t resume walking until the tension slackens.
- If you have an assistant available, you can use the same indoor practice method, but with your helper holding the dog’s favorite toy on the opposite side of the room. Your helper can place the toy inside a bag and rattle it around to entice your dog to go investigate it.

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The Austin Dog Alliance, a non-profit 501(c)3 organization, provides the following programs:

- Rescue: Our foster parents provide a nurturing home environment for dogs.
- Youth Outreach: Dog-related educational programs for area schools and youth groups.
- Deaf Community: Uniquely tailored youth and adult dog training taught in sign language.
- Dog Training: We provide a wide variety of fun and educational dog training classes.
- Pet Therapy: We provide seminars, classes, evaluations, placement, and support to therapy teams in local schools, hospitals, and nursing homes.

