

# Leash Pulling

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When your puppy pulls on a leash, he is trying to get from point A to point B faster than you are. When your young dog pulls on the leash, stop walking and wait for him to turn and look back at you. The moment he turns his attention toward you, mark the behaviour (paying attention to you) with a word like “yes” or click your clicker and have him come to you for the reward.

Consistency is the key. You must stop any forward movement every time he pulls on the leash. **Wait for him to pay attention to you and then mark and reward** the correct behaviour. You can also take a step or two backward or change direction if he is still pulling on the leash.

Another way to address leash pulling with your puppy is to tether him to your waist with a leash. A six-foot leash should be used when using the tethering method. Make sure your puppy is light enough to not pull you off balance. You do not want to get hurt in the process. Begin using the tether inside the house at first. Once he has adjusted to being within the leash distance from you, try the tether outside. This method can get him used to going only a few feet ahead of you.

When the puppy is where you want him, next to your side or walking on a loose leash, gently give him a few little pats on the head or mark with “yes” or a click from your clicker so he begins to understand what you want him to do: **to walk on a loose leash**. Every so often, you can give him a treat for being such a good boy.

These methods work with some puppies, but not all. Many puppies have lots of energy and can experience a bit of a challenge walking at our slower pace. For these dogs, some wonderful training aids can help with leash pulling. Two of the tools you can use are **head collars** and **halters**. When using any kind of head collar, you will want to first desensitize your dog to wearing it. Some dogs are concerned when you first try to fit them with head collars, and a halter may be a better option to start with. Your Patient Behaviour Advocate will decide which head collar or halter is best for your puppy, based on the challenges you are facing and the bone structure of your puppy. Head collars and halters are training tools and should be used as such. Once your puppy has stopped pulling on the leash, you can gradually go from the head collar or halter to a flat-buckled collar, based on whether your puppy is still trying to pull.

When taking your dog for a leisurely walk as a reward for relieving himself, do not expect him to walk at a heel position. Heeling (dog taught to walk exactly at your knee and hold that position) is good to use in a crowded situation or in the obedience ring. It is not a normal position for any animal for walking. Heeling does not give the puppy an opportunity to check out all the interesting smells that attract his attention. It is believed that dogs learn many things about other animals through their ability to smell where other animals have been. Give your puppy that opportunity.



*If you have any questions or concerns, please contact us*