



Everyday Walking Train as You Walk

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While teaching your dog the components of heelwork, it's important to gently reinforce appropriate walking position and a relaxed leash. This routine should be done for one to two minutes at a time when you are out leash walking your dog. You will be teaching your dog the finer points in a non-distracting environment until your dog can find the heel position on cue. Then you can start combining the components of heelwork.

This procedure will be easiest to teach using clicker training so you can mark exact moments of correct performance for your dog.

1. Your dog must know where the end of the leash is. Unless you have clearly released your dog to go ahead for some reason, the "Arm's Length Rule" must be in effect. Your dog will be on your left.
2. Put the loop on your right wrist and have some treats in your hand. If your bait bag is on the right side, you should be able to access it easily to reload your hand.
3. Hold the leash in your left hand at a point where, when your hand is by your side, you can easily reach your dog's collar with either hand. If you are giving more leash than this, your dog is too far away. Keep both hands quietly by your side and don't let your dog pull them away from that position.
4. Stand and wait until your dog settles and click or otherwise mark moments when s/he lets up tension on the leash. After the mark, quickly put a treat beside your left foot.
5. When your dog has settled and is attentive to you, go forward. If your dog stays beside you for a few steps, click/mark and place a treat beside your left foot while the leash is relaxed. If your dog charges ahead, stop and wait. Do the settling routine again. If this cycle goes on too long, try taking a step or two backward to bring your dog facing you.
6. This will be your process for about one minute, one sidewalk square, or other measure. You should have a time or distance to measure progress. If your measure is a sidewalk square, for instance, you should be able to do a full sidewalk square eight out of ten times before trying for two sidewalk squares.
7. At the end of your session, give your dog a release and let him sniff around, potty, or do some other relaxing activity at the end of the leash.

This process may feel awkward and frustrating at first, but with continued practice, both you and the dog will get better with it. Allowing your dog to walk ahead or you or even beside you

on a tight leash will simply result in your dog learning that he makes progress by pulling you along.

TEACHING YOUR DOG TO DO A SLOW APPROACH

Young, inexperienced dogs always lack impulse control, and friendly ones tend to do out-of-control greetings. If you look carefully at the sequence of events, you will see that the dog actually prepares to do the greeting at quite some distance from the subject. Teaching dogs to pace their approach will help them gain control over these natural and normal impulses.

A useful tool is “bridging.” In operant conditioning, the click, whistle, or “yes” is called the “terminal bridge.” It marks the moment the animal has accomplished the desired behavior and is entitled to a reward.

The use of an “intermediate bridge” is helpful to give the desired behavior an extended duration. To use an intermediate bridge, first you have to establish the marker. Most people use “Goodgoodgood” or “Yesyesyesyes” chained together in a long, undulating sound. You can even say, “Feetfeetfeet” if that sounds right to you.

Start by walking your dog toward a wall, a fence, or even a chair, to establish the bridging marker to your dog, and to rehearse the procedure. Do not try to meet a person in this fashion until you can successfully walk your dog toward something inanimate and get a sit with a reward.

Start about ten feet away from your object. Have your dog begin in a sit beside you with a relaxed leash. Give your cue (“Heel,” “Let’s go,” etc) and set out, giving your bridging marker as you go, and end by asking for a sit at the target destination.

Once your dog is successful in this task eight times out of ten, ask some people to help you by standing still without greeting your dog while you and the dog approach them. Once you have approached and your dog is in the sit, they may quietly pet him or her, low on the chest or under the chin. As they begin to retreat, take a step or two away from them with your leash in the “Arm's Length Rule” position.