

Loose- Leash Walking

with **DOG ADVENTURES NORTHWEST**

Let's start this out by saying "loose-leash walking" five times fast, just to get it out of your system. Saying those three words in that order has taken us literally years to master, but we are here to tell you that it can be done.

We are also here to tell you that you absolutely can have a dog that is not a tornado on a rope.

If we can't teach you to be able to drink a cup of coffee without a lid while strolling with your pup through your neighborhood, we will buy you that cup of coffee.





Let's get started.

Loose-leash walking is taking a relaxed stroll with your dog. It's not a "heel," where your dog is dutifully keeping pace right at your side, their eyes on you. That's a fun trick for rally obedience, but usually not all that helpful for most pet dog owners. Instead, loose-leash walking allows your pup to sniff, explore, look around, and get some much-needed mental stimulation... all while simultaneously being aware that there is a human at the other end of the leash. When you walk with your dog, you want the leash to look like the letter J, and not like a dash. **When you walk with your dog, you want to actually enjoy it, and not be yanked down the sidewalk by a panting bulldozer.**



Before we get to the specifics, here are the three basic principles to apply to any skill you'd like to teach your dog:



Set your dog up for success.

Be sure to meet your dog's basic needs before training with them. Make sure they are feeling safe, comfortable, and secure in their surroundings, all before you start to train. Work in a place where your pup can focus, and at a time of day when they can be successful.



Teach your dog to love the behaviors you want to see.

The fastest way to teach your dog what is acceptable in people-town is to teach them to actually love our rules. Help your dog sincerely love the behaviors you are teaching by pairing/rewarding those behaviors with things that dogs already love. (Here's lookin' at you, Pavlov.)



Start at the beginning.

Don't expect post-doctoral behavior of your preschooler. Start easy, and gradually work through challenging but achievable goals. When training is easy and fun, your dog will love to learn and to build on their skills.



Now that you are starting off on the right paw, here are the five steps we take clients through on the journey to loose-leash walking...



STEP ONE:
**Identify the
desired behavior**

What behavior do you want your dog to exhibit while out on a walk?

- Walking by your side and responding appropriately when you change direction
- Checking in with you via head turns and eye contact



STEP TWO:
**Teach your dog to love
the desired behaviors**

There is nothing intuitive or inherently reinforcing about loose-leash walking, so pair what you want (a loose leash) with what your dog wants (food, toys, praise, sniffing, etc). Let your dog know that sticking with you leads to all of the things they already love!



STEP THREE:
Put it on cue

The only way to teach a dog the meaning of a cue is by pairing the name of the behavior with the actual behavior. Pick a word that means, "hey pup, stick with me" and then pair it with the behavior. You can name it whatever you like: "let's go," "this way," "cucumber." Seriously, it doesn't matter what you call it, as long as you're consistent. Once you successfully pair the cue in one environment, move to a different place and start all over.



STEP FOUR:
Proof the behavior

OK, so now you've got a dog who is totally excited about walking by your side and frequently checking in with you via eye contact and/or head-turns. Awesome! Good human! Now it's time to focus on building distance and distraction in a measured way.



STEP FIVE:
Call in the experts!

Now that you have a sense of the underlying concepts, drop us a line so that we can work on the specifics together. We'll walk you through every step, showing both you and your dog how to have a fun and stress-free walking experience.



BONUS:

Receive \$50 off of your first service with Dog Adventures Northwest by noting "**Promo \$50 Off**" when you request services!

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