

# Does Your Dog Pull On Leash?

It's not just your dog! It takes two to pull. Dogs do not pull if there is no one dangling at the end of the leash! Both you and your dog need to break old habits. Your dog pulls because someone, somewhere at some time, took a step when he put tension on the leash.

He continues to pull because it continues to be a rewarding experience. He pulls, and he gets to the car. He pulls and he gets to greet that other dog in class. He pulls and the neighbor lady across the street tells him how lovely he is, even though he is now not JUST pulling but is also climbing up the front of her with his muddy dog paws, to which she replies, "it's ok, I don't mind!"

## What gets rewarded, gets repeated.

Here is the elusive answer to the ever-present question of  
**HOW DO I TEACH MY DOG NOT TO PULL??**  
Don't walk forward if there is tension on the leash.

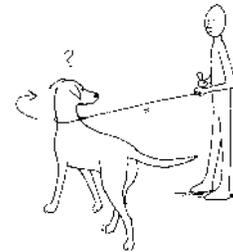


When the dog applies ANY tension to the leash at all ...

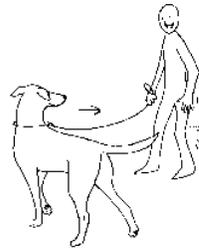
Immediately stop. Be a tree. Keep your hands close to your body.



When the dog turns to see what happened to you, praise for his attention...



...and encourage the dog back into heel position next to you - if necessary, take a few steps backwards.



As long as the dog is in the magic spot next to your leg, continue praising, give food rewards, make it the best possible place in the world to be. If he loses concentration and there is any tension on the leash at all, stop and repeat the above sequence.



*\*gasp\** Sounds way too simple doesn't it?

Simply STOP every single time you feel the slightest tension on the leash and the pulling will go away. (Yeah, right.) No, honest - It really, really works!

The truth is, that if you tire your dog out first with a good game of fetch and then take him for a walk in a quiet non-distracting place every day this week with only ONE goal: to walk without tension and you absolutely refuse to take a single forward step when you feel tension on the leash, he will discover that pulling is "broken" and that the tension is a cue to slacken the lead. You will see the light bulb go on when he realizes this. If you are consistent and don't give up, he will learn it. He will have good days and bad, but if you are diligent he will figure it out.

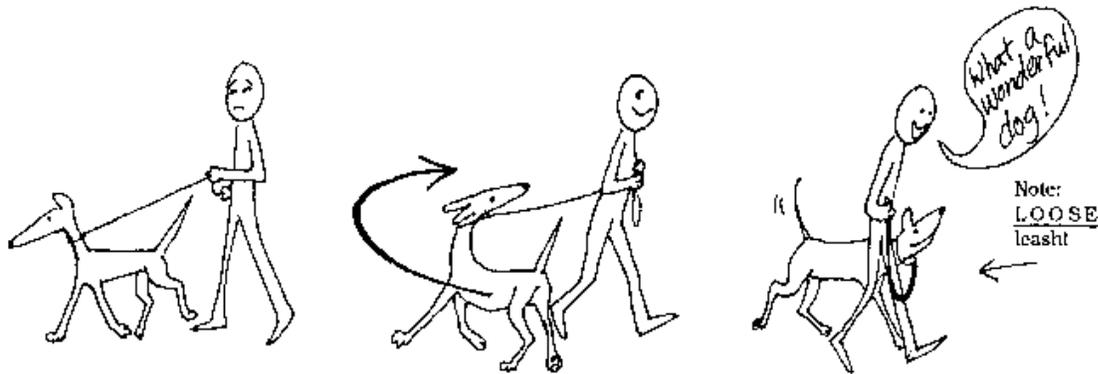
The other problem is that YOU want to get where you are going as much as your dog does.



Responding you your dog's pull has been rewarding to you, too. You are probably thinking right this instant: "How will I ever get to the car, the park, the house, by standing still for heaven's sake?"

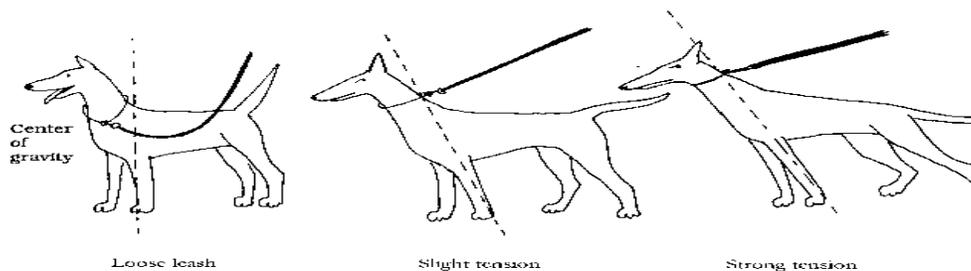
**BE CONSISTENT.**

What if you stop and he just keeps pulling? (See pictures below) Stop for a couple of seconds and wait, if your dog continues to strain like a maniac, turn abruptly and walk away from your dog (imagine you are facing 12 on the clock, you are going to turn and head for 4 o'clock.) The diagonal direction will set him off balance and he will turn toward you, as he catches up, PRAISE and deliver a treat in heel position - next to the seam of your pant leg. (This assumes that the dog is walking on your left side. If he is on your right, you will turn and head for 8 o'clock.) Then continue on your way.



**The first commandment of leash training:**

**DO NOT PROCEED FORWARD IF YOUR DOG IS APPLYING TENSION TO THE LEASH.**



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## LEASH HANDLING

Probably one of the most often presented behavioural problems is from dog owners that have a dog suffering from on-leash reactivity (sometimes mistakenly referred to as aggression or dominance). Clients will tell me their dog “is fine off-leash”, but will lunge, bark and not listen when on-leash. I ask them to show me what they do with the leash when their dog starts to behave in this undesirable (and often embarrassing) way. The majority of the time, the owner will grab the leash close to the dog’s neck and hang on tight. This reaction from the human end of the leash is natural – we need to gain control of the situation. Our dog’s movement is erratic so we naturally try to stop this by shortening the leash. **But for the dog**, being on a short leash is frightening. Usually the dog is reacting to something that it perceives to be a danger. When any animal perceives a danger it automatically has 3 options to choose from: it can run, it can hide, or it can fight. By shortening the leash, we humans take away the options to run or to hide, leaving our dog with only one option which to fight.

One of the suggestions that work well for many of my clients is to simply lengthen the leash and walk away from the dog’s perceived danger. Let your dog know that you have taken control of the situation by choosing the option to run. You may walk away (you don’t have to run); the idea is that you are increasing the distance between what has made your dog react and your dog. This exercise is most successful when you turn away the moment you see your dog may be about to react, not after your dog is in a complete frenzy. Once your dog learns to trust your judgment, you can then begin retraining your dog to calmly accept the perceived danger. Your timing of redirection and praise in the retraining process is critical for your dog’s success and should be done under the guidance of a professional trainer.

If you recognize leash reactivity or have any behaviour issues with your dog, please feel free to contact me at 250-898-3173 or visit my website at [www.canineconduct.ca](http://www.canineconduct.ca).



## ***Loose Leash Techniques***

- **Luring**
- **Treat at arm's length**
- **Red Light, Green Light** - When the leash is tight you stop. When the leash is loose you walk.
- **About Turn** - Begin with your dog sitting on your left hand side. Start in front of your crate, home or car, whichever you are using as “home base”. Give the cue “this way” (save “heel” for an exact heel position) When the dog forges ahead of you, *before the leash goes tight*, cue the dog and quickly turn to the right (about turn) heading in the opposite direction. Lures can be used to lure the dog into the turn. Keep turning as the dog forges, gradually moving further from home base as the leash remains loose.
- **Speed Changes** - Constantly changing your speed will teach the dog to focus because your movements are unpredictable.
- **Step and Sit** - Begin with the dog sitting on your left hand side. Use a lure as you take one step and immediately stop and sit the dog. The lure becomes a hand signal. When the dog is able to control himself with one step and sit, take two steps before stopping and signaling the dog to sit. When the dog able to control himself with two steps and sit take three steps before stopping, then four and so on. If the dog loses control go back to your last point of success and begin again.
- **Keep Away** - This exercise must be performed in a secured environment. Begin with the dog sitting on your left hand side. Show the dog the motivator then run away from him. As he catches up and comes into position on your left hand side, click and treat, then run away again.
- **Watch Me** - Teach the dog to “watch me” on command. Begin with the dog sitting on your left hand side. Move very slowly using the treat to lure the dog’s focus up to your eyes. When the dog is able to stay in position gradually integrate about turns speed changes.
- **Check In** - Begin with the dog sitting on your left hand side. Ignore the dog, clicking and treating or praising the dog only when he looks at you. Use this technique at a slow walk, gradually building up to a normal pace, gradually integrating about turns and speed changes.
- **Mark The Moment** - Click and treat (or say “yes”) to mark the moment the leash is loose as often as possible then gradually fade the reward mark.



- **Throw Reward** - Begin with the dog on leash at a stand still. At the beginning the dog will target whatever is interesting in the environment, just ignore him. When he looks at you give an excited “yes” or click and toss a treat reward on the ground. The dog learns if he looks at you he will be rewarded with something better to target on the ground. The idea of this exercise is to not ask or tell the dog anything but reinforce him for offering it to you.
- **Crate Control** - Begin with the dog in a crate, gradually opening the door when the dog is sitting calmly and quickly closing it when he gets up. When door is open and dog remains sitting invite him out and begin to work with one of the above techniques directly in front of the crate.. When the leash goes tight immediately return him to the crate and begin again. The dog will learn that a tight leash means he is banished to the crate and will avoid allowing the leash to tighten in order to retain his freedom.
- **Targeting** - Teach the dog to target a target stick, clothes pin or other applicable target on your left hand side. Use the target to keep the dog in position while walking and gradually fade the target.
- **Shaping** - Click and treat successive approximations as the dog gets closer and closer to heel position.

**Once you have perfected the left side, start the training all over again on the right side!**

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Canine Communication Studies

**Norma Jeanne Laurette**

*Puppy Power & Canine Communication Studies  
Dog Training/Behaviour Therapy/Career Courses  
Founder & Chair, International Positive Dog Training Association (IPDTA)  
www.dogtrainingcareers.com*

HAPPINESS IS A CHOICE!!!

Jane’s Notes: You can say “YES” instead of using a clicker but you must first condition your dog to understand that the “YES” is a reward marker: say “YES” and deliver ONE treat; repeat, repeat, repeat until you see your dog react to the “YES” in a positive way. You can also click the leash and deliver one treat to teach the sight and sound of the leash is fun.

ALL of the preceding pages are to give you the tools needed to help your dog learn that a loose leash is rewardable. Play around with the different techniques and ideas to see what works best for the both of you. There is no magic wand when teaching a loose leash; the loose leash is based on your relationship with your dog. If you constantly correct and pull/jerk on the leash then it stands to reason your dog will disconnect from you and pull too. Remember: if you don’t pull, your dog won’t pull.

If your dog continues to pull, please set up an additional training session with me as you are doing a wonderful job teaching your dog TO pull and you don’t want that behaviour ingrained. Woof.

