



Leash Walking

While going out on walks is often very enriching and a great stress reliever for dogs, it can sometimes have the opposite effect, causing more stress for your dog and tipping them over their threshold.

Practice your leash manners by starting in a familiar area that isn't very exciting to your dog. This could be inside the home, the yard, driveway, a familiar and quiet street, etc. Practice the steps below first in that location, and then move on to more novel and exciting areas. You want to start easy and then work our way up, building that foundation up strong first before expecting them to walk perfectly when downtown in the middle of rush hour.

Starting Position

Lure your dog next to you and then into a sit. It doesn't need to be perfect, just that they are sitting near you with a slacked leash in a neutral position.

Keeping a Loose Leash

As you walk, reward your dog for not pulling and keeping a loose leash. Be sure to click and then reward them, either by tossing the treat on the ground in front of them or taking the treat from your hand, every few steps to start and then extend the amount of time between rewards. If/When your dog starts to pull, stop walking, stand in place, and lure them back to you and into the starting position. Once in the starting position begin walking again and continue the walk.

If you want your dog to walk more in a heel position, then the same techniques apply, but raise the criteria so that anytime your dog walks in front of you, stop and then lure them back to the starting position.

Checking In

Eventually your dog will begin to anticipate the reward coming and will start "checking in" with you, or looking and making eye contact with you as they walk. When your dog does this, click and reward. This will also help to discourage leash-grabbing and jumping while walking.

Pro-tip: if your dog is too excited to check in with you, either go to a quieter location, or try walking up and down the same stretch of road or trail a few times, and then try working on the training again. After your dog has sniffed around and seen all the sights that particular stretch has to offer, they'll likely be less interested in the environment and more ready to focus on you.

Equipment

Having the right equipment is important to help make walks more enjoyable and safe. A front clip harness is always recommend, unless there are medical restrictions that make another style of harness preferable. A six-foot flat leash is the most common and versatile leash to use for basic walking; if you are in area in which your dog can have a little more freedom to explore and run, then a long-line leash would be a good option to have, and they come in a variety of different sizes. If your dog tends to bite or mouth at their leash, then a chain lead may be a useful option to have as well.

Avoid retractable leashes as they offer little control and can break easily. Any type of walking equipment that uses aversive techniques is not recommended (such as prong collars, choke chains, or electronic collars) as they can cause injury or an increase in behavior issues. For a dog who pulls on leash, a back clip harness can actually make it easier for the dog to pull.



Recommended Equipment + Handling Tips for Happy Walkies

Equipment!

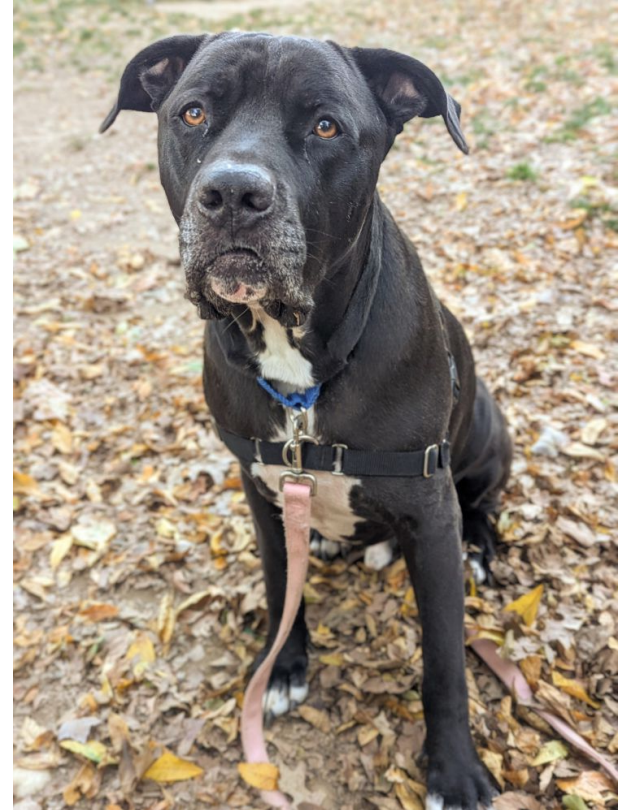


You'll have the best experience when you have the right tools for the job.

We recommend:

- Flat, Martingale collar
- Flat, 6-foot or longer clip leash
- Chest harness with option to clip in front

If you are looking to upgrade your gear and need financial assistance, email behavior@alexandriaanimals.org!



Flat, Martingale collar

- Tightens without pinching
- Minimizes risk of dog slipping out of collar
- Comfy material
- **Avoid Martingale collars with metal chains!**



Flat, Minimum 6-foot Clip Leash

- Keep it simple!
- ~6 feet allows dog room to explore but helps you maintain control
- Easy, comfortable grip



Chest Harness that can Clip in Front

- Relieves pressure on neck
- Gives you peace of mind
- Front clip can also fasten to collar for strong grip!
- Brands vary, but harnesses should fit snugly with only two fingers' worth of space.

[THESE](#) and [THESE](#) are some of our favorites, if you are considering purchasing a new harness!



Harness Recommendations



What we DON'T recommend:

- Pinch collars
- Electronic collars
- Prong collars



*If you are interested in trading in your
pinch, prong or electronic collar for new
gear, email
behavior@alexandriaanimals.org!*

Handling tips!



Leash Grip.

- Place your thumb through loop
- **NEVER** wrap the leash around hand or put the loop around your wrist
- Take up excess leash by folding it accordion style



Figure 1a



Figure 1b



Figure 1c

Leash Handling - Thumb and Finger Lock



Leash Handling - Your Body

- When you need solid control:
 - Feet hips width apart
 - Hips pointed in direction the dog is pulling
 - Short leash
 - Hands locked to belly



V.S.



Leash Handling - Using Leverage

- Keep one hand palm down on the line.
- Push down to maneuver your dog.
- Gives you more strength!
- Minimizes inadvertent leash correction!



Additional Tips

- Double knot your sneakers.
- Leave your headphones at home.
- Keep both hands on the leash as much as possible.
- Keep your hips pointing in the same direction as your dog's shoulders.
- Let your dog sniff!

