

Leash Training Your Dog

The next step in your dog's training program.

Brought to you by Training Your Puppy in 5 Minutes

In nearly every society, there are leash laws for dogs being walked out in public. You'll need to keep your puppy leashed while visiting the veterinarian or groomer, while walking in the park or while strolling through your neighborhood. Thus, it is imperative to teach your puppy how to behave while on a leash.

When your puppy is young, use a lightweight cotton leash that is easily washable. The leash will be dragged through the dirt, urinated on, chewed on and played with, so you want one that will hold up to frequent laundering. Then again, you might want a couple of these leashes, one to use while the other is being washed, or one to use as backup when puppy destroys the other one. Hey, no puppy is perfect!

Up to this point, puppy has learned everything with the leash dragging behind him or while not wearing one. If he has been prepared for wearing a leash by dragging a leash while working, he'll be ready for formal leash training. If not, start putting it on and getting him used to it while he is working and playing. Practice all of his puppy kindergarten behaviors prior to doing anything on a leash. Continue to hold all training sessions for only five minutes at a time. Keep him wanting more. Even the leash work should only consist of five minutes at a time. This is especially important when puppy is learning new things. He will be more easily tired and stressed, and you will lose his attention more quickly.

With leash training, you can begin by doing the come and sit with the leash dragging. You want to continue to promote pup's off-leash behaviors while he's learning to work on a leash. You also want him to continue thinking of training as a game. Make sure you have lots of treats or his special toy handy to reward him at the appropriate times. If you have been using a clicker to bridge puppy's behaviors, you can either place it in your right hand with the leash or put it away, using the word "Good," "Yes" or "Yippee," or making a clicking noise in your cheek as a substitute. You will need both hands available for leash training. The left hand should hold the reward while the right hand holds the leash. Keep your right hand either on your left hip or at your belly.

The same rules apply whether heeling on or off leash. The treat should be held near your left calf; you should bait your pup the entire time and you should praise and reward with the same good timing. Nothing changes just because you're holding a leash.