

## **A guide for Loose Lead walking:**

*Extra section especially for our Border Collies!*

Teaching loose lead walking, also known as loose leash walking, is essential for both the comfort and safety of both the dog and the owner during walks. Dogs pull on the lead for various reasons, which can stem from both instinctual behaviours and learned habits. Understanding these reasons is crucial for effectively addressing the issue.



### **Reasons Why Dogs Pull on the Lead:**

1. **Instinctual Behaviour:** Dogs are natural explorers and scavengers. When they sense something interesting or exciting, such as a scent or a sight, they may pull on the lead to investigate further. For example, a dog might suddenly lunge forward when catching the scent of another dog nearby.
2. **Excitement:** Dogs may pull on the lead out of excitement, especially when they anticipate something enjoyable, such as going for a walk, meeting other dogs, or reaching a favourite destination like the park. For instance, a dog might start pulling eagerly towards the park entrance when they realise they're heading there.
3. **Lack of Training:** Many dogs pull on the lead simply because they haven't been taught proper lead manners. Without guidance and consistent training, dogs may resort to pulling as a way to move forward or get what they want. For example, a dog might constantly pull ahead because they haven't learned that walking calmly by the owner's side is desirable.
4. **Desire for Freedom:** Dogs are naturally inclined to roam and explore their surroundings. When restrained by a lead, some dogs may pull in an attempt to gain more freedom of movement. For instance, a dog might pull persistently when they spot an open space where they want to run freely.
5. **Prey Drive:** Dogs with a high prey drive may pull on the lead when they spot small animals, such as squirrels or birds, triggering their instinct to chase. For example, a dog might suddenly dart forward when they see a squirrel running across their path.
6. **Socialisation and Habituation:** Dogs that haven't been properly socialised or exposed to different environments and stimuli may become overwhelmed or overstimulated during

walks, leading to pulling on the lead as a coping mechanism. For example, a dog might pull nervously when encountering unfamiliar sights and sounds on a busy street.

7. Lack of Focus: Dogs that are easily distracted or overly excited may struggle to maintain focus on their handler during walks, resulting in pulling behaviour. For example, a dog might pull persistently when they're more interested in sniffing the ground or greeting other dogs than walking calmly.

8. Physical Discomfort: Sometimes, dogs may pull on the lead due to physical discomfort, such as an ill-fitting collar or harness, pain or discomfort in their body, or discomfort caused by the lead itself. For example, a dog might pull because their collar is too tight and causes discomfort around their neck.

## **Methods to Address Pulling on the Lead:**

1. **Start in a Distraction-Free Environment:** Begin training in a quiet, familiar environment with minimal distractions. Remember to keep calm and make it fun. As your dog becomes more proficient, gradually introduce more challenging environments with increased distractions. For example, start training in your garden before progressing to a walk in an area with distractions.
2. **Clicker Training:** Pair a distinct sound (the click) with a reward to mark desired behaviours such as walking without pulling. For example, click and reward your dog when they respond to a cue to walk nicely on the lead.
3. **Stop-and-Go Method:** Stop walking immediately whenever your dog starts pulling on the lead. Wait for them to relax and return their attention to you before resuming the walk. For example, stand still and wait for your dog to stop pulling before continuing the walk.
4. **Change Direction Method:** Change direction abruptly whenever the lead becomes tense, encouraging your dog to follow your lead and pay attention to you. For example, turn around and walk in the opposite direction whenever your dog pulls ahead.
5. **Use of Harnesses and Head Collars:** Consider using a no-pull harness or a head collar to provide additional control and discourage pulling. For example, use a front-clip harness that redirects your dog's forward momentum when they pull.
6. **Consistency and Patience:** Set aside dedicated time for training sessions and practice regularly. Be patient with your dog and understand that learning takes time. Consistent reinforcement of desired behaviours will lead to lasting results. For example, practice loose lead walking during short, frequent walks and remain patient when your dog needs time to learn.
7. **Positive Reinforcement Lead Training:** Use positive reinforcement techniques such as verbal praise, treats, or toys to reward your dog for walking politely on a loose lead. For example, praise and reward your dog with a treat when they walk calmly by your side without pulling.

## **Why Corrections or Punishment Aren't Effective for Long-Term Results.**

When it comes to teaching our canine companions how to behave on a lead, the approach we take can have a significant impact on their learning and overall well-being. While it may be tempting to resort to corrections or punishment when our dogs pull on the lead, it's essential to understand why these methods often fall short in achieving lasting results.

One of the primary concerns with using corrections or punishment in dog training is the potential for creating fear and anxiety in our furry friends. Techniques such as jerking the lead or using aversive collars can instil a sense of apprehension, eroding the trust between dog and owner and potentially leading to behavioural issues like aggression or avoidance.

Corrections tend to suppress undesirable behaviours temporarily without addressing the root cause. Rather than teaching our dogs what we want them to do, they learn to avoid punishment by ceasing the behaviour altogether. This can result in a lack of clarity for the dog and frustration for both parties involved.

In some cases, punishment may even exacerbate behavioural problems, particularly in dogs prone to fear or aggression. Reactivity can escalate when dogs associate certain stimuli with punishment, leading to heightened levels of pulling or other undesirable behaviours during walks.

Furthermore, corrections fail to address the underlying reasons behind our dogs' behaviour. When a dog pulls on the lead, it may be due to factors such as excitement, lack of training, or discomfort. Without addressing these underlying issues and teaching alternative behaviours, we risk perpetuating the problem rather than solving it.

Another significant drawback of using punishment is the potential damage it can cause to the relationship between dog and owner. Dogs may come to associate their owner with negative experiences, leading to a breakdown in trust and a reluctance to engage in training or other activities together, punishment limits communication and understanding between the dog and the owner. Rather than effectively communicating what behaviour is desired, corrections can leave dogs confused or frustrated, hindering the learning process.

There's also the risk of physical harm or injury associated with certain punishment techniques. Harsh lead corrections or the use of aversive tools like choke chains or prong collars can cause discomfort or even damage to the dog's neck, throat, or trachea, as well as psychological distress.

In contrast, positive reinforcement-based training methods offer a more effective and humane approach to teaching loose lead walking and addressing behavioural issues in dogs. By rewarding desired behaviours and building a strong bond between dog and

owner, these methods promote lasting results while enhancing the relationship between canine companions and their human counterparts.

In conclusion, while it may be tempting to resort to corrections or punishment when dealing with lead pulling and other behavioural problems, it's essential to consider the potential consequences and seek out alternative approaches that prioritise the well-being and long-term success of our beloved pets.

### **Here are methods to address the various reasons why dogs pull on the lead:**

1. Instinctual Behaviour: Use positive reinforcement training to redirect your dog's attention back to you when they start to pull. Reward them with praise for walking calmly by your side.

Engage your dog's mind with training exercises and interactive games to help satisfy their natural curiosity and reduce their focus on distractions.

2. Excitement: Practice calmness exercises at home before walks or stand calmly looking outside of the front of the door until your dog is calm to help your dog learn to manage their excitement.

Start walks with a calm demeanour and only proceed when your dog is relaxed and focused on you.

3. Lack of Training: Implement consistent training sessions focused on loose lead walking using positive reinforcement techniques.

Use cues such as "heel" or "let's go" to communicate to your dog when they should walk calmly beside you.

Be patient and persistent, rewarding your dog for even small improvements in lead manners.

4. Desire for Freedom: Allow your dog some off-lead time in safe, enclosed areas where they can enjoy more freedom while still under supervision.

Use longer training leads (Long-Line - available from Pets at Home) when in open ground like a playing field, to give your dog a sense of freedom while still maintaining control and reinforcing good manners.

5. Prey Drive: Train your dog to focus on you and ignore distractions by practising obedience commands in the presence of triggers like squirrels or other small animals.

Use desensitisation and counter conditioning techniques to change your dog's emotional response to triggers, such as pairing the sight of squirrels with pets & praise, treats or toys.

6.Socialisation and Habituation: Gradually expose your dog to different environments, sights, sounds, and smells through controlled socialisation outings. Use positive reinforcement to reward calm behaviour in new environments and gradually increase the level of stimulation as your dog becomes more comfortable.

7.Lack of Focus: Practice attention-building exercises at home and during walks to strengthen your dog's focus on you.

**Here are some focus exercises that you can incorporate into your training routine.**

Name Recognition Game: Start by teaching your dog to respond to their name. Begin in a quiet environment with minimal distractions. Say your dog's name in an upbeat tone and when they look at you, immediately reward them with a treat or praise. Repeat this process several times until your dog consistently responds to their name by looking at you.

The "Watch Me" Command: Once your dog is reliably responding to their name, you can introduce the "watch me" command. Hold a treat between your eyes and say "Watch me." When your dog makes eye contact with you, reward them with a treat and praise. Gradually increase the duration of eye contact before giving the reward. Practice this command during short training sessions throughout the day.

Stop and Go: While walking with your dog on a lead, periodically stop walking and wait for your dog to naturally look at you. When they make eye contact, reward them with a treat and praise. Then resume walking. This teaches your dog that checking in with you leads to positive reinforcement and encourages them to pay attention to your cues during walks.

Change Directions: As you walk with your dog, suddenly change directions or make a U-turn. When your dog notices the change and looks at you for guidance, reward them with a treat and praise. This exercise teaches your dog to stay engaged and attentive to your movements during walks.

Hand Targeting: Teach your dog to touch their nose to the palm of your hand on command. Hold your hand out with your palm facing your dog and say "Touch." When your dog touches their nose to your hand, reward them with a treat and praise. This exercise encourages your dog to focus on you and strengthens the

bond between you.

**Distraction Training:** Gradually introduce distractions such as other dogs, people, or squirrels during walks. When your dog notices a distraction but remains focused on you, reward them with a high-value treat and praise. This teaches your dog to ignore distractions and maintain their focus on you, even in stimulating environments.

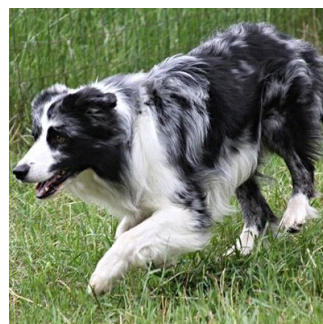
**Name Recall Practice:** Incorporate name recall exercises into your walks by calling your dog's name and rewarding them when they come to you. This reinforces their responsiveness to your cues and encourages them to stay engaged with you throughout the walk.

### **Border Collies are on a different level.**

Here's a guide on how to help Border Collies stop pulling on the lead by addressing their instinctive needs:

#### **Understanding Border Collies' Instinctive Needs:**

Border Collies are an intelligent and energetic breed with strong instincts shaped by their history as working dogs. Understanding these instincts is key to addressing their behaviours, including pulling on the lead:



1. **Herding Instinct:** Border Collies have a strong herding instinct ingrained in their genetics. They may exhibit behaviours such as chasing, circling, or nipping when they perceive objects or animals moving around them.

2. **High Energy Levels:** Border Collies have boundless energy and require regular physical and mental stimulation to stay happy and healthy. Without adequate exercise and mental enrichment, they may become restless or exhibit undesirable behaviours, such as pulling on the lead.

3. **Working at a distance from their handler:** Traditionally, Border Collies take instruction and guidance from their handler at a distance and are more often off-lead.

#### **Methods to Address Pulling by Fulfilling Border Collies' Needs:**

1. **Provide Sufficient Exercise:** Border Collies need ample opportunities to burn off excess energy through daily exercise. Engage them in activities such as brisk walks, jogging, hiking, or playing fetch in a secure area. A tired Border Collie is less likely to pull on the lead out of pent-up energy.

2.Mental Stimulation: Border Collies thrive on mental challenges as much as physical exercise. Incorporate brain games, obedience training, agility courses, or interactive toys into their daily routine to keep their minds engaged and prevent boredom.

### 3.Herding Games:

Channel their herding instincts into constructive activities. Set up simple herding games using toys or objects, where they can practice their natural behaviours in a controlled environment. This allows them to satisfy their instinct to herd without resorting to pulling on the lead.



4.Structured Training Sessions: Border Collies respond well to structured training sessions that provide clear guidance and boundaries. Teach them obedience commands such as "heel" or "leave it" and reinforce these behaviours through positive reinforcement techniques like treats, praise, or play.

5.Use Appropriate Equipment: Choose equipment that helps discourage pulling while providing comfort and control. Consider using a front-clip harness or a head collar designed to redirect your Border Collie's attention back to you when they pull on the lead. Avoid aversive tools like choke chains or prong collars, which can exacerbate behavioural issues.

6.Redirect Attention: Border Collies can easily become fixated on distractions during walks. Teach them a "look at me" or "focus" command to redirect their attention back to you when they start to pull. Reward them for responding to your cues and maintaining focus on you.

7.Consistency and Patience: Training a Border Collie to walk politely on a loose lead requires consistency and patience. Set aside dedicated time for training sessions and practice regularly in different environments. Be patient with your Border Collie and celebrate small successes along the way.

By addressing their instinctive needs through exercise, mental stimulation, structured training, and appropriate equipment, you can help your Border Collie overcome pulling on the lead while strengthening the bond between you. Remember to tailor your approach to suit your dog's individual personality and preferences, and seek guidance from a professional trainer if needed. With time and dedication, you can enjoy enjoyable walks with your well-behaved Border Collie by your side.



## **Seek Professional Help if Needed:**

If you're struggling to teach loose lead walking or if your dog exhibits particularly challenging behaviour, consider seeking guidance.

By integrating these methods and tips into your training routine with patience and consistency, you can effectively teach your dog to walk politely on a loose lead, enhancing the enjoyment of walks for both you and your furry companion.

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