

## **Revealed! Secrets to walking your dog the right way**

There you are, trying to get your pet to walk with you, but he's tugging in all kinds of directions and you seem to get back to where you were before, after poking at several non-descript bushes. Just then another owner passes by- her dog is at her heels and as they stroll down together, with no fuss at all, they look like they are enjoying it. As for you, you're still struggling and this time you're headed for a sniff at another bush! What is that lady doing that you aren't? How do you get your pet to walk the right way?

Well there's a trick to it! Apart from a 4-foot leash and a collar that won't slip off, here are some secrets that are keys to walking your dog the right way:

- Be your dog's leader
- Make your pet love the leash
- Get him/her to master the commands
- Train with the leash
- Practice consistently

### **Being the Leader**

Didn't you always follow the lead of someone you looked up to? Well, it's the same with your dog. He or she are going to do whatever you say if they see you as the leader- the alpha of the pack because they know that the alpha knows the best! When you bring your puppy home, and before you venture to take him or her for a walk, first establish your alpha quotient. Do this from day one by:

- Looking your pet in the eye, even as he growls.
- Looking the alpha as in decisive, determined and powerful.
- Making sure he respects your space and you.
- Feeding him at fixed routines and not when he or she wants it.
- Housebreaking him with a firm hand.
- Handling your pet's body, so that he accepts your domination.

These are the basics of what you must do to be the alpha of your dog, before you move on to walking him. This is because, walking is an activity, which demands that you be able to hold your pet's attention and be able to control him. He should respect you enough to do your bidding. Walking with your dog in essence is all about who has the upper controlling hand. If you have pampered your dog to the extent of letting him sleep on your bed, he will see you more as a littermate than the leader of the pack- and think about it from the dog's point of view- who in the world needs to listen to a littermate?!

By all means your puppy needs to be near you on his first night at the house, but must he or she sleep on your bed? Bring in the crate to your bedroom instead. Make him respect that you as the alpha get the bed, he as the subordinate gets the crate. Also show him or her affection all right, but don't go overboard with the petting. Similarly feed your pet according to the schedule you have fixed and not when your pup demands it.

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Be very firm during house breaking and set rules about chewing. Yes, a pup learns about his surrounding by chewing, but step in as the leader of the pack and set the rules. If you are not seen as the alpha by your pet, you can expect to be taken for granted by your pet. He will not listen to you and instead, manipulate you with his tender doleful looks. Show him what's right and wrong and be consistent in your behavior to him or her. Begin your relationship with your dog on the right foot and that would help you and your pet put the right foot forward when you go out for a walk.

### Loving the leash

Get your pet to see the leash as something like a reward. When your puppy has been good about his housebreaking drill slip a collar and leash on, kind of like a reward or treat, and let it trail around him or her. Make your pet comfortable with the idea of a collar around the neck. You can do this even when your puppy is really small, but do use a non-choking type collar and leash and don't do it more than a few times in a day. You don't want to overdo the treat till it means nothing!

You can slip on the collar and after he gets use to it, you can lead him around the house on a loose and not tight leash. Take care to lead and have your puppy follow. You are the leader, so be in control. If your puppy seems scared, talk in a soothing manner and use praise if he or she carries it off without fear. Do try and avoid scaring him off with the leash- you want to have your pet associate the leash with nice welcoming feelings rather than fear.

Choose the right collar. A choke or a pinch collar is good for a puppy. A buckle collar would give the dog a chance to slip his or her head out and bolt away. Do not leave your puppy inside the crate with a collar and leash on- it's not safe.

### Mastering the commands

Now that you have got him to like the leash, how about learning to obey to simple commands? It is a must to get your dog to understand some basic commands. If he or she can obey the basics, then training on a leash becomes so much easier. As the leader and the primary caregiver, you will need to start off on making your dog understand commands like:

- Sit
- Heel
- Sit-Stay
- Heel-sit
- Down-stay

**Teach your pet to sit:** Once you can lead your puppy around the house on a leash without scaring him and he in fact seems to be happy to slip on that collar and leash and follow your lead, it's time to learn to sit. Some things to remember:

- Hold the leash in your right hand.
- Sit your dog on your left hand side.

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Remember these points and after you lead your pup on the leash for a while, stop with him on your left hand side, gather the leash in your right hand and use your left hand to push your pet's bottom down as you give the command "Sit". As you are pushing him down, tug the collar and leash with your right hand. Once he or she is in the sitting position, say a word of praise. Begin to walk but when you stop, once again command your dog to sit by repeating the same actions. Repeat this consistently and your dog won't need that push to sit.

**Teaching your pet to heel:** Get your dog to heel. This means staying as close as possible to you while walking, preferably by your knee. To get a dog to heel as you walk, use the command word and hold a food treat close to your side. Let him or her come up and get him to stay close. If your pet is pulling away, step forward, tug at the collar and say "heel". Pat him and talk to him if he comes near. Don't say a word if he doesn't listen, just tug till he comes to your side. He or she should know that you would not stop him or her from sniffing and exploring as long as they walk near your knee.

**Teaching your pet the heel-sit:** If your pet can sit and knows what "heel" is all about, it's time to learn to sit whenever you stop walking. As you walk, make sure your dog is on your left side and command your pet to "heel". Once he gets close to you, put your left foot forward and stop walking. Say, "sit" and push him with your left hand and tug the collar to get him into the sit position. Repeat the command and praise him if he does your bidding. Repeat the action and each time, stick your left foot forward, so that soon it becomes the cue for him to automatically sit and you won't need to use the sit command. Do remember to have his attention as you walk and don't try and trick him with sudden halts.

**Teaching your pet the sit-stay:** This is a command that not only comes handy during walks but also at home during mealtimes. Basically this is an attempt to get your pet to sit and stay sitting even if you are away a short distance from him. Use a long leash. What you need to do is command your dog to sit and then hold an outstretched palm to your pet's face and say "Stay" as you step away from him or her. If your pet gets up from the sitting position to follow you, say no and make him sit again. Say "Stay" again and start moving away.

Begin with a count of five and work up to get him to sit for a minute. When you come back to him do so by circling him and making sure that he is on your left side. Till you get back he should be sitting and if he does, he needs a reward!

**Teaching your pet to stay down:** This command is intended to teach your dog to lay down, with his forelegs in front and his head down. This is a good command to teach him to accept you as the alpha. It's also useful while you walk him. You need to make your pet to lie down by using the command "down" and using pressure with the leash and collar or apply pressure to your dog's shoulders with your left hand to make him lie flat on the ground. You could also get you pet to sit and then as you repeat the command, pull his or her forelegs out and push him down gently.

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To get your pet to stay down, first command him to the down position and then say “Stay” as you walk away. If he gets up, force him down and repeat the stay command and once again walk away. Make him hold the position for a while and come back to have him at your left side.

### **Tips to make your pet obey your commands:**

- Use a commanding voice so that your pet knows the alpha means business
- Be gentle, when you apply pressure to get your dog into position, or he will think you are attacking.
- Don't get wound up in the leash.
- Praise and reward obedience.
- Repeat but not to the point of boredom

### **Training with the leash**

It's time for the walking now. The aim of the walk is to get your pet to walk close to you, follow your lead, heed your commands, sit when you stop and walk without pulling. You could walk around the house with your pet's leash attached to your belt while you go about the house and see if the dog stays close to you. You can have a dry run of the walk with your puppy or older dog, inside the yard and see if he pulls at the leash. If he does, immediately correct the pet's behavior by, giving a yank at the leash till he stops. Don't speak to him apart from a stern “No”. Give him no attention till he stops tugging at the leash but reward him when he stops the pulling. If you see him responding to your yanks, begin the walk outside.

As with all the commands, make sure that you have your dog on your left side and the leash in your right hand.

- Talk to your pet and tell him, that it's time to go.
- Lead the way and always make sure that you leave through the door before your pet. He should know that he has to follow you.
- Walk at a normal pace and get him to walk close to you by saying heel. If he comes close to you, praise him and reward him.
- If he pulls, he is trying to establish the fact that he is the leader and wants his way. Do not give in. Encouraging leash pulling is like encouraging disobedience.
- Your pet will be excited by the outdoors and though you do want him to have fun, you do not want him to set the pace of the walk. So if he pulls, you must walk in the opposite direction, without saying a single word, except heel and then give a tug at the leash and collar.
- If he comes to you, reward him, if he pulls again, do the same and walk the opposite way, and give a tug. Make sure he is bewildered to the point when he will just give up, walk close to you and follow your lead.
- Reward him every time he listens to you and stops pulling and do not give him any attention when he pulls, except from quietly walking in the other direction.
- Your pet should learn the pulling isn't going to get him any rewards, but listening and following your lead will.

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- Practice “heel-sit” with your pet in the first week and see that she stays as close as possible and gets comfortable with the command and that she stops when you stop. Step forward with your left leg as you tell her to sit so that she gets used to the fact that when you plan to stop, you want her to sit. Keep stopping after a few paces and get her to sit.
- Gradually vary the pace and the course. Take a left, right into your dog and stop. Walk very briskly or very slowly. Get your pet to practice all the possible combination of commands. Sit down on a bench and get him to sit by your side and then give the command “down’ and make him lie down.
- A walk will give your pet plenty of temptations like squirrels, other dogs, joggers and small children, see how he reacts and correct the behavior. You cannot have him dragging you off behind another jogger or a squirrel. Hold the leash tight and do not give him or her too much slack to play on.
- Do however let him or her smell at the bushes and explore what they want to, after they heel-sit and wait for you to give the go-ahead. Don’t allow your pet to head off on his own- he has to get your permission.
- Do not allow any one to pet your dog if he or she has just been with you for a while and is in the learning process.

The whole process of walking is a training course. A pulling dog can be trained into an obedient dog or a normally well-behaved dog can turn disobedient if allowed to lead the way and assume the alpha position of control. Be in control and do not train your pet without a leash. Vary the commands and practice them. Repeat patterns to engrave them in your pet’s mind. Make walking a pleasurable experience for you and your pet

### **Walking without a leash**

Walking your dog without a leash is a different story altogether and you cannot begin that unless you train your pet to walk with a leash. However walking a dog without a leash, severely depends on the kind of breed your pet is. It is not advisable for some breeds to be walked without a leash- in fact some would argue and say no dog should be allowed to walk without a leash, because you never know when they will spring a surprise on you and bolt! If you are bringing home a Basset Hound or a Siberian Husky, the breeder, other owners and the trainers as well, will advise you to keep them on the leash during walks for their own well-being. These breeds are the kind who are off like a shot and have very bad homing instincts and hence get lost.

Some of the questions you need to ask yourself (and answer!) before you decide to walk your pet without a leash are:

#### **When is a dog ready to be walked without a leash?**

You are the only one who can really understand and evaluate your pet and your relationship with him. So you will need to think about how ready he is to walk without a

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leash. You will need to take a call on how sufficiently independent and old enough he or she is to taste the freedom of being without the leash

### **Can you control her or him without a leash?**

Remember that without a leash, you have no control over your pet in that; there is no collar to tug and force him to heel or sit. If you plan to let your pet walk without a leash, you have to be sure that he or she will romp around but come back to you when you call. When he tries to stick his head in a public trashcan he should listen when you say “no”, instead of eat up something that can make him sick. Your pet must be totally obedient and should sit, stay and come back when you give the commands.

### **Are you sure that your dog will neither fear other dogs and people nor will he jump and attack other dogs and people?**

Your dog also has to be well adjusted socially to be without a leash. Make sure that she is not frightened by bigger dogs or people- some dogs are known to run away because something scared them off. You must be sure that he will not succumb to the temptations of chasing another dog, cat or squirrel. She must be adjusted to children and people so as to not bite or knock them down. He might end up hurting someone for which you would have to be responsible. Off-leash, your pet should not be a threat to the environment and people.

### **Most importantly, do you think it is a safe option to walk your pet without a leash?**

How safe is it to let your dog off the leash without the fear that he or she, might rush out to the street in the heat of the moment and get knocked down by a car? Just as you trust your dog trusts his own instincts, which may or may not be the right thing to do in a human society. You will be taking the leash off your beloved pet, on the risk that he might not stop when you call out to him.

### **Walking your dog without a leash**

<b>Advantages</b>	<b>Disadvantages</b>
The energetic and hyper dogs get a chance to get vigorous exercise off leash. They will be using their energy and will be restless at home.	Being off leash, gives some alpha dogs the opportunity to pick up fights with other dogs. So your alpha might try and attack other dogs or be attacked instead by another dominating alpha.
If you are in the off-leash area of a public park you can meet other dog owners and get a few training tips.	There is the hidden danger of being bitten by other people’s pets or your pet biting other people!
You can also learn about other breeds of dogs while your dog gets a chance to socialize and play with other dogs.	There is a chance that your smaller dog might be fearful of both people, children and smaller dogs, which will make the walk unpleasant.
Your pet will get the feel of a fresh, open	There are piles of dog feces in busy off-

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environment, a feeling of freedom and will be happy to be off the leash.	leash park areas, and your dog might end up with an infection.
It's an exercise in controlling your dog and testing his or her obedience.	There is the chance that some owners might not control their dogs and be a danger.

Before you take that leash of your pet make sure that you:

### **Teach your pet that chasing isn't an option**

This is quite a task because chasing is something ingrained in a dog's chase. Think about it, if he finds nothing else to chase, he will chase his own tail! It is also a way for them to exercise establish their superiority as opposed to the thing that they are chasing. They chase because it's a very natural thing for all dogs to do. They chase for play, they chase from their predatory instincts, they chase for dominance and if they are working and herding dogs like Shetland Sheepdogs or Siberian Huskies, then chasing is a matter of duty too!

Dogs are known to chase cats, squirrels, joggers, children and most dangerously moving cars. So if you want to walk your dog off the leash, you must teach him not to chase. He or she will have to be trained to unlearn the natural instincts of chasing. You will have to teach him how not to fetch! You can start by:

- Beginning inside the house: Before you take your pet outside without a leash, practice indoor. Make sure you have his or her attention and put him on a leash.
- Now get a tennis ball and just show it; do not give it to your dog. If you do, he would assume that you want him to smell and feel it really well and fetch it back for you.
- Roll the tennis ball away from him and say "off".
- If he moves, repeat the command "off" and give him a tug on his leash.
- Repeat again till your pet understands that when you say "off it means do not fetch. You have to get him to stay at your side, with a tug of the leash, till he stops squirming to rush off and get the ball.
- Remember to reward him or her, when he or she obeys the "off" command.
- Repeat this as you would any game, till your pet can learn not to fetch when you say "off" even if he doesn't have the leash on.

Now that he can obey the command inside the house, it's time to try the exercise outside. Keep him on the leash, though and ask a family member or friend to run by him as a jogger in a park would. Every time the person jogs by say "off" and hold back your dog with a yank if he tries to set chase. Keep practicing till he gets the idea that chasing is taboo when you say "off". Don't forget the praise and reward, when he heeds your command. Once he starts obeying the command, practice the action without the leash.

**NOTE:** Please do not practice without the leash until you are sure that your pet will heed your call as the decoy jogger, runs past. Also take action on your dog, before he sets off on a full chase!

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It's time to get him to be immune to moving cars as well. Get a relative or friend to drive by as you practice the off command. Choose a quiet street and keep your pet on the leash as the car goes by. Give the command and tug at the leash. By now your dog must be well versed with the off-exercise to heed the call. If he still wants to run after the car, yank the leash. Reward him when he does not run. Repeat several times and do not take the leash off till you are absolutely sure that he will listen to the "off" command and not chase the car. Once you are sure, then take off the leash and practice in a secluded street. Keep him at your heels and as the car drives by, say "off", be prepared to manually stop him if he seems to attempt to run and put him back on the leash again.

**NOTE:** Till your dog is absolutely proficient at obeying the "off" command without any need for the leash, do not venture to walk him without the leash.

Practice the off command daily; in situations that you can control before you take him or her, into the big outdoors. There are too many temptations that might dissolve their resolve to listen to the "off" command. Give him a chance to soak up the training before you throw up the bigger challenge. You will be the only one who can judge whether he or she can be trusted to obey off the leash in less controlled environments, where there are dogs squirrels and joggers as well as cars passing by.

### Teach your pet to come when called

If you want to walk your dog without a leash, get him to come back to you when you call to him. This is a vital point and is a lifesaver in situations your dog can get into when he is off leash. It is also a difficult command to get the dog to consistently follow- so matter when how and what he does, if he obeys the "Come", please reward him. To teach your dog to come to you:

- Use a six-foot lead on your pet and stay right at the other end of the leash.
- Now stand straight (do not kneel- you're the alpha remember!), look in your dog's eyes and use a commanding voice to say, "come".
- If he doesn't move, tug with the leash toward you and use your body and voice to urge him to come to you.
- If he does come- reward him and repeat again.
- Graduate to a longer leash and put a greater distance between you and your pet.
- Repeat the command and tug the leash.
- If he responds, reward him. If he doesn't, keep up the practice till he does.

Once you feel he's got the hang of the word "come", take him to a park on that long leash and position yourself in a point where there are dogs, cats, squirrels or anything that is a distraction. Give him some slack and let him go, but call out "come" when he's a considerable distance from you. If he doesn't respond, yank at the leash and get him to come to you. Keep up the practice, till your pet learns that it's better to come to you than be yanked off!

Till you feel that he will come to you do not let him off the leash. If you feel your dog is ready to obey your command, practice in a fenced off yard or a tennis court, where you



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can prevent your dog from running away. Use the come command in your day-to-day handling of the dog. For example when you feed him, set his food bowl and command him to come. Also when you want to pet him, sit in your chair and command him to come to you and pet him only when he obeys. Come is a command that your pet needs to know, whether or not you plan to walk him on or off the leash. However, if you and your pet are not ready with this command – do not attempt walks without the leash.

Some pointers to aid you to get your dog to come when you call:

- Do not immediately attach the leash after the dog obeys the come command, as he will associate it with going home and try and not listen to delay the home going. Ask him to come and play with him for a while and then leave.
- Do not punish you're dog when he comes back after you call him several time. Reward him for the fact that he came to you.
- Avoid using the come command and immediately marching him off to unpleasant things like a bath, or a medicine dose, or a nail-trimming session or to leave him alone in his crate as you have to leave. Your pet will associate the command with not so nice things! Even if you have a task to perform, command him to come, pet him, play for a while and then begin the bathing, or nail-cutting etc.

### **Final note on walking without the leash**

If you intend to walk your pet without a leash, act responsibly. Be sure that your pet can obey – the “off” command and not chase the chasable and the “come” command, so that he or she returns to you. Put your pet's obedience to test in the off-leash area of a public park. See how your pet responds and then take it from there. Do remember though that these off-leash areas are often unfenced and require that you have a good verbal control of your pet. There will be other dogs around and you might be fined if your dog acts aggressively to either a person or another dog.

If your pet obeys the commands you can get him or her to walk off the leash in 10 minutes but it always pays to be cautious. Don't get overconfident of your pet. If you get complacent about his or her obedience, you may be risking his or her life. Be a responsible owner and act wisely. You are the only one who can assess your pet's capabilities and you are also the only one who can protect him or her. The idea of a “free” dog might sound tempting, but even though your pet might be very well trained, sometimes instincts takeover.

### **Dos and Don'ts of Walking your pet**

- Do not leave too much distance between you and your pet right away- keep him or her close till she gets the hang of the basic commands.
- Do not tolerate pulling on the leash but do praise your dog for not pulling.
- Do not follow your dog when he or she pulls you in a particular direction- you've given into and are endorsing the wrong walking behavior.
- Do not let your dog off the leash unattended and without supervision.
- Do not get your dog think that off-leash walks are for him to play with other dogs and not you – you must get him to understand that even the off-leash walks are between him and the alpha (you) so he better obey you.

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- Do use a long leash if you are unsure of off-leash walks, to give your pet the feel of being off-leash but always retaining the control.
- Do not forget to reward when your pet obeys all the walk commands.
- Do keep practicing the walking with your dog consistently and be patient, because your pet is really trying hard to obey. .
- Do not let your pet off-leash, till you think he or she is ready.

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