



LEASH ETIQUETTE

GOAL: Our focus is to walk the dogs safely and comfortably through the shelter and on the street. Training shelter dogs to walk on a loose leash may increase their chance of being adopted. It is more fun taking a stroll in the park with a dog that does not pull on leash than with a dog that has no leash manners. We hope to teach our dogs that there should always be slack in the leash. We control how much freedom (leash length) the dog has, but no matter the leash length, the dog is taught not to pull on the leash.

EQUIPMENT: Shelter dogs are fitted with a no-slip collar, also known as a martingale collar. Strong dogs that pull on leash might be fitted with a no-pull harness. Other dogs (dogs that are difficult to control with a no-pull harness) might need a head halter, like a Gentle Leader. All the necessary training equipment is stored in the dog's designated area. Leashes should be 4-6 feet long. Do not use a retractable leash.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR MANAGING DOGS ON LEASH INSIDE A SHELTER:

1. Have treats and the necessary training equipment with you when entering the kennel.
2. Use the Exit Strategy before putting on the dog's equipment.
3. Walk dogs on the left side.
4. Have both hands on the leash at all times except when feeding the dog a treat.
5. Keep the handle of the leash in your right hand, thumb through the loop. Fasten the rest of the handle in your right fist, or slide your right hand through the loop holding the leash. The right hand is your "anchor."
6. The left hand is the hand closest to the dog. Use your left hand to control the length of the leash. You also dispense treats to the dog with your left hand.
7. The dog is kept close to your left side when going in and out of the kennels, through the shelter rooms, and hallways. When needed (for dogs who lunge at other dogs or cats), keep the dog distracted with a treat, peanut butter on a spoon, or a toy.
8. If another dog is being walked down the hallway, wait until the dog is out of sight before you enter the space with your shelter dog.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR WALKING DOGS ON LEASH OUTSIDE OF A SHELTER:

1. Once outside the shelter, give the dog a chance to eliminate. "Stand like a tree": Don't engage with the dog and give the dog enough leash to sniff.
2. Keep both hands on the leash. The left hand controls the length of the leash. The right hand is the lifeline holding the leash loop.
3. Praise the dog and reward him every now and then if he is walking on a loose leash by your side. Loose leash means that there is slack in the lead and the leash is forming a letter "U" or "J".
4. Always reward the dog at your left side, facing the same direction you are. In time, the dog will start gravitating towards where the treats are dispensed.

5. “Give and Go”. The instant that the dog starts forging ahead, release the leash from the left hand, turn abruptly and go in the opposite direction. Ask the dog to follow you with a “Let’s go” as you are turning. “Let’s go” means “catch up with me” or “keep up with me”. When the dog is back on your left side facing the same direction as you are, take the leash back with your left hand, while simultaneously praising and rewarding the dog for keeping up with you. Once you are walking forward, be prepared for another “give and go”, as soon as the dog starts to move ahead of you.

6. Some dogs tend to cross in front. If the dog begins to cut you off, turn into the dog (to your left) and walk in the opposite direction. As you turn cue the dog with a “Let’s go”.

HELPFUL HINTS:

- Before the walk, some dogs might need a short play session to burn off some energy.
- A few attention exercises, like “look” will encourage the dog to focus on the handler. Bring a treat from the dog’s nose up to your eyes, saying “look.” If he makes eye contact following your hand, mark the behavior with a click or a “yes” and reward the dog with the treat.
- Teach the dog “Let’s go.” With the dog on your left side, bring a treat at the dog’s nose with your left hand. When the dog follows the treat, pivot to your right slowly, saying “Let’s go”. If the dog follows, mark the behavior with a click or a cheerful “yes” and reward the dog with the treat out of your left hand.
- Always reward good behavior. Movement and a high rate of reinforcement (for good behavior) make loose leash walking more exciting for the dog.

CONSIDERATIONS:

- Know your strengths; always walk dogs that you can handle.
- Only walk dogs that you have been approved to walk (green, blue or red level).
- Loose leash walking is a difficult behavior to teach a dog. It takes a lot of patience and consistency.