

Train Your Dog to Walk With a Lead

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff



Any pup over 8 weeks of age should be ready for a collar and lead. In fact, a lightweight [nylon buckle or Quick-Klip collar](#) that fits correctly should be your first purchase. It is best to wait until after your pup has become used to his collar before you attempt to introduce the lead. Leave the collar on as much as possible until your pup gets used to it. If he is in a cage or crate, remove the collar to prevent snagging. Do not use a choke chain collar on young puppies.

When choosing a lead, you must keep several things in mind. If you have a smaller dog that does not pull too hard, purchase a [nylon](#) or [cotton lead](#). A chain or [leather collar](#) is best if you have a large breed or one that has a tendency to pull.

The lead length is totally up to you. If you are going to do obedience work, purchase a 6-foot lead - it is required in most classes. For just tooling around town with your pooch, a 4-foot lead will do. It will keep your dog near you and give you plenty of control. [Retractable leads](#) are also an option, but are best purchased once your pup is used to a regular lead and has had some control training.

Introduction

1. The first time you put the lead on your pup, attach it to his collar and allow him to get used to the feel by dragging it around the house or yard. Do this for about ten minutes a day for 5-7 days. Watch that he does not chew on the lead! If you have a fearful pup, distract him by throwing a [ball](#) or [interactive toy](#).
2. Once he is used to the feel of the lead, pick up the



unattached end and hold it, following your pup wherever he goes. Keep the lead as loose as possible and don't worry at this point if the pup pulls. Repeat this step for about a week.



3. When the pup starts pulling you around most of the time, it's your turn to take some control. But make it fun. Take along a favorite toy, a ball or even a special [treat reward](#). Then, take off walking in one direction. If your pup follows willingly, heap on lots of praise. If he does not follow you, sits stubbornly, or pulls in the other direction, take the object of affection and move it in front of him so that he follows it in the direction you're going. At this point praise him heartily. Time your praise so that it happens when he's moving and not when he's resisting. This may take some time and observation. He will soon get your message.
4. Remember not to pull hard or jerk on the lead, no matter how tempting. A dog's natural tendency is to pull back and you will not get your message across. This could also give your new pup "lead phobia" that will be hard to cure.

Repeat this step every day for about a week and every day you should see your pup becoming more confident and yourself having a little more control.

Following these tips will go a long way towards making life with your dog more fun. A leash-trained dog not only puts you in control, but also gains respect from pedestrians you encounter on your walks.