

Dog Walking 101

Hey you, new pooch parent—yeah, you with the cute puppy who can't stop pulling! Want some tricks to keep Trixie on task? Or perhaps you're already an old pro but want to make your outdoor excursions more fun for both you and your dog. Follow our insider tips and your pooch will be eager to get going as soon as you pick up the leash!

It's the Leash You Can Do

What's the best type of leash? "Use whatever you feel most comfortable holding," recommends the ASPCA Animal Behavior Center's Kristen Collins, CPDT.

- Flexi-leads are best reserved for walks in the park, when it's safe for a dog to explore a bit further away from her pet parent. They are NOT a good idea if you're walking in an area with high foot traffic or off-leash dogs, as the long line may get wrapped around your dog, a person's leg or another dog.
- Many people think chain leashes look nice, but they are much heavier than nylon or leather, and they can be very hard on the hands. Even so, they sometimes work well for dogs who like to tug or bite the leash. "Metal doesn't feel nearly as nice in a dog's mouth," explains Collins.
- Leather leashes are a good option because they are easiest on the hands.
- Nylon leashes can cut into hands or give a pet parent "leash burn" if a dog pulls a lot or unexpectedly lunges forward. But they come in many stylish colors and designs, and they hold up well after repeated exposure to rain and snow.

Pull Over, Rover!

Constant pulling on the leash makes walks stressful for both of you. "It's a common problem that can happen for a number of reasons," says Collins.

- If your dog darts after local wildlife, it may help to walk him when critters are less likely to be out and about; avoid dawn and dusk. You can also check out our article [Dogs Who Are Reactive on Leash](#).
- If the problem is simply pulling on leash due to natural canine enthusiasm for all the exciting signs and sounds you encounter on walks, you'll find help in our article [Teaching Your Dog Not to Pull on Leash](#).
- Try using a head halter to walk a dog who's excitable on leash. "They provide power steering for dog parents!" says Collins. "The Gentle Leader[®] by Premier[®] Pet Products is my personal favorite." Details and more can be found in our article [Walking Equipment for Your Dog](#).

Stay Off the Grass (and Out of the Flower Beds!)

Our experts at the ASPCA Poison Control Center want you to keep your walks toxin-free:

- During the warmer months, it's important to keep your pet safe from toxic lawn and garden products. Insecticides and certain types of mulch can cause problems for our furry friends—during neighborhood strolls, please be sure to keep your pooch off the lawns of others.
- Even though popular spring bulb plants like tulips and daffodils add much to our landscape, they can cause significant stomach problems for our furry friends. If your pooch likes to stop and smell—or nibble—the flowers, please keep him on a short leash during your walks.

So Nice to Meet You!

It's great that your friendly pooch loves meeting people during walks—but not so great that she jumps up on them. “The basic idea is to teach your dog how to sit on cue and then require her to sit to interact with people,” says Collins. “No sitting, no greeting. But if she sits, she gets to enjoy the reward of greeting her friends.” It doesn't hurt to reward the dog with a treat—or ask the person whom she's greeting to offer a treat.

See our article on [Teaching Your Dog Not to Jump Up on People](#) for more guidelines.

Three Things to Bring

- If you're planning an extended walk, be sure to bring water for your dog—especially if it's warm outside.
- Don't forget the goodies! Walks are great training opportunities. Bring Fido's fave treats along, and practice tricks and obedience while you're out in the world. “This will solidify your dog's skills *and* convince him that going on walks is fantastic fun!” says Collins.
- Don't get caught without extra poop bags, particularly if you're going on a long walk. (P.S. This is a great way to recycle all those plastic grocery bags!)

Watch for Creepy Crawlies

Depending on the time of the year and the area of the country you live in, sneaky critters like snakes, spiders, scorpions and bees can be a serious concern for pet and parent alike. If you're walking in a densely wooded area, take extra care to keep an eye out for hidden dangers.

To Be Free or Not to Be Free—That Is the Question

Taking a walk to a dog park or other fenced-in area that's safe for canines to romp freely? Make sure your dog is prepared for off-leash play. “Your dog must know how to come when called,” says Collins, “so the most important thing to do is teach a really reliable recall.”

Find out how to accomplish this in our article [Teaching Your Dog to Come When Called](#).

Take It Up a Notch

Here are some suggestions for making walks more fun for your dog:

- Mix it up! Try taking your dog to new places. He'll love experiencing the new sights, smells and sounds at a novel location.
- Choose fabulous destinations. If possible, walk to fun places, like friends' houses or the dog park.
- Walk with buddies. If your dog likes other dogs, consider group walks. You can either borrow a friend's dog to accompany you, or invite family and friends who have dogs to meet you somewhere.

What's Bugging You?

Walking in humid, mosquito-friendly areas? Spray yourself, not your pooch! Even though it's tempting to share insect repellent with your pooch, it can be a grave mistake. Insect repellent should never be applied to dogs, who can suffer neurological problems from the toxic ingredient, DEET. Instead, ask your veterinarian for a suitable, pet-specific alternative.