

Loose Leash Walking

Loose Leash Walking (LLW) means walking your dog without any tension on the leash (aka walking your dog without them doing any pulling).

Setting Up for Loose Leash Walking (LLW):

Your leash and clicker should be held in the same hand. Holding the clicker and leash in one hand frees up your other hand for delivering treats and hand signals to your dog. One of the easiest and safest ways to set up is with a finger lock. First, slip both the handle of the leash and the loop of the clicker around your wrist. Then create a loop along the length of the leash, slip it around your index finger, grasp it with all four fingers. You can then hold the clicker between your thumb and index finger. Be sure to place your thumb on the clicker so that you are ready to capture those clickable moments.



You can also hold your leash with a thumb and finger lock. This removes the risk of injury from having the leash looped over your wrist. Simply loop the handle of the leash over your thumb instead of your wrist, loop the leash over your index finger, and grasp with your whole hand.

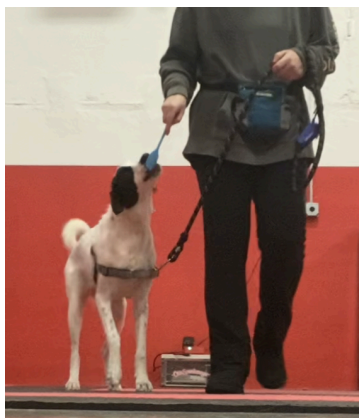
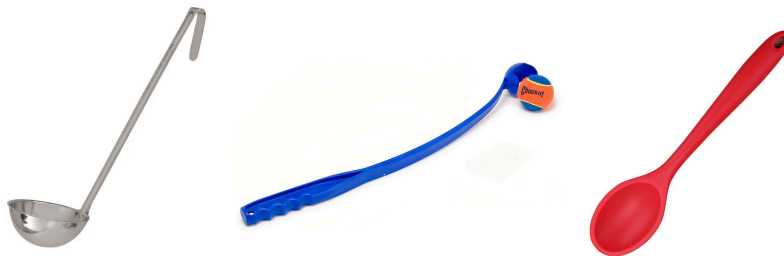


The hand with the clicker and leash should be on the OPPOSITE side of your body from where your dog will be walking, so that the treat-delivering hand is closest (on the same side of your body) as your dog is walking. The leash should be hanging in a loose “J” shape in front of you.



Your treats should be easily accessible and delivered by the hand that is on the same side as your dog. Delivering treats directly to your dog without reaching across your body helps your dog to avoid forging ahead of you (and potentially crossing your path) to get closer to the source of the treats.

Note for smaller dogs: To avoid having to bend over to deliver treats to a dog that is low to the ground, you can use something to extend your reach. A ladle, chuck-it, or long-handled spoon smeared with peanut butter, cream cheese, or kong paste works great to deliver the treats exactly where you want without



Steps for Teaching Loose Leash Walking:

The very first thing we need to do to teach LLW is to show your dog where you want them to be. Designate the area next to your leg as the “Treat Zone”.

As long as your dog is in the Treat Zone, forward progress can be made, and treats can be delivered.

Never reach outside of the Treat Zone to deliver treats, always deliver them right next to your leg.

1. Start out with about 10 small treats in your hand.
2. Hold them where you want your dog's face to be and begin to walk forward while holding them on your dog's nose.
3. Deliver one treat at a time at very frequent intervals (one treat for every step).
4. Once your dog has figured out that the Treat Zone is the place to be, begin to lift your hand up to your hip between treat deliveries.
5. Every step that you take in which your dog is still next to you in the Treat Zone, click and deliver a treat, then bring your hand back up immediately after each treat has been delivered. Tip: Make sure you are bringing your hand all the way up into a neutral position and then all the way down to your dog's face to deliver your treats. If you hover your hand somewhere in the middle, they may begin to jump up to get closer to the treats. You can always use something to extend your reach if needed (refer to above note on little dogs) but this still must be brought up out of reach when not actively treating so it doesn't just become a lure.



6. Now that you are lifting your hand up in-between steps, your dog has the option to move out of the Treat Zone. The moment they step out of the Treat Zone, your number one job is to STOP all progress in that direction. (Think of your footsteps like they are rewards. Every step forward, you are telling your dog “good job, keep doing what you are doing.” Every step you take while they are pulling forward, you are telling your dog that pulling works and that pulling gets them where they want to go faster. We need them to learn that the opposite is true: pulling is counter-productive and causes progress to immediately stop.) Once you’ve stopped, progress cannot continue until your dog comes back into the treat zone. You cannot just pull them back into the Treat Zone. You have a few different options.
 - a. Ask for a Touch within the Treat Zone. Once your dog comes in for the Touch, take a step forward and resume clicking and treating for LLW.
 - b. Say your dog’s name and take a step backwards to call them back towards you. Once they return to the Treat Zone, take a step forward and resume clicking and treating for LLW.
 - c. If your dog has a “Side” or “Heel” cue, ask for it. Once they are back in position, resume clicking and treating for LLW.
 - d. Abruptly change direction or do a loop and try again.
 - e. If all else fails, walk YOURSELF down the leash, hand-over-hand, to get right to your dog’s face. You are reeling yourself in, not reeling your dog in. Put a treat directly on their nose and lure them back into position. Once they are with you, resume clicking and treating for LLW.
7. Begin to click and treat a bit less frequently. Start clicking for attention/eye contact, not just being in the Treat Zone. (Keep the treat rewards in your pouch/pocket until after you have clicked to mark the behavior so that your dog doesn’t just follow the treats.)
8. Continue expanding the time and number of steps between your clicks and treats, as long as your dog is staying in the Treat Zone. Don’t try to progress too quickly, though. (For example, we wouldn’t expect that a puppy who is walking nicely when they receive a click and treat for every two steps will suddenly be able to do so for 20 steps. Make progress gradually, and go back a step if you encounter issues.)