

Leash Pulling and Reactivity

Dog-walking problems can range from simply pulling on leash to displaying wild exuberance when they see a person or another dog, to barking, growling or lunging at others. Dogs may be frustrated, fearful, anxious, or any combination of those. But, with a little training, management and some “quick fix” strategies, you can be on your way to helping your dog’s walks go more smoothly in no time!

Proactive Management



Limit exposure to overly exciting situations (such as festivals or crowded streets) that are beyond the dog’s ability to handle calmly. By doing so, you will keep your dog calm enough to learn new ways of behaving.



Distance is your friend when you see an approaching person or pup. Keep enough distance that your dog is able to remain calm, respond to cues, and eat treats.



Walk during lower traffic times of day, in less-populated areas, or in areas with multiple route options so that you can quickly change direction.



Remove your dog from situations when needed, or reduce the intensity of the situation to prevent the dog from rehearsing unwanted behaviors such as barking, pulling, or lunging.

Set your dog up for success by carefully monitoring and managing the situations to which he is exposed.





Training Strategies

Help your dog by using humane, reward-based training strategies that are supported by the world's leading veterinary, behavior and training experts. Using punishment-based techniques can often make problems like aggression worse, and/or create new problem behaviors.

Directing the dog's attention to a training task and rewarding their participation is particularly useful because it creates calmer on-leash responses that can later take the place of undesirable ones and become the dog's default response.

Carry pea-sized, highly palatable treats in a treat pouch or pocket when out on walks to provide a valuable, convenient way to teach and build more desirable responses out on walks.

Quick fixes in a pinch

- Cross the street.
- Do a U-turn and move back in the opposite direction.
- Turn and move away in an alternative direction and route.
- Move off the main pathway until the human or dog distraction has passed by.
- Redirect: If your dog looks as if they are about to react, use an interrupter such as a treat, a cue for a known behavior, or something like a hand clap or a light tap/tickle on the back that doesn't scare the dog but simply breaks their focus.
- Use visual barriers (e.g. a building, a parked vehicle, a tree or bush) to reduce the intensity of the situation by blocking the dog's view of the passing person or dog. Then keep the dog busy by rewarding some cued behaviors or simply feeding a couple of treats.
- If your dog ever reacts, turn and move your dog far enough away they can calm down. Then, reassess and see if the situation was too close or see if specific triggers can be lessened the next time. Avoid harsh punishment, like leash jerks, as they only negatively affect the dog's emotions around other dogs.