

## LOOSE LEASH WALKING: UNLEASHED!

[February 7, 2017](#)

Training Tip Tuesday: LLW Unleashed

Loose Leash Walking has nothing to do with the Leash!

Loose leash walking is about communication, relationship, respect; It is not about control, or domination, or even training. If your dog *\*wants\** to be with you, *\*understands\** your expectations, and *\*respects\** your leadership, then he will gladly follow along next to you. If you are struggling, chances are it is the result of miscommunication.

Loose Leash Walking (LLW) is certainly a skill to be developed. (Now – before you jump on your computer and email me to say ‘but, but – isn’t that training? And you said above it wasn’t about training...?’) let me explain. LLW is unlike some of our more traditional cues; like sit or down. When we ‘train’ a cue; we teach the dog to react a certain way to a certain sound. For example, when they hear ‘sit’ they put their butts on the ground. Heel is a ‘trained’ skill; when your dog hears a certain word, they line up to your leg in a certain way. LLW is informal; the dog should do it regardless of whether or not there was a cue given. Regardless of the equipment or the environment. This is why I say it’s not ‘training’ per se, but the development of a true understanding of your expectations.

So – how do you develop understanding? With patience, of course!

We teach our dogs that we like when they are on our left side, with their heads by our leg. When we find them there, we offer a treat or praise in that position. (Remember – this isn’t a formal Heel, so just getting in the general area is good enough!) We start in an area free from distractions so we can educate our pups and lay the foundation for understanding; then we build up to more interesting places.

\* If they pull ahead because they think they know where we are headed, we stop. We wait for them to turn back to us, check in and put some slack in the leash. We praise them when they do. Perhaps taking a step backwards to encourage them to move closer to us.

\* If they pull ahead because they see something really, really interesting – we change directions; We hop and skip and jump around so *\*we\** are more exciting than whatever they saw. When they turn their focus back on us, we praise and reward,

\* We keep our walks interesting; we change directions, practice skills, go to new places; if the dog doesn’t know what’s coming next; he can’t anticipate and drag you there! We also keep realistic expectations and allow our dogs time to be a dog! Environmental rewards and sniff breaks can make a big difference in your overall walk.

- \* We practice confidence building skills so our dog is comfortable walking at our side and doesn't feel the need to rush ahead, or hide behind us,
- \* We practice our Socialization so our dog knows how to behave in the presence of distractions,
- \* We learn to read our dogs, so we can interpret what is going on; we can anticipate reactions and give appropriate guidance at the appropriate times.

Try this: find a nice secure area that's large enough to move around. If you can't find an area, put your dog on a 30' or 50' long line and clip the end to your belt-loop. Start walking around the perimeter of the area. Ignore your dog. Let him do whatever he wants. When he comes over to you, praise and reward him! Then keep walking. Don't call him. Let him make the choice on his own. After a few minutes you should find your dog checking in more often, and even choosing to walk along with you instead of being on his own!

There are many tools out there designed to make your dog \*listen\* to the leash; They pinch and prod, they pull at different angles to make it uncomfortable for the dog, some of them even emit a high pitched sound when tension is applied to the leash. None of these however, improve your communication! When used in the absence of education they seldom work for the long-term. Your dog needs to understand what you want; not just be punished for going ahead! Take the time to develop a relationship with your dog, and don't rely on 'quick fixes' or marketing hype to do it for you! 😊:)

<https://youtu.be/f7INQmtqUDY>