



Lead Training a Puppy

One of the first things you need to teach your puppy is how to behave on a lead. You need to have full control over your dog while in public places and good lead training makes walks together more comfortable and enjoyable for both you and your dog. Starting early will make the process much easier and the time and patience invested in the few weeks of training will be well worth it. The puppy needs to receive the same clear messages on 'lead behavior' from each person who will be bringing him for a walk.

- Within a few days of getting your new pup, you should fit him with a light, well fitting collar. He may scratch at it for the first few days but if it is left in place he will soon ignore it.
- When he is happy with the collar you can then attach a light lead and, under supervision, allow him to trail it around after him in the house.
- When he is relaxed doing this, you can then pick up the other end and do a few minutes of leading in the house. It is important that the pup is not over excited for this phase. He will probably be happy to follow you around from room to room out of interest in where you are going.
- When he allows the lead to go slack by walking alongside or just at your heel, praise him audibly (praise word or clicker) every 4-5 steps, and immediately give him a treat while on the move. As soon as he pulls ahead, it is very important that you immediately stop walking (you can call out a vocal signal like 'Ah ah') and calmly call him back to you. The same follows if he lags behind or sits down. Stop, call, praise and reward. Then set off again (so long as the lead is still slack).
- It takes lots of consistency, lots of practice and a bit of patience but soon you should be seeing progress, as he understands the routine of how he can best enjoy his walks.

FURTHER NOTES:

It is natural for a dog to pull ahead and if allowed to do so, he will self reward by finding something interesting up ahead, or merely enjoy being out front. Allowing him to walk ahead will re-enforce the behavior. You need to use praise and reward as positive re-enforcement. In this way you are training him that it is to his benefit if he walks by your side with a slack lead. Keep it simple for him. He may be a little confused initially. If he pulls, he will not be rewarded by forward movement, praise or treat. It may be useful when the lead tightens to turn yourself around and move in the opposite direction so that he is again behind you. Repeat this each time he pulls ahead. This will mean that he becomes less sure of where 'ahead' is. The key is to be consistent, so that he decides that the best and most enjoyable option for him, is to walk at your side, with a loosely hanging lead.