



Solutions for Leash Pullers

Dogs pull on-leash because they walk faster than we do. Think of any time you've seen walking off-leash. They typically aren't walking at the same pace we humans do; they're trotting along briskly. Being quadrupeds, they simply move more quickly.

Dogs also learn to do what works. This means that after only a few walks, your dog could learn that pulling on leash gets him to where he wants to go. If we let this go on for too long, the habit becomes much stronger and it may take longer to teach an alternative behavior.

The first step in reducing pulling should be to get your dog into humane no-pull walking gear. The two options here are front-attaching harnesses and head collars. The front attaching harness will reduce how hard your dog pulls and will redirect them when they pull too hard or lunge. These are a good option for light-moderate pullers. Some brands include the EasyWalk, Freedom No-Pull Harness, Halti, and SENSE-ation Harness.

The best option for strong pullers is a head collar. Head collars work to dramatically reduce the strength in which your dog can pull and can also redirect their head with lunging or pulling strongly. A head collar should be properly conditioned before using on regular walks. Some brands include Halti and Gentle Leader. Most can be found in your local pet store, and even more easily online.

The next step is to teach your dog loose leash walking. Loose-leash walking is not the same exercise as heel. Your dog needs the opportunity to take in all the wonderful sights, sounds and smells that he experiences on a walk, and he can't do that if he is glued to your side. Walks are about more than physical exercise; they provide mental stimulation, socialization and enrichment for your dog. Allow him to investigate the environment, provided that he isn't dragging you down the street!

Teach your dog that walking nicely works and that pulling does not with Red Light – Green Light.

Red Light – Green Light

- Begin walking with your dog in the intended direction. The instant the leash is tight, stop dead in your tracks.
- Wait for your dog to loosen the leash – he may sit, look back at you, wander off to the side, etc. It doesn't matter what he does, as long as it releases the tension in the leash.
- The instant the leash is loose, say "okay" and began moving forward.
- Repeat this *every* time you feel tension in the leash – no exceptions.
- Do not use food during this exercise. The reward is moving forward.
- Use this exercise if your dog pulls toward a smell, as well. The reward, in that case, is the opportunity to take in the enticing scent.