



## Polite Walking Training Plan

**Thank you** for welcoming your new dog into your heart and home! We hope that you have many happy years together. Your new best friend has been part of our training program here in the care center. They were noted by our staff to pull hard when on walks and have been trained on how to walk on a loose leash. However, they will need your help to continue to be successful! Below is a step-by-step guide on how to have walks that are enjoyable for you both.

### A NOTE ON WALKS

A walk should be for both you and the dog! It is important to let dogs sniff and explore the environment. This helps your dog meet their biological needs, which is critical to their mental and physical health and long-term well-being! Use as long of a leash as possible to give them the space to explore and reduce the frequency of your management but **be safe**. In an urban area, it may be best to use an 8-foot, 10-foot, or 12-foot leash instead of a 30-foot or 50-foot one.

### REQUIRED SUPPLIES

- Your dog
- You
- A leash
- High-value treats (note: they must be valuable to your dog)

### STEP ONE: PAUSE

When your dog reaches the end of the leash and begins to pull, stop walking. In the beginning, you want to start backing up and making a sound that is interesting to your dog. This helps make you more interesting and makes it easier for your dog to orient back toward you.

### STEP TWO: MARK

When your dog turns towards you, mark the behavior.

A marker should be a short, clear word or sound like “yes,” “nice,” or the click of the clicker. You can condition a marker by saying a chosen word in a clear, exciting voice and then delivering the treat within two seconds. It is essential that it is marker first, then reward. If they occur at the same time or in reverse, the dog will not associate the click with the treat.

**Tip:** Mark and reward for orienting towards you, even if they do so without pulling first.

### **STEP THREE: REWARD**

Carry a treat that your dog finds valuable even when outside. Some examples of common high-value treats include hotdogs, deli meat, cheese, and wet food. But remember, the treat is only valuable if your dog considers it valuable! Some dogs may prefer atypical treats, such as crackers, bananas, or even water. Use whatever gets your individual dog excited.

After they turn towards you and you've marked, offer them the treat. Then, allow them to return to the environment. This adds a second reinforcer, the environment, and makes your reward even more potent. If you must coax them back to you every time they take a treat, either try to find something higher-value, or do something to make the treat more exciting, like tossing it towards them or into the grass.

### **STEP FOUR: REPEAT**

This is an exercise that requires consistency and patience but is well worth it to help create a walk that you both enjoy.

### **SOME TIPS**

If your dog is really struggling, you can do a relaxation protocol before the walk. The two most used are the ones by Karen Overall and Suzanne Clothier. This will help your dog settle and be more relaxed before you even begin. This can also be done if your dog has a hard time relaxing after coming home.

While on the walk, you can encourage your dog to settle and take in the environment by scattering a few treats in the area that they are already sniffing.

Walking out and back the same route instead of walking a loop can help make the environment less exciting on the return trip and your dog more willing to engage.

Behavior is affected by the environment. Be prepared to increase your rate of reinforcement in higher distraction areas.