



## Loose Leash Walking

As your adoption counselor discussed with you, your dog displayed poor leash manners, and / or reactivity to stimulant on leash. This means that your dog may be more likely than others to be reactive on leash when a stimulant is present.

### The Plan:

Create structure in your walk by leading the walk. Walk with the mindset that this is *your* walk and the dog is coming with you – not the other way around. Think of the walk as a training session rather than your dog's main source of exercise, this way you will not be disappointed if you do not see immediate results.

**If your dog has poor leash manners but is not reactive** place your dog into a short leash.

- Create an invisible line in front or beside your body that you do not want your dog to cross. This line should be no further than 3 feet from you.
- If your dog crosses this line, stop walking.
- Do not offer a correction (verbal or leash), or pull back on the leash, simply freeze.
- If your dog continues to pull after freezing for 5 seconds, turn to walk your dog in alternate direction than the one they are attempting to pull towards. This is to regain control of the walk, and your dog's attention.
- This is an exercise in patience as much as it is consistency. If you are calm and consistent, your dog will learn faster!
- Offer your dog constant verbal praise for as long as they walk in a loose leash. Ween the verbal praise down as their leash skills improve.
- Do not allow your dog to pull you toward a sniff or bathroom spot, as this will only encourage their desire to lead the walk.
- Lead your dog to sniff / bathroom spots periodically throughout the walk, allowing them the length of the leash while you remain stationary.
- Once your dog has done its business encourage them to continue on your walk

**If your dog has / doesn't have poor leash manners and / or is reactive** practice a structured walk, as outlined above.

- Walk your dog during low stimulant (whatever your dog is reactive to – dog, people, etc.) traffic times during the day / evening.
- Begin to verbally praise your dog the moment they see a stimulant they would normally react to (but haven't started to yet).
- Keep the praise slow and calm. Continue to offer your dog VERBAL praise as long as they remain unreactive. If your dog begins reacting from a fair distance and therefore will be unable to pass the on-coming stimulant calmly, turn and walk in another direction *before* the reaction begins. You will notice if you are consistent with changing direction *before* your dog is reactive, their distance threshold will continue to decrease.
- Follow *behind* a stimulant your dog would normally react to (from a safe distance) during these low traffic times. The back is much less scary / exciting than the face.

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## Georgian Triangle Humane Society

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Registration Number 86800 4185 RR0001



- If your dog only becomes reactive while passing the stimuli, continue praising until your dog changes from 'calm' to prelude to reacting.
- Change your tone from a calming praise tone, to an upbeat, excitable tone. Encourage your dog's moving forward by saying "LET'S GO"! The idea here is to keep your dog's focus on you rather than the stimulant. Remember, we don't want to *correct* your dog's reaction, we want to *redirect* it. Correcting your dog for reacting could be the equivalent of scolding someone for being afraid of heights.
- With a calm, consistent, and understanding leader like you, your dog will continue to make progress and SOON their emotional reaction to the problem stimuli will be changed for the better! Continue with an upbeat tone until your dog has passed the stimulant (and is not looking behind them toward it).
- Once your dog has passed, load them up with **verbal** praise for a job well done. Physical praise can be too stimulating at this time.

**Support:**

Our Behaviour Support Team can help to provide resources and tips if you experience concerns in the home environment. With your adoption the GTHS will provide an over the phone consultation in order to provide you with tips and resources to set your new dog up for success. In all cases of dog adoptions, the GTHS recommends hiring a professional dog training or behavioural consultant to ensure your relationship with your new dog starts off on the right paw! A list of local trainers is enclosed in your adoption package.

Our Behaviour Support Team can be reached at [behaviour@gths.ca](mailto:behaviour@gths.ca)

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