



### **Walking Techniques**

Walking your dog on a leash is an important and potentially unavoidable part of dog ownership. Bad leash manners are one of the most common negative behaviours in dogs. The most common reasons for pulling are: fear of the stimulus, social frustration, and pulling is a learned behaviour. The technique used will be different depending on the type of pulling. Consistency is KEY with walking techniques. You must commit to being 100% consistent with whichever technique you are using. You may only make it 30 feet in an hour during the first few walks, but as your dog figures out that pulling means NOT going forward, the behaviour should diminish. If you are consistently applying the technique correctly, and there are no underlying issues, you should see small results within the first week, and major results within a month. It may take months to modify the behaviour completely, so the more consistent you are, the faster they will respond. If you are not seeing results within a month, you should seek a professional consult.

### **Stop and Go**

This technique is the simplest of the three described in this document. It works best for younger dogs, and dogs who pull ONLY. It is not effective in reactive dogs. Always ensure you are NOT using your hand or arms to control the leash; this is best done by 'locking' your hands to your hips and moving your legs ONLY. The concept is simple, if there is any tension on the leash, stop abruptly, wait for the dog to stop pulling, lean forward slightly to test the leash tension, if the dog does NOT take a step forward or add tension to the leash, then you can go forward. You may need to repeat this process multiple times in a short period of time (it might be every step you take) to ensure the dog knows that tension on the leash means they do NOT get to walk forward. The reward in this case is walking forward; they do not get a treat or pet, as it's much more challenging to time rewards while moving.

### **Loose Leash Walking**

This technique is good for mildly reactive dogs or dogs who like to pull and don't respond to the Stop and Go technique. If your dog begins to pull or you feel ANY tension on the leash, quickly start walking backward and wait for the dog to turn towards you. Once the dog has turned around, offer praise and continue backing up until the dog has reached you. Once the dog has reached you, mark it with YES, start moving forward and offer a reward while walking forward to encourage your dog into a heel position. Only feed the treat when the dog is in the heel position. If they leave the position and you are comfortable with them roaming a little bit, that's ok if they aren't pulling. During Loose Leash Walking, your dog is not required to be at your side in a heel position, but it is beneficial to always reward your dog for choosing to be there.

### **Working Walk**

A Working Walk is a key tool in helping working breeds fulfil their drive to work and helping reactive dogs learn that focusing on the walker (human at the end of the leash) is more rewarding than reacting or pulling. During a Working Walk, your dog is expected to always be in a heel

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## **Georgian Triangle Humane Society**

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position. This technique is best for working breeds and very reactive dogs. Begin training the Working Walk by using the Loose Leash Walking technique. Once your dog has mastered that and chooses to be in the heal position more often, start offering less rewards and asking for eye contact when your dog is in the heal position. Once your dog ‘checks in’ with you regularly by offering eye contact, begin looking at them less. EVERY time you and your dog make eye contact, offer a reward as long as they are in a heal position. The end goal of the Working Walk is for your dog to be in a heal position and watching the walker for the whole walk.

### **Understanding Dogs’ Threshold**

All dogs have a threshold, a distance between them and a stimulant, under which they will react to the stimulant. If the dog has a 10-foot threshold, any stimulant further away than 10 feet should not trigger the dog, unless it is novel or exceptionally scary, whereas any stimulant under 10 feet away is likely to trigger your dog. While training, it is imperative you **DO NOT CROSS YOUR DOG’S THRESHOLD**. If the dog has been triggered, training becomes nearly impossible. Once you and your dog become more comfortable with the techniques, the threshold should get smaller, but may never fully disappear.

### **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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