

Leash Handling & Protective Leadership Handler Skills Obedience Club of Daytona 2020

Leash Laws: How to accomplish a loose leash walk with your dog:

From DAY ONE remember

1. **KNOW** that every time your dog is on a leash, you are training him! You are either teaching good leash habits or bad leash habits. **PAY** attention, **CATCH** the **THOUGHT**, and do something!
2. **Keep your leash loose!** Give your dog just enough leash to keep it loose. Don't pull on your dog. When you do that you are telling him a tight leash is ok, **NO!**
 - a. As soon as your dog is stepping out in front of you, **BEFORE** the leash can get tight, give a little check on the leash with a verbal "ahht-ahht". **THE SECOND** he makes that leash loose, and/or acknowledges you, **PRAISE** and Treat!
3. **Do NOT let your dog pull you, EVER!**
 - a. **If he pulls you while you are standing still, give a check on the leash, you must make it loose first, then TURN and go in the opposite direction. PRAISE him when he joins you! Praise, Stop and Treat.**
 - b. **While you are walking, if he starts to get out in front of you, BEFORE the leash goes tight, TURN and go in the opposite direction. PRAISE, Stop and TREAT as soon as he is back by you, then move forward again.**

Dead Leash: When you are standing still with your dog (listening to your instructor, having a conversation with another person, etc.) and wish your dog to relax by your side, use a **dead leash**.

Here is how:

- Hold the dog's collar in your off hand (the one w/o the lead) and allow the leash to dip down to the floor next to the dog, and step on it.
- Be sure that the dog can comfortably stand up straight with a few inches to spare.
- Let go of the collar and stand up straight. Put most of your weight on the "leash foot" but continue to hold the handle of the leash firmly in one hand.
 - *Relax (take a big breath and release your shoulders) and ignore your dog.*
 - He may try to lunge or jump around initially, but he will "self-correct" (get an automatic check on the leash).
- Since the leash is "dead" – there is no give and take as there would be if you were holding it in your hand.
- The dog quickly becomes bored (you are being "no fun," that's the idea) and he settles down, and will usually sit or lie down.

(see the next page)

The Two-Foot Rule: When your dog is on leash, he must not interact with other dogs. Do not let your dog get within two feet of another dog. **Following this rule accomplishes several things:**

- It teaches your dog that when he is on lead, he must pay attention to you and you only.
- If you are consistent in following this rule, the dog soon becomes relaxed and focused on you even amid other dogs.
 - Although it certainly appears that they are anxious to get to other dogs, the key word here is **anxious**. Dogs should interact with other dogs only off-leash and in a safely enclosed area. Being on-leash when meeting other dogs can cause a dog to feel trapped. Off leash, he can work things out on his own.
 - **If you are approached by another dog/handler team on the street, put your dog on your “off” side, and if the other handler seems determined to approach, put your flat hand up in the “please do not come closer” signal.**
 - As your dog learns to trust that you are his protective leader and an effective buffer between him and “the world,” he will become relaxed and focused and a real pleasure to have by your side.

PROTECTIVE LEADER:

Dog’s live best in a world of predicable order. You can’t always control what happens around your dog, but you can control how you handle your dog when things happen! Dog’s want their people to keep them SAFE. If they don’t see you being aware of the environment, paying attention and keeping them safe, they end up protecting themselves and you, which typically leads to poor choices on their part and a house that ends up in chaos because the dog thinks it is head of the house. **You must choose to lead or be led. THIS is how a dog’s world works.** You want your dog to learn to be comfortable in the world. When a dog is comfortable, they relax and rely on their person for direction. You will have many opportunities here at the Training Center to learn how to be the person your dog needs.

1. **Don’t panic – Be Calm!** If the situation warrants, LAUGH at your dog’s silly startle reaction to something that scares him. Do not insist your dog move towards anything he is afraid of. Relax.
2. **Help your dog recover from something that startles him by being the protective leader.** Show your dog you have his back, all the time. Praise your dog for deferring to you and trusting you. Praise him calmly when he demonstrates calmness and act like it is no big deal if he hesitates. Change the subject – maybe he’ll be more interested next time. **As he learns to trust YOU, that you won’t push him (or lure him) when he is frightened, he will become more confident and relaxed in a variety of environments.**
3. **Protective Leader qualities and behaviors** will be discussed frequently in class. If you have questions about how to handle things, please don’t hesitate to ask your instructors!