

Progression of a Walk



There is much more to a walk than clipping on a leash and heading out the door. These guidelines will help you and your dog connect and move together as a team as you navigate the walk and the various situations you'll encounter on it!

Consider these elements before heading out on your walk:

1. Is this the right time of day to walk my dog? Will there be a lot of triggers out?
2. Is this the right environment to walk my dog? Would a different park or neighbourhood be less stressful for my dog?

3. Pause again once you step out the door. Is your dog excited now that the world has opened up to them? Make sure you have their belly and brain with you: Can they eat? Can they think? Power up your "Yes" and try a simple skill. If they can eat and think, you're ready to begin the walk!

4. If your dog pulls on the leash and is NOT in a trigger situation, stop and anchor yourself so that the walk does not continue forward OR give a verbal cue such as "Oops!" and turn around to walk in the opposite direction. Both strategies teach your dog that pulling on the leash does not get them to move forward. Be sure to reward when they're walking nicely!

5. When does your dog start to become over-aroused? Is it when you pull out the harness? When you put on your shoes? Slow down and help your dog settle during these steps. Try a "Yes" power-up (5 Yes+Reward's in a row), ask for a couple of well-known, simple skills. Can you help your dog leave the house calmly?

6. Watch for any offered attention on the walk. If your dog happens to check in and looks at you, that's a big win! Say "Yes" and offer them a tasty food reward. With repetition, your dog will begin to offer you attention more frequently while walking.

7. Be aware of your environment and exits at all times. When a trigger appears, check your space. Can you ensure this will be an opportunity for your dog rather than a challenge? As soon as your dog first notices the trigger, begin the "Check In, Check Out" game. Remember that the appearance of the trigger is the start button for the game! Continue to play until the trigger is out of sight or your dog completely loses interest.

Remember to always ask the question: Does this walk serve my dog?

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