



As your puppy grows, you'll be able to enjoy more and more activities with them—and that includes going for walks outside the home.

Even though dogs on leashes are a common sight, leash walking isn't an intuitive behavior for dogs—instead, pups need our help to learn.

Most pups adapt to their leash just fine, but it may take time and patience in the beginning.

Here are some tips to make the process easier and more fun for both of you...

Puppies and Leash Training: Tips for Success

When your puppy's ready to start exploring the world, they'd probably love to just roam free and explore everything!

However, wearing a leash and collar is important for their safety, so it's not something you'll want to skip.

Leash training prevents your pup from accidentally running onto a busy road or taking off after a squirrel and becoming lost. A leash also helps you keep your pup from eating strange things off the ground during their walks (puppies are very curious, after all!).

Fortunately, the learning process can be smooth for both of you, with a few leash training tips...

Ask Your Veterinarian About Outdoor Excursions

Before taking your puppy to any popular dog hangouts, you'll want to check with your veterinarian that their vaccines are fully up to date.

Once you get your veterinarian's okay, then it's time to explore and have some fun!

Choose the Right Supplies for Your Pup

You'll need to have a leash for your puppy.

Most experts recommend standard leashes rather than retractable. They're more secure and give you a greater amount of control over how far your pup can run.

You'll need to choose a leash that's the right size for your pup—lighter leashes for smaller breeds, and sturdier leashes for larger dogs.

In addition, you'll need to think about the right collar or harness for your pup.

Choose something that's snug enough that your puppy can't slip out of it, but also comfortable and not too tight.



Popular options include...

- **Collar.** This standard option works well for many dogs and is worn around your dog's neck.
- **Harness.** Harnesses fit around your dog's chest and stomach, which is nice because it distributes pressure on your pup's chest rather than their neck if they pull on the leash. Plus, harnesses are an excellent option for dogs that are good at slipping out of collars (for example, dogs that have a wide neck and narrow head).
- **Gentle Leader.** This gentle option fits over your dog's head and the bridge of their nose. It's comfortable and helps train your dog not to pull or lunge. The only caveat? Compared to other options, it takes a bit more training to get your dog used to it.

For simplicity's sake, we'll use the term 'collar' in this article—but the information also applies to these other options.

Does It Fit?

For a collar or harness, a good fit means you can comfortably place two fingers underneath, between the collar or harness and your dog's skin.

Any looser than that, and you risk your pup being able to slide out of it. Too tight, and it can cause discomfort or even skin sores and irritation.

Gentle Leaders have specific fit instructions to follow.

Note: For some puppies—especially large breeds—they may outgrow their puppy collars or harnesses. So, monitor for tightness, and replace with a larger collar or larger harness when appropriate.

Give Your Pup Some Time to Adjust to the Collar and Leash

You can begin this process before your pup finishes their vaccines. That way, they'll be prepared for outdoor walks when it's time.

Some pups may take to their collars (or harnesses) right away. Others may take longer. Mild scratching at the collar area is common initially.

The key, as with so many areas of training your puppy, is patience and making everything into a positive experience.

Start by just leaving their collar on for a few minutes at a time. Offer praise or treats to reward them, then remove the collar.

Do this each day, increasing the amount of time until your pup seems comfortable leaving it on all the time.

Then, try the same thing at home or in the backyard with a leash attached. Supervise your puppy as they drag the leash behind them. Offer a toy to make it a fun experience.

When your pup is comfortable with that, you can start with short walks outside.

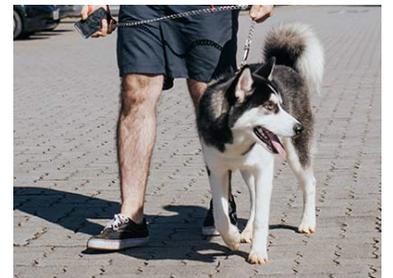
Teach Manners for Walking

If your puppy tries to pull on the leash, don't pull back. Instead, just stand still and stop walking—then, resume the walk when they're calm.

That will teach your pup that calm behavior, rather than pulling, is what leads to an enjoyable walk.

Work on Basic Obedience Commands

To further improve the safety of your pup's outdoor adventures—and to enrich their developing mind—teach them basic commands such as 'sit', 'stay', 'heel', or 'down'.



If you feel comfortable, you can do this training at home. Professional dog trainers and classes are also good options.

Whatever you choose, remember that patience, a positive attitude, and praise make any training process more fun for both of you. And, the act of learning something new will help your pup stay entertained and mentally sharp.

So, enjoy the process of learning together—and have fun on all your walks and outdoor adventures!

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