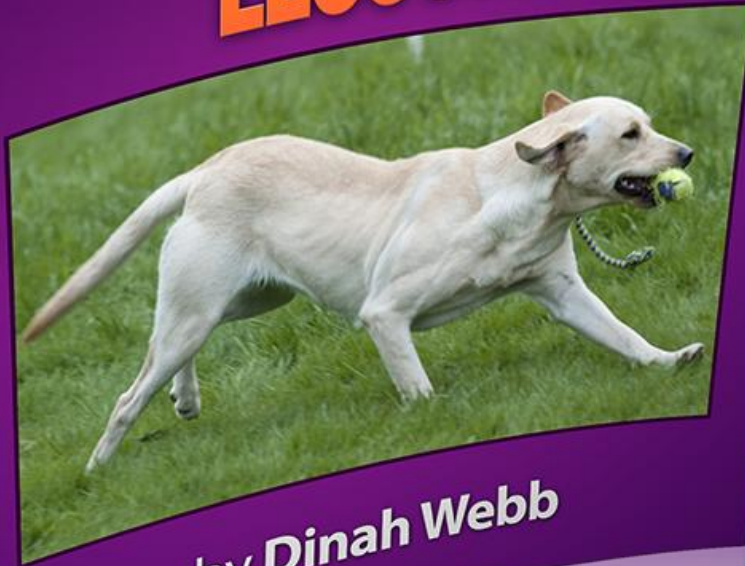


**6 Minute**

**DOG TRAINING  
LESSONS**

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by Dinah Webb

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## **LEARNING TO WALK ON A LEAD/LEASH**

First make sure that you have followed my tips to good preparation then when you are ready, follow these 6 steps.

### **Step 1 - The collar and lead/leash**

Before you start, decide on which collar and lead you want to use. There are various types of lead and collars and if you would like some input start by asking advice from an expert. I often recommend a half check for a larger breed dog because it gives the owner good control and helps your dog understand what is required of them. A word of caution though, do be careful when using any form of check collar, they can and do cause damage if used too harshly.

Whatever you decide to use, before you start decide have a quick check of the dog's collar and lead and ensure it is in good order (no roughness or anything rough around the edge which could chafe your dog's neck) and a comfortable fit. After all, you wouldn't be happy wearing something that's the wrong fit! Ideally, the lead you use should not be too long or too short (about 4-6 feet or 120 – 168 cm suits most dogs).

### **Be legal**

Do check the law which applies in the country or state you and your dog live in. In the UK, the Control of Dogs Order 1992 means that when a dog is in "public" (such as a place, road or path) must have a collar with their owner's name and address either:

- inscribed on the collar or
- on a plate or badge attached to it.

Failure to do this is an offence.

### **Step 2 - Preparing – PAT**

#### **Position**

Before you start also decide which side you would like your dog to walk on. This comes down to you as an individual and your needs, but do bear in mind that show and working dogs are usually required to walk to your left, so if this is something you're thinking about doing, now is a good place to start.

#### **Acknowledge**

If this is the start of your training and if you haven't already done so, choose the word that you will use to acknowledge your dog's good behaviour and to give them praise and encouragement – a simple "yes" usually works best.

#### **Treats**

Do have a ready supply of your dog's favourite treat as a reward to praise good behaviour. I recommend small highly flavoured treats, such as slivers of liver or mature cheese. Despite the fact that it is balanced with their exercise, do also bear in mind that calories in treats can easily add up!

If you intend to use a clicker this is also a good place to start. I'll discuss clicker training later on in my book.

### **Step 3 - Getting used to it**

Ideally, by now you will have trained your dog to sit since this makes things much easier for both you. I also recommend starting lead training in your house or garden, with as few distractions as possible.

If your dog doesn't usually wear a collar, get them used to wearing one before you start the lead training. Let your dog see the collar and lead and have a good old sniff before using them. I often recommend trying a dog with a collar by putting the collar on your dog just before a meal so that the collar is associated with nice things (food!). You may want to let your dog try wearing the collar for a couple of consecutive days before attaching the lead.

Once they're used to the collar, some dogs also benefit from a few sessions of you putting the lead on the dog and letting them wander around in it, occasionally picking it up the lead so the dog gets used to how it will feel. Please do take care though and always stay with your dog rather than let them wander alone to avoid accidents if the lead should get caught in anything.

### **Step 4 - Starting off**

Dogs display a variety of behaviour when you first put on and use a lead, be it spinning around or generally running amok. Particularly, a puppy will need some time just to get used to things. It is best to wait until

- the dog slows down and
- sits
- so that the lead goes slack

before doing anything else.

Once the lead goes slack, and your dog sits, acknowledge your dog with a "yes". Then, assuming your dog is on your left, hold the lead and a treat in your right hand with your left hand holding the center of the lead slack, ready to move towards the collar.

Start to walk slowly forward, using your left foot first. As the dog starts to walk beside you give the command "heel". Try this for a short distance (about 12 steps) before stopping when you should acknowledge your dog's good work with a "yes" and the treat from your hand.

Build up confidence with short distances, and gradually increase the distance. Remember that training should be 6 minutes at a time. Also remember that with a dog who has not walked on a lead before you will find they will sit, pull back and generally be confused initially. Stick with it and just be gentle and encouraging, it won't all be learned quickly, many dogs take months to walk properly on the lead.

### **Step 5 – Avoid pulling**

If the dog moves about or tries to pull/start ahead of you, use your left hand to move towards the dog's collar, gently grab the collar and pull it backwards. If you are using a half check chain, you can give a sharp but not forceful tug on the chain. It's the sound not pain which gets another behaviour, don't poison training sessions with losing your temper or being too forceful, the dog will remember and you have a steeper learning curve if the dog becomes fearful or has been hurt by rough handling.

If the dog continues to pull forwards make a sudden turn, going clockwise and walk in the opposite direction. This will mean that the dog's head is pulled by the lead and they will have to speed up to catch up with you. Go backwards, turn to the left, turn to the right so you are not predictable to the dog and they start to watch you.

### **Step 6 – About Turn right**

Once your dog is confident in a walking in straight line and stopping to sit, you need to introduce turning.

**To turn right**, using your left hand, guide your dog to the right and give the command "heel". Continue walking.

To turn left, you may want to start with holding a treat in front of your dog's nose as you turn left.

Lead training can be challenging at first so it's important that it's fun for both. However, once the training is complete it is rewarding for you and your dog.