

Dogs pulling on leashes are very common. The best way to teach your dog not to pull on leash is to never let him/her pull on the leash in the first place. You can accomplish this by changing directions every time you feel pressure on the leash. For example, your dog starts to put tension on the leash therefore you turn 180 degrees and walk. Vary your walking patterns and reward your dog with praise and treats for following you and not pulling on the leash. Be interesting! Be a leader and communicate to your dog what you expect him/her to do.

Many dogs have even been breed to perfect this skill, such as Siberian Huskies. Dogs have an opposition reflex, when something pulls back on them they pull harder into it. A dog's muscles are designed to actually resist, or pull against, a slow steady pressure on them. This means that the more the leash tightens up, the harder the dog will pull against it in the opposite direction. This is one of the reasons pulling back on dogs does not stop pulling. When we walk our pulling dogs the picture quite often resembles that of a boat and a water skier. Our dogs pull us and we lean back to brace ourselves. The dog ends up feeling best leaning forward and we feel best leaning backward. It is very difficult for us to walk together and we end up fighting each other because we are out of balance. Balance is the key to us being able to walk peacefully together

The first step to a balanced walk is for us to look at ourselves. Dogs are very aware of our body language, therefore we need to hold our body upright and point it in the direction that we want to move. Quite often we fixate our eyes and body language on our dogs. This can be very confusing for our dogs. If we need our dogs to move forward we need to point our bodies in the direction we want them to move - forward. If we want our dogs to stop we can turn into them (a quarter turn) to tell them to stop. To communicate and influence our dog's movement we need to try to keep our bodies in line with their front shoulders or head.

Pulling also rewards dogs because they get where they want to go fastest by doing this. Therefore, you can stop and not let them continue on the walk until they ease up on the leash and/or acknowledge you. You can use praise and treats to reward your dog for the right choice of not pulling. You can also change directions during your walk if your dog starts pulling. Your dog will start to understand that you show him/her where you are going and you will also be less predictable (which is more fun for your dog).

Practice these skills in your house first and then in your backyard, gradually increasing distractions for both of you. You can also perfect your teamwork communication and skills by leading your dog through and over different obstacles, like pylons set up in a line that you can zigzag through. You can also lead them over different pieces of playground equipment, benches and/or small retaining walls/dividers.

The Balanced Leash

Your dog's center of gravity/balance is in their chest. We want to teach your dog how to remain in balance on leash by shifting their balance back into the chest. No one likes to be out of balance, including our dogs! **The balance leash is a tool from Tellington Touch.** To begin using this tool you will want to be on either your dog's left or right side. Your body needs to remain near your dog's shoulder/head area to communicate best with your dog. Your leash should be at least 6 feet long. Attach the leash to the dog's buckle collar as usual. With the hand that is closest to your dog, hold the leash in the middle. Have the end of the leash hang on the other side



of your dog (the side you are not standing on). Pick up the loose end with our other hand by reaching in front of your dog's chest. Please see picture below. To slow down or stop, rebalance your dog with several "ask and release." **The "ask and release" should be in an upward and back motion and should not jerk the dog.** We are asking your dog to shift their weight back. Make sure to release the tension to allow your dog to experience balance. For an experienced or strong puller it may take a few "ask and releases," along with meeting them with the equal amount of pressure that they apply to the leash, to experience some balance.

Some dogs seem to step over or back out of the traditional balance leash. For these dogs we modify the balance leash into the **balance leash plus**. Set up the balance leash as described above, then have your dog step over the leash loop in front with his outside, front leg (the front leg furthest away from you). Put the end of the leash up through your dog's buckle collar on the side of your dog's head that is closest to you. This is the balance leash plus. You use it the same way as the balance leash; the leash still applies pressure to your dog's chest to bring him/her back into balance.



We discuss and help you work through ways to walk your dog nicely on leash in the Calgary Humane Society's Polite Pooches class. Please see www.calgaryhumane.ca under Behaviour and then Obedience classes.

Equipment options. There are some great tools to use to help walk our dogs nicely. With most of the options that we recommend at the Calgary Humane Society the leash that is required is a double ended leash. The leash has a clip on either end. This allows for two points of contact to help influence our dogs. A step in harness in combination with a double ended leash allows for great communication with our dogs. (Please see our handout on Step In Harnesses). Another option is to use a head halter with a double ended leash. The other end of the leash can be attached to a flat collar or harness. An Easy Walk harness is yet another option, where the leash attaches to a d-ring on the front of the chest. All of the above equipment is available for purchase and fitting at the Calgary Humane Society. Remember that dog's can learn to pull in any piece of equipment and we need to work with our dogs and communicate and influence them on walks, so that the walk can be enjoyable for everyone!