



Why Dogs Pull On Lead

Pulling on lead is the number one complaint by dog owners everywhere!

Recently, in a survey conducted by Urban Dog Training the number one problem that people feel they need help with most is teaching their dog to walk nicely on lead. The same is also true for our group classes and private consultations.

Apart from making taking your dog for a walk extremely uncomfortable, dogs that pull on lead are a safety hazard. They can pull you into oncoming cyclists, skateboarders, aggressive dogs etc.

Why Dogs Pull

Probably the biggest contributing factor to pulling on lead is the owner. The reason dogs pull on lead is simple – HUMANS TEACH DOGS TO PULL ON LEAD.



1. Dogs pull, humans follow.

When dogs are motivated to get to something, naturally they pick up the pace of their walking. When the human does not respond with a matching pace invariably the dog will end up pulling on the lead. If the human follows the dog at this point, the dog then learns that dragging the human along on the end of the lead is the way to get to everything he wants i.e. that pulling equals forward movement.

2. Humans put tension in the lead.

Many humans teach the dog to keep tension in the lead by holding the lead tight. Worried that they cannot control their dog they wrap the lead around their hand, or hold the lead close to the dog so that they can 'control' the dog. This teaches the dog to become accustomed to the feeling of tension in the lead.

3. Opposition Reflex

The number one contributing factor to pulling on lead is 'Opposition Reflex'. Put simply opposition reflex is your dog's natural instinct to resist pressure. When you pull back on your dogs lead, your dog's *reflexive* response is to pull forward into the pressure being applied to his neck (or belly if he's wearing a harness).



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Try this experiment:

1. Attach a collar and leash to your dog
2. Put tension on the lead

The dog will naturally resist the pull and will pull itself in the other direction. The same thing happens when you're out walking. If you pull back on your dog's lead, opposition reflex will dictate that your dog will pull in the opposite direction – forward.

4. Environment is more interesting than the handler

A sad but true fact is that if your dog is pulling on the lead he finds the environment much more interesting than you. There can be a number of contributing factors here such as:

- 🐾 Breed Characteristics – for example, a scent hound might be more interested in scenting than focusing on you.
- 🐾 Deprivation Level – a dog that only gets out twice a week is likely to be highly motivated to pull due to the fact the he is criminally under-exercised and under-stimulated.
- 🐾 Handler Skill – Some handlers (most in fact) do nothing but nag their dog and jerk at their lead. Is it then any wonder that the dog would rather be focused elsewhere?



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