

# Training as Enrichment: Walking & Moving

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Helping pets live happy, healthy, full lives



Reward-based training can be used to teach new tricks, hone polite manners, provide brain challenges that leave the dog more satiated and settled by the activity's end, and boost the human-animal bond through enhanced communication and deepened trust.

## 1. TRAINING-CENTERED WALKS

Rather than being pulled relentlessly down the street, encourage closer connection with your canine by positively promoting your dog's moments of attention and loose leash walking.

- If the dog is straining at the end of the leash or pulling mightily to get to where they want to go, think of the tight leash as a red light and STOP. Wait firmly in place as long as the leash stays tight and the dog is focused on where they want to go, rather than on you.
- Wait for a brief moment of connection when the dog slightly orients his body or gaze in your direction and the leash goes slightly slack. That's the green light to move forward!
- When the dog keeps his leash loose (no pulling), sometimes use a cue such as "OK" or "Go Play!" just before giving the dog freedom to walk forward briskly or investigate an area of interest.

## 2. FOLLOW THE LEADER

To create a more in-sync walk, first teach your dog to willingly want to walk beside you, starting off leash and in a safe, low-distraction area, like inside your home.

- Encourage the dog to keep close as you walk by rewarding your dog with a treat for remaining on either your right or your left side.
- To initially get your dog into proper position at your side, with their body turned in the direction you're moving, you can either wait for your dog to naturally move toward you, or use a treat lure in your hand to gain the dog's initial interest and movement to you.
- If your dog is oriented on your opposite side, you can also do a 180-degree spin by pivoting in place, turning towards your dog, to eventually face the opposite way with your dog now aligned on your desired side. Then, using a treat lure, you can turn your dog to face the same way, if needed. Or, simply move out and forward, encouraging your dog to follow.
- To assist your dog in moving on the proper side, practice in a hallway or other narrow walkway. For instance, you can walk with the right side of your body close to the wall to encourage your dog to walk towards your left side.

Reward your dog any time he looks in your direction, orients his body next to you, or walks in step beside you with his shoulder aligned with your leg.

Keep your movements interesting by adding in frequent stops and turns that keep your dog's attention on where you might move next. Sometimes have the dog follow you while you walk backward – you can then pivot to his side.



### 3. CREATE AN IN-HOME AGILITY COURSE

Celebrate your canine's athleticism by using items you already have in the home to create an indoor agility course. Slick floors are scary for the dog and can cause injury, so set up the agility course on a non-slip surface such as a carpet or rug.

- Encourage the dog to move through the "course" by luring him with treats or toys over each "obstacle," then giving the dog a treat after each one. Skip an obstacle for a while if the dog is hesitant about it, as you don't want to cause frustration.
- Create a jump by tying a rope, leash, mop, broom, or wooden dowel between two objects that are held in hand or elevated evenly between two platforms. Keep the jump very low (no higher than the dog's wrist).
- Encourage your dog to jump through a hula hoop.
- Create weave poles by lining up and spacing out tall boots, cans, and cereal boxes.
- Drape a blanket or sheet over two chairs to create a tunnel for the dog to navigate through or under.

### 4. CATCH TREATS IN THEIR MOUTH

Catching a treat mid-air in his mouth is not only a more stylish way for your dog to eat his treat but it's a useful skill for more easily delivering treats to your dog during training.

- To teach the trick, start off with light, airy treats that catch more air with a longer lag time, before they fall to the ground. Puffy treats, such as plain popcorn, or cereals like Cheerios, are good choices for helping teach the mid-air catch.
- Start by dropping the single treat just above the dog's mouth. Or gently toss it up at a slight arc upward to allow the dog time to orient beneath the treat before it falls.
- You can also alert your dog about your imminent toss using a cue word like "catch" just before tossing the treat. Or you may also do a couple of pre-emptive motions of moving your hand in a slight tossing motion before the full treat toss that follows.
- As dogs perfect their mouth-eye coordination the challenge can gradually be upped, increasing the distance and trying different treat types for the dog to conquer.



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