

Leash Handling: Isometrics, Balance & Control

INSTRUCTIONAL GUIDE

How to Hold a Leash Properly



Fig 1

How you hold the leash is very important when working with a dog who pulls or who is fearful, timid, or aggressive. Holding the leash correctly helps you control your dog, prevents you from jerking and yanking on her neck, and frees one of your hands so that you can give her treats or carry something she values on the walk.

Basic leash techniques will give you more control over your dog's movements and give her a little bit more freedom at the same time. (Fig 1)



Fig 2 ©2007 Margaret Crow

A relaxed leash means that there is no tension on the leash where it attaches to your dog's collar or harness. You can keep the leash very short, but it can still be relaxed at her neck. (Fig 2)

The Basics

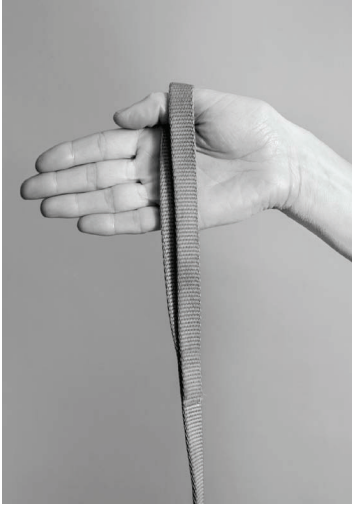


Fig 3



Fig 4

Place your thumb into the leash handle instead of your fingers. Close your fingers to secure the leash so it doesn't slip out of your hand. This will free up the fingers on that hand and, with proper body mechanics and alignment, give you more strength when your dog lunges or pulls. (Fig 3 & 4)



Fig 5

Because your fingers are free when you place your thumb into the leash handle, you can shorten the leash and stay in control of your dog while holding or carrying treats, a tennis ball, or your car keys. Be sure to always keep some fingers closed and on the leash handle whenever you grab or hold onto something. (Fig 5)

How to Shorten the Leash

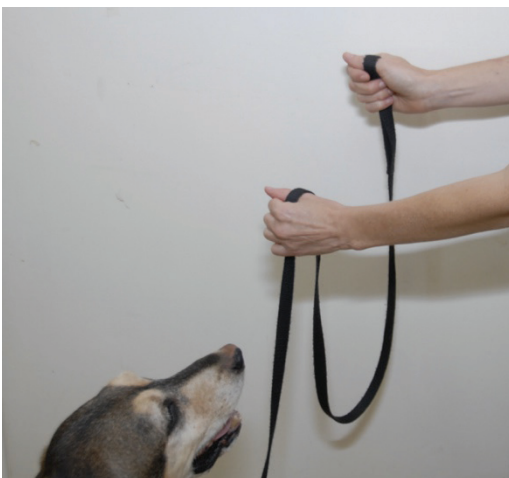


Fig 6

To shorten the leash, with your free hand (the hand not holding the leash) decide how much of it you would like to take in or shorten. (Fig 6)

Bring the hand holding the leash handle to your free hand to replace it. Slide your thumb under the leash instead of your fingers. (Fig 7, 8 & 9)



Fig 7



Fig 8



Fig 9



Fig 10

Close your fingers after every loop to secure the leash and make a handle. This prevents the leash from slipping out of your hand. To shorten the leash further, repeat the steps. (Fig 10)

Here's shown from a different angle. (Fig 11, 12 & 13)

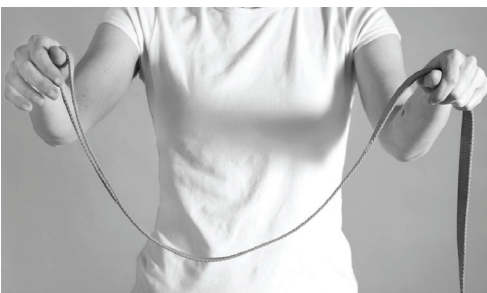


Fig 11



Fig 12



Fig 13

Once the leash is secure, your free hand can provide treats to your dog.

Treating Lucy with my free hand after I shorten the leash. The leash is relaxed at her neck. (Fig 14 & 15)

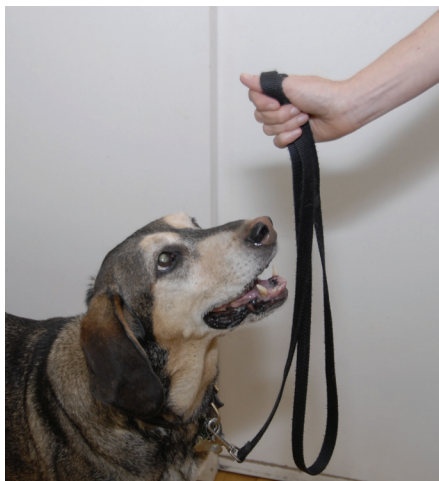


Fig 14

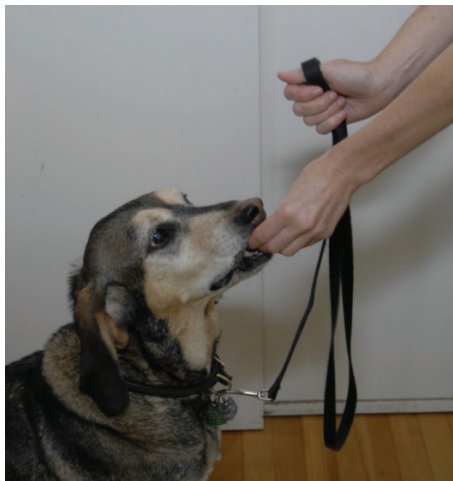


Fig 15

Holding the leash in my left hand as I treat Sebby with my right. (Fig 16 & 17)



Fig 16



Fig 17



Fig 18

I've taken two large loops to shorten the leash. The leash is relaxed. A relaxed leash simply means that there is no tension where it attaches to your dog's collar or harness. You can give your dog very little leash and still keep it relaxed at her neck. (Fig 18)

When you shorten the leash, try to do so without pulling your dog. If she pulls, stop to get your balance. Shorten the leash as you walk toward your dog or shorten it as she approaches you. Even though you might have to walk toward your dog to shorten the leash, you do not have to let her continue to pull you.

Body Mechanics & Proper Alignment

Always keep your arm or forearm in line with your dog and at the same angle as the leash. Your arm or forearm should follow the direction of the leash. This provides you with more strength if your dog suddenly lunges since she will be pulling against your body weight instead of your wrist and forearm.

You probably lean forward or try to reel your dog in when she lunges or pulls against you. This puts you off balance and is a primary reason why people fall forward. There are two ways you can stand to maintain your balance when your dog lunges.



Fig 19 ©2007 Kerri Fenn

Position yourself with one leg in front of the other. Rest your weight on your back leg, as if you are going to sit down on a chair. You will have more strength because you will be using your legs and lower body—not your upper body or forearms. You are not trying to pull your dog to you, but simply meeting her resistance and staying stationary when she pulls.

Resting my weight on my back leg prevents me from leaning forward or jerking on Kiva as she tries to pull me. My arm is in the same direction as Kiva and is in line with the leash. (Fig 19)



Fig 20 ©2007 Kerri Fenn

The other way is to turn into the leash so that the length of the leash is in front of you and the side of your body faces your dog. By positioning yourself so that your side faces your dog, you will have more strength without needing to pull back on her or jerking on the leash. This position stabilizes you and keeps you balanced, even if your dog pulls strongly.

Standing sideways to Kiva with my forearm in front of me enables me to maintain my balance without pulling back on her. My arm is facing Kiva's direction and in line with the leash. (Fig 20)

Try to keep your arm still when your dog suddenly lunges or pulls at the leash. To do this, freeze your arm or lock at your elbow utilizing principles of isometrics. If you use your arms or upper body to pull back on your dog, you will encourage her to pull harder and will have little choice but to yank on her. This can result in injury and make any reactivity your dog may have worse. If you stop yanking on your dog or jerking at the leash, she will look to you more and pull less.



alanastevenson.com

alana@alanastevenson.com

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