



Positioning Techniques on Leash for Fearful & Aggressive Dogs

VIDEO SCRIPT

This video has four lessons.

- How your dog moves or how to move your dog (luring)
- Changing direction (the U-turn or 180°)
- Turning Your Dog away from a Stressor
- Switching Sides (moving your dog to the right or left of you)

You will need: A flat 6 ft nylon or fabric leash 5/8", 3/4" or 1" wide. For little dogs, the leash can be 1/2" or 5/8". The leash should be smooth, soft, and light on your hands. Lots of little pieces of food or treats. A dog to practice with. Your dog should be wearing a flat collar and/or a harness. A helper, stuffed dog, or object to use as visual marker or post.

Try to keep the leash relaxed as you work. Stop, pause, rewind and replay the video as many times as you need until you perfect the techniques. Go slow. Give lots of treats and reward your dog as you practice.

How Your Dog Moves or How to Move Your Dog

Your dog's plane of motion is under her chin, in front of her chest and legs. Food in your hand should be positioned at her chest level for your dog to walk forwards. If you hold your hands above your dog or lift up on the collar, she will resist and pull backwards. With a lure, wherever you move the food in your hand, your dog's nose will follow. This moves your dog's entire body. To get your dog to follow you, hold food in front of your legs. Your hands should be below your dog's nose at her chest level. With the leash relaxed, step or walk backwards.

Here I lure Lucy to follow me. I keep my hands in front of her, low at her chest level and step backwards. If I hold my hand above her or pull up her collar she will pull back. Since she's following the food, wherever you move your hand, her body will follow. If you hold food above your dog, she will sit. Keep the food low and in front of your dog. This is the first step in teaching your dog position changes. By keeping your hands in front of you, your dog faces you. By then walking backwards away from the trigger, your dog will be turned away from it.

Here shows where my hand is positioned.

Quick 180° or Turn Around (U-turn)

The way most people change direction is by turning away from the dog. When you turn away from your dog to change direction, you ditch your dog and lose her attention. It's also a sloppier turn especially if your dog is focused on something else or distracted. Instead, when you want to change directions with your dog turn into the leash and to the side closest to your dog. I call this an inside turn. If your dog is on your left, pivot left to turn around. If your dog is on your right, turn right. Give your dog a treat once you've turned. Turning this way is quicker, more efficient, and easier for your dog.

Before you turn, you will have to get your dog's attention and lure your dog to turn with you. Once your dog is fully turned, reward him. Repeat this movement and reward your dog any time you both change direction.

Now Candace practices. Be sure to shorten the leash so it doesn't get tangled and hold the treat in front of your dog's nose when you turn so your dog turns with you. Turning this way is more efficient, easier for your dog and quicker to learn. Notice Candace holds the treat low to get Lucy to turn with her. Praise your dog for turning with you and give her the treat after she turns. Dogs like this turn and it's easy for them to do.

Mistakes – Quick U-Turn

Watch Lucy's response to Candace as Candace demonstrates both turns.

Watch these mistakes, Candace doesn't get Lucy's attention before she turns. She then holds the leash too high so pulls up on Lucy's collar so it slips off. Candace normally keeps Lucy's collar loose, but when Lucy felt the pull or resistance on the back of her neck, she pulled back in response.

Turning your Dog Away from a Stressor

To turn your dog away from a trigger, shorten the leash, put food in front your dog's nose at chest level. Keep your hands in front of you as you step backwards away from what you want your dog to avoid. Keep your hands low under your dog's head so you don't lift up on the collar. Do not turn your back to the stressor. As you step backwards, keep feeding your dog to keep her focus on you and away from the distraction.

When you've turned your dog, it's important you stay facing the stressor. Not only to see what the stressor may do but also to keep your dog facing you and away from it. If the stressor approaches, continue to step backwards away from it, just be careful where you step so you don't trip or fall.

Here I demonstrate the position change shown from a different angle. In this case, Candace is what I'm wanting Lucy to avoid. Often children, dogs, and even some adults will want to engage with your dog even as you try to avoid them. By stepping backwards away from the distraction, keeping your hands in front of you and feeding your dog, she will be turned and walking away from it.

Now Candace practices. We are using a stuffed dog as a visual trigger for Lucy to avoid. Once Lucy is.....

turned and walking away from the dog, Candace can decide in which direction she wants to go.

Mistakes – Turning Your Dog Away

This is a common mistake. When Candace sees the stuffed dog, she instinctively steps in front of Lucy to block her from seeing it. She turns her back to the distraction, instead of turning Lucy away from it. If you try to block your dog from seeing a distraction, your dog will want to go around you.

Switching Sides

Once you've turned your dog away from the distraction and she is facing you, you can go in multiple directions. If you want to continue walking forwards, when you step to the right of your dog, she'll be on your left. If you step to her left, she'll be on your right. A simple way to think of it is to side step closest to what you want your dog to be away from so that you are positioned between your dog and the distraction as you pass.

It's important if your dog is reactive to keep her engaged and positioned next to you as you pass the distraction, so she doesn't dart in front of you or behind you to get to it.

Keep your hands and food in front of your dog and held low to fully turn her and to keep her by your side and outer leg as you pass.

Here I demonstrate the turn more quickly using Candace as the distraction I want Lucy to avoid. I can walk right next to Candace but still remain between her and Lucy.

Here's showing the turn with Lucy using a stuffed dog as the distraction. Once Lucy is turned away from it, I step closest to it and keep Lucy by my side as we pass.

Now Candace practices. I am the trigger she wants to keep Lucy away from. It's important she shortens the leash and turns Lucy fully before she steps forward to start walking again.

Candace has Lucy on her left. She lures Lucy to turn around and then positions Lucy to her right to pass me.

It gets easier for Candace and she gets better and becomes more comfortable with repositioning Lucy as she practices.

Mistakes – Switching Sides

This is a common mistake. Candace shortens the leash and positions her hands low but doesn't step backwards far enough for Lucy to fully turn and steps forward a bit too soon.

Here she does better and self-corrects, but still doesn't step backward far enough for Lucy to comfortably change direction. Lucy needs a little more room to turn.

Candace does great here at shortening the leash, keeping her hands low and stepping back enough for Lucy to change direction, but she holds the leash too high pulling Lucy at the back of her neck.

Here I do it correctly, keeping Lucy in motion, stepping backwards far enough for her to comfortably turn and keeping my hands low and to the side I want her to be on. If you hold your hands too high above your dog, she will sit and if you pull on her collar, she will back up, stop, or resist. This is why it's important to keep your hands in front of her and at her chin or chest level.

All the Turns

Here is a recap of the positioning techniques you've learned. First you learned how to turn your dog away from a trigger so that her back will be facing what you want her to avoid. You also learned how to change direction with your dog so that you turn into the leash instead of away from it. The third positioning technique you've learned is how to switch sides with your dog or how to position your dog to your left or right so that you can pass something you want your dog to avoid.



alanastevenson.com

alana@alanastevenson.com

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