WALKING NICELY ON THE LEAD

Make sure that before you start you have plenty of treats to hand. They only need to be tiny little pieces to give your dog a taste. We will need to do many repetitions at first when teaching this exercise, so having small pieces will prevent us from over feeding our dog. Have at least two types of treat available. Something of lower value to your dog, such as their dry food or some standard dog treats and something of higher value to your dog, such as chicken or cheese (or something else safe for your dog that they find tasty). The reason for this is that we may have to make the reward more valuable if our dog is struggling to focus. This will be more likely when distractions are added and the exercise is taken outside. If you are using a clicker, have this at the ready as well. If you are not using a clicker, have your marker word agreed.

STEP 1: Choose which side you would like to train your dog to walk on. If you have chosen the right side, then have your lead in the left hand. If you have chosen the left side, have your lead in your right hand. This will mean, the lead will cross in front of you, leaving the hand closest to your dog free to give the treats as rewards.

STEP 2: With a treat in hand lure your dog to your chosen side and into position. Once your dog is in position, use your marker word or clicker to mark them and then reward. Do this a few times, at least 5 times, to let your dog know that this is the position we want them in.

STEP 3: Once your dog is in the correct position by your side, take a step forward. If your dog remains at your side as you take this step, mark and reward them. Then take another step forward and if your dog stays with you mark and reward. Repeat this method of marking and rewarding every step, to let your dog know that staying by our side is what is getting rewarded.

STEP 4: Once you feel your dog is managing to stay with you by your side when you take 1 step, you can increase it to 2 steps. Marking and rewarding every 2 steps as long as your dog stays with you and doesn't pull ahead .

STEP 5: Gradually increase the amount of steps you take before marking and rewarding. If your dog pulls ahead, do not pull against them. Instead, plant your feet and lure them back into place using food, not by pulling them with the lead. Once they are back In position, mark and reward and set off again. If your dog continues to fall out of position and pull ahead, you have probably gone too fast and taken too many steps. If this happens take it back to the level you were achieving success for a while longer.

TOP TIPS

- Start in low distraction areas when first teaching this. Trying with too many other things going on, when a dog is first learning an exercise, makes it too difficult for them to focus. Set them and yourselves up for success!

- It is best to do this training at the end of the walk, or during a separate training walk. Trying at the start of the walk when the dog has been cooped up all night and is excited to go out is asking too much of them.

- Only train any exercise for a maximum of 10 minutes at a time. This prevents both dog and owner from getting bored or frustrated.

- Be patient and consistent. Loose lead walking is one of the hardest things we can teach our dogs, particularly if they are forward driving. If loose lead walking is trained for 10 minutes a day, 4 days a week for example, it can take approximately 3-6 months to achieve a dog who doesn't pull. This of course will vary depending on each individual dog.

- Manage expectations. Of course with hard work we can achieve many goals we set out to achieve. However, be aware that there are some highly stimulating situations that may cause some dogs to lose focus or be unable to loose lead walk. If this is the case, do not punish your dog and try to go at your dogs own pace, as after all, they are all individuals

If you need further help, you can find a dog trainer by copying and pasting the link below into your web browser:

https://abtc.org.uk/practitioners/?_abtc_role=animal-training-instructor

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