

TAKING A WALK

Why bother with training walks?

Because every walk is a training walk: Your dog *will* learn something. Why not determine what that will be? Besides, you and your dog will both enjoy your walks far more this way.

How to prepare.

Step 1. Decide the following:

- What will you do when another dog crosses your path?
(Cross the street? Ask your dog to sit while the other dog passes? Ask your dog to heel or watch as you pass by? Allow your dog to politely meet the other dog?)
- What will you do when you meet people?
(Cross the street? Ask your dog to sit to say hello? Ask for a heel or watch as you pass by?)
- How will you handle potentially interesting things like trash on the ground, baby strollers, squirrels, etc?
(Leave it? Let's go? Watch? Heel?)
- How will you handle potentially frightening or startling things like loud noises, rambunctious children, or, for shy dogs, other dogs or people?
(Cross the street or move in the opposite direction to create distance from the scary thing? Give treats and cheer your dog on? Use heel or watch to keep your dog focused on you while moving quickly past?)

Step 2. Bring tasty treats, and choose a walking route with just the right amount of challenge for your dog. If your dog is relatively new to training or on the shy side, choose a route with low traffic of people, dogs, and other distractions, so you can practice successfully.

Step 3. Take the walk, actively scanning the environment so you can respond proactively to challenges (cats, other dogs, people) rather than reacting when they are already too close.

After the walk.

After you return home, assess how the training walk went.

- What did your dog do well?
- What needs extra practice?
- Is there anything you want to do differently next time?

Training Tip: Choose the cue your dog is best at (watch, leave it, heel, etc.) to get the best results in a distracting environment.

Troubleshooting: If you have trouble keeping your dog's attention focused on you, try an easier route on the next walk, bring tastier treats, and walk your dog before his mealtime, not after.