

Homeward Bound Golden Retriever Rescue

Golden Rule Training

Loose Leash Training

At best, leash training should start at puppy hood, but unfortunately, many of the dogs (all ages) at the rescue have not been leash trained; we find there are levels when accessing ability to walk on leash:

- **Level 1**- This dog has had no leash training or has never been on a leash. He is very hard to walk; he pulls excessively on the leash and walks ahead, and pulls to where he wants to go. He needs leash training basics and daily practice with solid leadership.
- **Level 2** – This dog walks on leash, but can be difficult at times. It is likely he has some leash training, but still pulls. He may need to be reminded of his initial training, or the current training needs to be reinforced with leadership and consistent practice.
- **Level 3** – This dog pulls a little, it may depend on who is walking him. He may walk fine, but needs some corrections during the walk.

Equipment

We recommend *Martingale Collars®* for all our dogs. They are completely safe and protect the front of the dog's neck from damage due to excessive pulling (trachea damage). They do not have a buckle or a snap, so the dog cannot back out of the collar and get loose. The design of the collar is unique and was originally made for a slim neck (Greyhound breed) so the collar does not come off and does not add pressure to the front of the dog's neck.

We recommend a 6-foot leash to allow your dog to move a little more during the walks, allowing them to sniff a little bit. After all, dogs need to sniff as part of their natural behavior, they should be allowed to sniff and potty on a walk (unless you potty train for only your back yard). *Note: Leather leashes are easier on your hands during the training process.*

Head collars are a great tool to assist with the hard to walk (Level 1 & 2); while they are learning, and are fine to use afterwards. There are many brands of head collars, they are painless and effective; it removes the dog's natural tendency to pull by placing gentle pressure on calming points and eliminating the harmful pressure on the dog's throat. In addition to reducing a dog's desire to pull away, the Gentle Leader is also a very effective tool in combating lunging, jumping, and helping to calm an aggressive and/or

anxious animal. At Homeward Bound, we use *the Gentle Leader® and the Halti® brands.*

We do not support the use of chock chains, pinch collars or shock collars. These tools have caused irreversible damage to the dog's neck and are unnecessary to control your dog.

Heel vs. Loose Leash

Loose leash walking is NOT the same as "Heel." Heel is a very specific kind of cue or command that requires the dog to maintain his position on your left side with his shoulder blade lining up with your leg. We teach heel after the dog can walk easily on the leash (loose leash).

Loose leash walking is what the name suggests. It requires simply that your dog is walking with you without pulling the leash taut. Done properly, loose leash walking allows the dog a little more leeway in his position relative to you while you can maintain control over the dog. Beyond that, you will decide what the criteria are for your dog's behavior during the walk.

If the goal is to have a nice easy walk daily, and not have the dog pull, these steps can help. *If your goal is to go into an intermediate obedience class and eventually have your dog evaluated for the Canine Good Citizen (CGC) certificate, then there is much more work to accomplish. The American Kennel Club sponsors these tests and there is a strict curriculum involved. This level requires a close walk with no sniffing or wondering, and a close "heel" to pass the evaluation. This process is included in our intermediate class at Homeward Bound.*

Pulling on a leash is never rewarded, so if the dog is pulling use "no" or "eh-eh" so the dog hears this is not what a desired behavior. You can use treats (especially for a shy dog); this may help in marking the progress as he stays close and does not pull he gets a treat.

Getting ready to leave the house

Most dogs get excited at the idea of going outside with their owner, however, he can be excited as long as he is not pulling or jumping. At all times, remain calm, and this will help the dog remain calm. We recommend practicing the "wait" cue before opening the door (see the "wait" cue instructions). Once you can leave the house in a calm organized manner, your walks will be more enjoyable.

What you will need:

- **Rewards**
Dogs just want to get out, go forward, sniff everything and explore. As you start out, have some treats ready to reward then for good behavior. If your dog is not leash trained and has a lot of energy,

make sure the treats are rewarding to him; it will help keep his focus. *We recommend this in the beginning to help keep your dog focused and walking next to you. As you say his name (see the "focus" cue) and he looks at you, give him a treat immediately. He will learn this is what you want him to do, stay right by you!*

- **Preparing to go outside**

It is critical that your dog to see you as the leader. You decide where you are going, not your dog, and you must remain confident, calm, and assertive at all times. This will help to maintain control over your dog and is an important part of being the leader your dog needs.

When you start your leash training, try to do it in an environment with as few distractions as possible for you and your dog. As you both get better with your loose leash walking, you can start to increase the distractions to make it more of a challenge.

When starting out on the walk, try to keep the dog close to you, and if he pulls, he is pulling you are not pulling him. If he pulls, you can stand still with no communication (known as standing like a tree), when you stand still your dog will try to figure out what you are doing, once he is calm and standing near you, then you start walking again.

Below are the three levels mentioned earlier, chose the one that best describes your dog's level and work through the actions.

Level 1: High level, difficult to walk

Level 1 is the more difficult to teach, they are usually very large or active dogs and tend to be younger. They are strong and difficult to walk, even just around the block!

Before you start the walk, expend some of the dog's energy!

Most dogs love walks, but some have never seen a leash or even know what happens when attached to one. For level one dogs playing ball or some other exercise is a good idea so the walk goes easier, it will help him focus on the walk!

Action:

To train the dog using a head collar, put the head collar on for a few minutes without the leash attached, leave it on for 2 minutes, give the dog a really good treat, say "good", then take it off. Then build up to 7 to 10 minutes (this is done inside the house). Do this a few times a day for a couple days. This tells them it is temporary and the head collar is not on all the time.

Note on Leash usage:

Hold the leash in your hand with your thumb outside the loop of the leash and your four fingers in the loop, and then make a fist around the loop. Do not wind the leash around your hand, if the dog pulls and tries to chase

something you may become tangled and possibly go down as the dog pulls and runs.

Action:

Take the dog out for a short walk with the head collar on, they may fight it with the leash on, but they will get used to it. Ignore them and keep walking, keep moving forward. Do not "pop" or pull the leash, it can hurt the dogs neck and it is not necessary! The dog will get used to you controlling their head and see you as leading the walk with more exposure and practice walking farther each day. See the Gentle Leader® brochure for more information.

As you practice, the dog will start to look back at you for guidance, have a treat ready and say "good"! This lets them know this is what you want.

Note: We do not recommend or support the use of choke chains or pinch collars. They are dangerous, can harm the dog as well as being cruel and unnecessary to control or train a dog. These products are considered old training methods that have been replaced by a more positive and appropriate methods.

Level 2: Mid-level, somewhat difficult to walk

Action:

A Martingale Collar and Gentle Leader or Halti head collars are tools you can use at level 2 as well. See instructions and tools above for Level 1.

Action:

Keep the dog by your side, as the dog pulls he is the one causing the tight leash, do not jerk the leash back, they will figure out they are pulling, when they release a bit, say "good", and if they look at you, acknowledge that and say "good". You want to reinforce the dog looking at you for leadership.

Note on Leash usage:

Hold the leash in your hand with your thumb outside the loop of the leash and your four fingers in the loop, and then make a fist around the loop. Do not wind the leash around your hand, if the dog pulls and tries to chase something you may become tangled and possibly go down as the dog pulls and runs.

Action:

When you feel the dog walking and not pulling, give a treat and praise quickly, within 3 seconds so he connects the act with the reward. He will start to look back at you for guidance, have a treat ready and say "good"! This lets them know this is what you want.

Level 3: Low-level, pulls a little

At Level 3 we introduce the “polite walking” technique. This technique is a gentle way of training your dog to follow. We do this by asking the dog to walk on the left or right side (for CGC it has to be on the left and everyone in the family needs to pick the same side so the dog understands what to do).

Note: Leash usage:

Hold the leash in your hand with your thumb outside the loop of the leash and your four fingers in the loop, and then make a fist around the loop. Do not wind the leash around your hand, if the dog pulls and tries to chase something you may become tangled and possibly go down as the dog pulls and runs.

Hold the leash in the front of your body to give you more stability. If you need to shorten the leash, fold the leash like an accordion and hold the loops in your hand.

Action:

As you start out, your dog may race ahead and the leash will become tight; quickly extend your arm forward to create slack in the leash, and then turn around abruptly and head back the way you came (or alternatively you can make a 90 degree turn to the left or right). Give a cue, such as “this way” or “turn” and keep walking.

The point of this exercise is to surprise your dog by a sudden change in direction. Make sure there is slack in the leash so you are not pulling the dog, you are simply changing direction. The dog needs to feel you suddenly change course, and hear the cue; this tells the dog, you are in control of where you go and at what pace, he is to follow.

Eventually, he will realize the change in direction is under your control and he is to look to you set the path. When he catches up to you, praise him and give him a treat. Do it quickly before he gets ahead of you (within 3 seconds, so have the treats ready)! The next time the leash goes tight, make another about face and give a cue, such as “this way” or “turn”. This technique, “polite walking” is the gentlest way to leash train.

How long of a Walk does the dog Need?

Overall, we recommend at least one fast-paced 30 – 45 minute walk a day for an active dog and for a very active or high-energy dog two 45-minute walks a day. If the dog is older or overweight, you must watch the pace, and if he is out of breath slow down. You may have to work up to 30 – 45 minutes. For some older dogs, a shorter walk is fine.

All leash training takes time, commitment and consistency, but the payoff is well worth it! You not only will have a well-mannered dog to walk with you, but you will get exercise while building a strong bond with your friend.