

Everyday Safety for Your Dog

A leisurely walk around the neighborhood, park, or outdoor trail is something that most people envision doing with their dogs. What some people don't realize is that it often takes a lot of training to perfect the "leisurely" walk. Here are a few training musts for every dog and owner in order to have a nice walk and a safe one too.

Six Training Musts for Safety and Pleasure

"Heel" and Loose Leash Walking

- Heel is a very specific kind of walk that is based in strict obedience. It requires the dog to maintain his position on your left side, with his shoulder blade lining up with your pant leg. It can come in handy for city dogs on crowded sidewalks.
- Loose Leash Walking gives the dog a little more leeway in his position next to you but still gives the handler more control and is fine for most situations.



"Sit"

- Teach your dog to Sit at every curb before crossing the street keeps both you and the dog out of oncoming traffic.
- Have your dog Sit on cue when a strange dog or person approaches

"Watch Me"

- Watch Me asks your dog to give you immediate eye contact on command. It is a proactive way to redirect the dog's attention on you in a pinch and can help keep him out of harm's way.
- Watch Me is also a helpful cue to refocus your dog when they are reacting to something distracting or frightening.

"Let's Go!"

- Let's Go can tell your dog that you are about to change direction and he should turn to follow you. It can also be used for a prompt about-face turn to avoid potential trouble or other hazards on your walk.

"Leave it!"

- Leave it means "whatever you are focused on this instant, you need to focus on me instead."
- Like Watch Me or Let's Go, Leave It can be used to ask your dog to ignore another dog, a squirrel, a passing cat, a skateboarder, a bicyclist, or anything else that might cause him to lunge, pull away, or bark.
- Leave it can help you avoid your dog from accidentally eating food, garbage or foreign objects that they find on the ground.

"Drop It" or "Give"

- If your dog does grab something before you can prevent it, a reliable response to Drop It or Give is necessary.

Additional Concerns for Urban Dogs:

Urban environments create additional safety concerns for handlers and dogs. Be aware of the potential unexpected hazards like municipal meters, electric call boxes, street and traffic light pole bases, manhole covers, congestion, etc. See Street Zaps for more information on stray electric voltage and the dangers it presents to you and your dog.

Extra Tips for Little Dogs

- For Toy and Mini breeds, you might want to consider using a body harness rather than a collar to avoid tracheal injury.
- Work on teaching your dog to walk politely by your side. This is important for many little dogs have difficulty maintaining position, and they tend to dash and dart about. Tripping over him could cause injury to both of you and it's easy for us tall humans to trip over our smaller canine friends.



Safety vs. Over-Protectiveness

It's not unusual to see little dogs barking furiously at other dogs. This is often mistaken as the small dog "acting like a big, brave dog" and some people consider this "cute" or funny. However, it's probably fear or anxiety that actually motivates this behavior, even if you see your dog acting in what appears to be an offensive and challenging way. And this issue isn't relegated to just little dogs! You can work a professional trainer to teach your dog to be more comfortable around other dogs, and use behaviors such as "Let's go" and "Watch me" to redirect his behavior.

Sometimes owners with small dogs react to this situation, particularly when their small dog is barking at a much larger dog, by picking their dog up to protect them. However, holding a small dog in your arms may create a false sense of security that might reinforce and even increase undesirable behavior. If you think your dog is likely to show aggression or fear toward other dogs on the street, contact a training professional to help you teach your dog to deal with his fears and build his confidence.

Making Sure You Get Your Lost Dog Back: The Various Kinds of Identification

Animal rescue organizations across the United States report that the vast majority of dogs and cats that come through their doors are never reunited with their owners. The simple fact is that a lot of these pets are missing some kind of identification leaving the shelters not knowing who to contact. Identification has come a long way, and owners today have multiple options to protect their dog. The best bet is to combine options and use an identification tag along with something more permanent. Here are some of your identification choices:

Identification Tags: old-fashioned, simple, and essential!

- There are some differing opinions on whether dogs should wear a collar, with ID, all times. The argument for wearing a collar at all times in the house is that the unexpected can happen, and if your dog suddenly dashes out the door and takes off running, your chances of getting your dog back are significantly increased with a collar & identification tags on. On the other hand, dogs that wear collars at all times in the house are at risk of having the collar or tags get snagged in furniture, or in their paws or even jaws, and this has the potential to cause injuries and choke your dog. For people with this concern, Premier makes a Breakaway collar that will come part if snagged on something.
- Best: A simple tag with your dog's name, your current phone number(s). If the jingling of tags just drives you crazy consider an updated id tag is specially designed not to jingle. See the resource section below. You can also get tags that attach to a dog's collar instead of hanging from the leash ring, and some companies produce collars with your information embroidered on them. See the resource section below.
- OK: City Dog Registration tags or rabies tags with the name and phone number of the vet who vaccinated

the dog. These tags can enable someone who finds the dog to find you, with a little effort, but only during business hours when these offices are open.

In addition to his/her tag, combining a second form of more permanent identification like those below will greatly increase your chances of being reunited with your dog.

Permanent Forms of Identification:

- **Microchips:** Rice-grain sized identification pieces that are implanted under the skin at the back base of the dog's neck. These microchips can then be read by anyone that has a scanner like veterinarians, animal shelters, and animal control officers. Owners of microchipped dogs should remember to keep their contact information current. Many microchipped dogs wear a tag with a chip ID number and the 800 phone number of the microchip company. You can have your dog microchipped at your veterinarian's office, or many animal shelters and rescue groups also perform this service. Two major microchip companies are Home Again and Avid.
- **Tattoos:** These are usually on the inside of the thigh or inside one of the dog's ears. Tattoos are permanent, visible, and cannot fall off or be stolen. Veterinarians or trained specialists ink the tattoo. You will need to list your dog with one of the many tattoo registry programs around the country. Although tattoos are permanent, they are harder to rely on than a microchip. Tattoos fade over time and may not be easily detected through the dog's fur.
- **GPS Collars:** While not technically an ID, GPS is the latest technology to help locate a lost dog. Some pet GPS companies are: Secure-A-Pet, Dog Tracs, Garmin Astro, PetSafe GPS, and Zoombak.

Resources:

- Vital ID at www.vitalid.ca
- Boomerang Tags at www.boomerangtags.com
- Dog ID Collar at www.dogidcollar.com
- Help 4 Pets at www.help4pets.com
- ID Tags at www.idtags.com

Foods to Avoid for Your Dog's Safety

Though most foods which are good and nutritious for humans are also good for dogs, there are some important exceptions. The following foods can be toxic, even in modest quantities.

- **Alcoholic beverages:** Can cause stomach upset, intoxication and death.
- **Avocados:** The substance Persin can cause vomiting, diarrhea respiratory distress and heart congestion.
- **Chocolate & Coffee:** Can cause vomiting, diarrhea, seizures, hyperactivity, and possibly death. Both contain caffeine and a substance called theobromine, or theophylline, which can be toxic and affects the heart and nervous systems. Note: The darker the chocolate, the smaller the amount necessary to be lethal for a dog.
- **Grapes & Raisins:** Can lead to stomach upset, vomiting and even kidney failure.
- **Moldy or spoiled food, garbage:** Can contain multiple food-borne toxins causing vomiting, diarrhea, seizures or even death.
- **Yeast dough (raw):** Dough can be double trouble in that as it rises,



the dough can expand the GI tract, possibly causing the intestines to rupture. The yeast can also form alcohol as it rises, leading to alcohol poisoning. It can also continue to rise in the dog's stomach and cause painful bloating, gas and eventual rupture of the intestines or stomach.

- Onions, Garlic & Chives: These all contain thiosulphate which can lead to stomach upset, and prolonged exposure can cause haemolytic anemia (damage red blood cells).
- Macadamia Nuts: Contain a high phosphorus content which can lead to bladder stones. In addition, they can affect the digestive, nervous systems and muscles causing temporary paralysis.
- Fat trimmings: Can cause painful pancreatitis.
- Xylitol sweetener (common in candy & chewing gum as well as some natural toothpastes and mouthwashes): Can lead to liver failure through the over-release of insulin, vomiting, lethargy and loss of coordination.
- Sugary foods: Better to stay away from sugar as dogs do not naturally consume sugar in the wild. Excess sugar would be bad for dental health and weight control.
- Raw eggs: Contain an enzyme called avidin, which can lead to skin and coat problems. Raw eggs may also contain Salmonella.
- Cooked Bones: Cooked bones splinter easily and can lead to a blockage or tear in your dog's digestive system meaning emergency surgery or death.

If you think your dog may have ingested a potentially poisonous substance, contact your veterinarian immediately. They will need to know what the dog has eaten, approximately how much, and when the dog ate the substance in order to determine the best course of action.

For further information on the nature of the toxicities of these foods:

- www.petdoc.com/story/toxic-foods-your-dog
- www.wikihow.com/Avoid-Foods-Dangerous-for-Your-Dog
- ASPCA Poison Control Center at www.asPCA.org/pet-care/poison-control or (888) 426-4435 (24 Hour hotline)

Note: Always watch for recalls on any dog foods or treat products and be aware that some products such as rawhide chews, pigs ears, jerky treats, cow hooves and pig skin chews have been linked to salmonella. You can find out about current and past recalls at www.fda.gov.

Bloat

Another important safety concern revolving around food is bloat. There are a variety of opinions on what causes bloat; some say it is raised food bowls, others disagree. Below are some links on bloat to provide you with more information on the condition, possible causes, and possible ways to prevent it.

- Bloat Information – Purdue University at www.vet.purdue.edu/epi/bloat.htm
- Great Dane Links on Bloat at www.ginnie.com/bloat.htm
- Wikipedia Article on Bloat at <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bloat>
- The Pet Health Library: Bloat at www.veterinarypartner.com/Content.plx?P=A&A=672

For more information on the Association of Pet Dog Trainers,
visit our Web site at www.apdt.com or call 1-800-PET-DOGS (738-3647) or email information@apdt.com.