

# Connected Walking

## Level 4: Walking in distractions

**Purpose:**

This exercise continues building the skill of polite leash walking. It introduces variation in the walking path and in the presence of the mild distractions.

**Dog Skills**

Self control  
Respond to a cue  
Give attention

**People Skills**

Reinforcement  
Cueing

**Steps:**

You actually now have all the tools you need in order to teach your dog to walk politely on a loose leash

Remember that it's very hard for a dog to walk in a long straight line at the same pace (kind of like the history channel—dogs like MTV). Changing pace and direction may actually be better for his body.

**Click Points**

Release of pressure  
Attention to handler  
When noticing the distraction.  
Loose leash when moving past a distraction.

Think about this when walking your dog—all those circles, turns, zigzags, S turns keep the walk more interesting for your dog (and may be better for his body). We call these 'transitions'.

1. How does this relate to taking your dog out for a walk in the real world? Use transitions when your dog sees a something ahead of you on a walk and starts to pull. Veer off at a right angle with a soft hand on the leash, using that chick's heartbeat flutter to get the dog's attention ("hey dog, we're walking together here!") Shirley Chong suggests imagining "your dog as a fish on the line in water--let the dog supply the speed but you supply the direction. You don't want to drag that fish against the water because that's too much hard work on your part. You let the fish swim and use the line to guide that fish into circles or into heading upstream".
2. Click every transition. Your dog is still learning and the click tells them that they are performing the transition correctly. You will GRADUALLY, OVERTIME, slow down your rate of reinforcement because your dog will be certain that they are behaving correctly.
3. What does your dog want as a reinforcer? Use that when training. If your dog wants to investigate a fire hydrant, go there using transitions as needed, when you finally arrive, encourage your dog to check out the hydrant.

**Good for developing these other behaviours:**

Polite greetings on walks, even around distractions; prepares for self-control off-leash as well as on; prepares for meeting other people and dogs without over-reaction. Teaches the dog the skill of looking at distractions (squirrels, other dogs) while maintaining self-control, rather than trying to get to the distractions. Polite leash

walking in real-life situations, such as on walks, at the vet, and more. Improves the dog's ability to keep his attention on the handler, rather than pulling on the leash, even when the dog is tempted by interesting sights or sounds.

**At home fun:**

Begin to practice in real-life situations, such as out on a walk or at the par, managing distractions at a level at which the dog can succeed, and interspersing "dog time" (when the dog may stop and sniff ) with controlled walking time (when the dog must stay with you as you walk). Always give a verbal cue, "let's go" or "relax," as you transition.

**TROUBLE SHOOTING AND ADDITIONAL HELP!**

Walking politely is very very hard for dogs to learn and very very hard to people to practice correctly.

**Here are some tips:**

- Keep your leash hand glued to your waist whenever possible; treat at your pant seam.
- Use a cue like "let's go" to tell the dog that they are to be walking with you on a loose leash.
- Use your hand target to help get a dog back into position if necessary.
- Use Premack's Rule for distractions: 'Visiting' the distraction is the reward for walking to it on a loose leash.

**Use penalty steps wisely:**

- If your dog pulls forward and chicken heartbeat vibrations of the leash don't get her attention, keep your leash hand at your waist and back up (creating pressure on the dog's collar).
- The INSTANT the dog turns and releases the pressure, call her back beside you with a hand target.
- When she is beside you, move forward again; if she stays with you, c/t for attention.
- If she pulls to the end again, back up again.

You should be able to get at least 10 c/t in for going forward for every back up. If your ratio is lower than that, the dog is NOT READY for such distraction—use a treat magnet to get the dog THROUGH the distraction.