

Loose Leash Walking

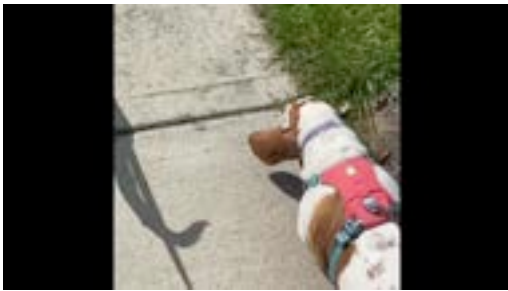
KIKI YABLON, MA, KPA-GTP, GPDY-KA

Overview

- What is loose leash walking, these days?
- Dog skills
- Human skills
- Setting up for success
- Walking as a behavior sequence/"chain" held together by cues
- Thinking about and teaching some component skills for humans and dogs

What Is Loose Leash Walking?

- Takes a long time to teach well
- Often defined by the product (a loose leash) rather than behavior required to produce it
- Often defined by "don'ts"
- Many different skills, eternally recombined in ever-changing environment



COURTESY JACKIE PEKAR, @GAMMATHETRIPOD, CHRISTIE CATAN, JO LOCK, SUSY VALLEJO, @HAPPY.HOUNDIE, @TARO.THECOCKAPOO, ANDREA POLLOCK, SARAH LINDGREN-AKANA, @TSJARDO, LAURA PERKINS, KATIE MONICK, AND SARAH OWINGS

My Definition: Dog End of the Leash

- Frequent offered attention
- Walking or trotting at distance/pace that lets my elbow remain bent/spine aligned
- Changing sides predictably
- Walking closer or faster occasionally by request
- Slow when I slow
- Stop walking when I stop, at certain environmental cues, or when I ask
- Move in the direction of leash tension
- Sniff what you like if safe
- Calmly watching or ignoring people and other dogs
- Reorient before moving on after a "distraction"
- Step over the leash

My Definition: Human End of the Leash

- Attention on the dog
 - Manage leash length
 - Keep tension off the leash
 - Keep the leash between person and the dog
 - Slow when they slow, if safe *
 - Stop when they stop, if safe *
- * maybe not for working dogs
- Give clear signals about direction, speed, and what's going to happen with other people and dogs *
 - Deliver or facilitate access to reinforcers
 - Keep dog safe *
- * may include a variety of other specific skills

What Skills Does the Dog Need?

- Collect the reinforcer
- Offer attention
- Walk, trot
- Reorienting
- Slow down
- Speed up
- Settle
- Follow a hand target
- Come back to side
- Step over leash
- Switch sides
- Go off path
- Wait
- Respond to leash tension

What Skills Does the Human Need

- Observation skills
- Gather the leash
- Let leash out
- Put slack in the leash
- Flip the leash over the dog's back
- Turning without tangling
- Speed up
- Use a marker
- Reinforcer delivery
- Arranging gear

Setting Up for Success

- We say it a lot—what does it mean here?
- Antecedent arrangement: right behavior easy
- Motivating operations—establishing and abolishing
 - Affect value of reinforcer
 - Affect temporary probability of behavior
- AO #1, often: A longer leash

Why a Longer Leash

- If you were doing it on purpose, how would you set things up to teach a dog to pull?



KELLY LEE

Why a Longer Leash

- On a shorter leash, a lot of this would be pulling.



How Long is Longer?

- 8-15 feet for city walks
- 15-20 for hikes
- With a M/L dog



Why a Longer Leash?

- Dogs on longer leashes (5 m) spent 2-3x more time sniffing than those on a shorter leash (1.5 m)
- Sniffing might be correlated with lower heart rate
- Whether they were walked every day, and whether they pulled on leash normally
- Good sniffing can slow dogs down
- Allows more comfortable gait for human and dog
- Less reason to pull

CRISTINA & AURÉLIEN BUDZINSKI, [HTTP://WWW.DOGFIELDSTUDY.COM/](http://www.dogfieldstudy.com/)

What Abouts

- Reactive dogs:
 - Tension on the leash might make it harder for the dog to turn around
 - Tension on the leash seems to push dogs off the fence in the wrong direction when they are on alert
 - Some dogs seem to take food more readily on a slack leash
 - Good leash management skills and selection of walking environment needed
- Pica, poop eating, etc.:
- Dogs who don't walk that far away
- Multiple dogs



ERIC GILBERT ON YOUTUBE

Other Ways to Set Up for Success

- Other MOs: Exercise, elimination
- Work on distractions and distance separately, as with any other skills
- Preteach component skills individually
- Don't forget to consider what will cue and reinforce them

What Are the Cues?

- **Marker +** Collect the reinforcer
- **I'm there, dropped leash, slack leash, tight leash, "distractions"** Offer attention
- **Verbal or walking a certain speed, leash draped against side** Walk or trot
- **End of investigation** Reorient
- **Leash tension** Slow down
- **Move faster, verbal cue** Speed up
- **Extended fist or palm, move fist or palm** Touch and follow a hand target
 - Come back to side
 - Step over leash
 - Switch sides
 - Move off path
- **Verbal, appearance of curb, door or elevator opening** Wait
- **Where I'm walking, length of leash, which harness, absence of close walking cue** Explore
- **I stop, lower arms** Park

What Are the Reinforcers?

- **Marker +** Collect the reinforcer **Food**
- **I'm there, dropped leash, slack leash, tight leash, "distractions"** Offer attention **Food, forward movement, cues**
- **Verbal or walking a certain speed** Walk or trot by my side **Food, forward movement, cues, access**
- **End of investigation** Reorient after investigating something **Food, cues, forward movement**
- **Leash tension** Slow down **Food, tension release**
- **Move faster, verbal** Speed up **Food, fast movement, distance**
- **Extended fist or palm, move fist or palm** Touch and follow a hand target **Food, forward movement, other cues**
- **Verbal, appearance of curb, door or elevator opening** Wait **Food, cues, forward movement**
- **Where I'm walking, length of leash, which harness, absence of close walking cue** Explore **Smells**
- **I stop, lower arms** Rest **Food, cool grass, attention from other people**

Don't Forget the Human Skills

- Observation skills
- **Leash is lower than dog's chest** Gather the leash
- **Leash is taut, distraction can be investigated, dog is moving faster than you in OK area** Let leash out
- **Leash is taut, distraction is off limits** Put slack in the leash without giving more leash
- **Leash is on opposite side of dog** Flip the leash over the dog's back
- Turning without tangling
- **Dog does desirable behavior, whether asked to or not** Using a marker
- **What you want after consumption, other variables** Reinforcer delivery

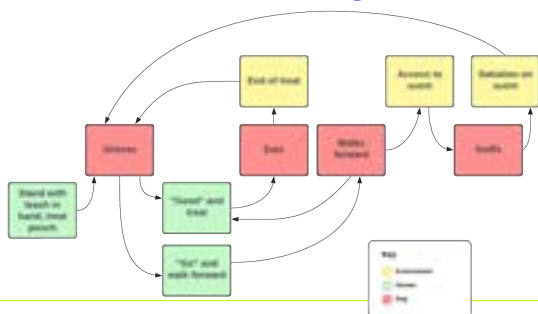
Human Cues and Reinforcers

- **Leash is lower than dog's chest** Gather the leash **Smile in leash, tangle avoided**
- **Leash is taut, distraction can be investigated, dog is moving faster than you in OK area** Let leash out **Tension avoided, dog can sniff**
- **Leash is taut, distraction is off limits** Put slack in the leash without giving more leash **Dog doesn't overreact; dog turns back to you**
- **Leash is on opposite side of dog** Flip the leash over the dog's back **Tangling/strangling avoided**
- **Need to change direction** Turning without tangling **Tangling avoided, dog in position to walk ahead**
- **Dog does desirable behavior, whether asked to or not** Using a marker **Opportunity to give treat etc**
- **What you want after consumption, other variables** Reinforcer delivery **Dog in right position to do what you want next, or farther from distraction**

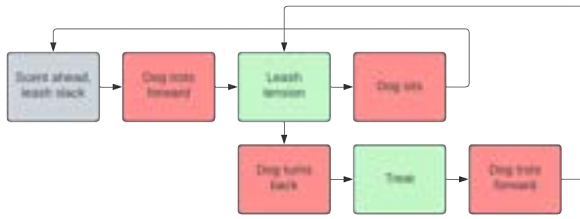
Behavior Chains/Sequences

- Sequences of behavior held together by cues as reinforcers
- Interlocking: one entity's behavior is the other's environment
- Plus there's the rest of the environment

Behavior Chains/Sequences



Accidental Behavior Sequences in Walking



Effective Sequences

- Behaviors should be fluent
- Behaviors should be on cue
- Cues should come where you would have clicked
- As with any other behaviors we hope to sequence using cues we can teach them individually and reinforce them repeatedly in the presence of the stimuli we hope will cue them

Collect the Reinforcer

- **Dog skills:**
 - Listen/look for marker
 - How and where treat will be delivered
 - Teach the "end" of the "loop" first
 - Antecedent for the next behavior
- **Human skills:**
 - Marking at the right time
 - Carrying treats, clicker, holding leash, etc
 - Predictable treat delivery

Collect the Reinforcer

- Teaching the reinforcement process first —like backchaining
- Owner found marking verbally or clicking difficult
- Tossed treats when dog wasn't looking



Offered Attention

- For some dogs, you'll be 50% of the way there with just this + longer leash
- Capture behavior and position, e.g., at hip

Reorient After Investigation



Reorient After Investigation

- Treats represent things to investigate
- Treating to ground may increase reinforcer value
- Treat delivery and moving ahead sets up next rep



Reorient After Investigation



Environmental Cues for Attention

- Marking for just looking, hearing, etc.
- Simple pairing
- Consider treat placement
- Start without walking—work distraction separate from distance, duration, precision, etc



Environmental Cues for Attention



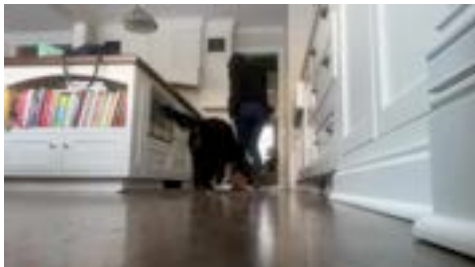
Pay Attention to Specific Cues

- E.g., not just "people"



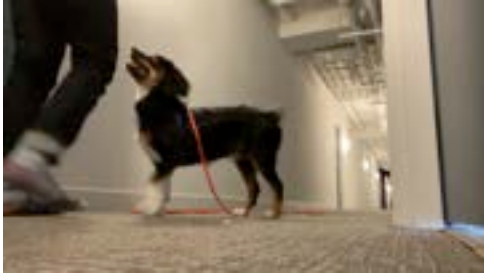
Building Attention Into Movement

- Indoors
- Off leash
- Movement is part of a reinforcer package



Building Attention Into Movement

- With leash
- In hall
- Using tug



Building Attention Into Movement

- Plus sometimes reinforcing for just attention and not moving



Movement as Part of the Reinforcer Package

- Taking it outside



Movement as Part of the Reinforcer Package

- Building duration



Wait

- Verbal cues
- Other cues (dropped leash, in my other presentation this week)
- Taught by stimulus pairing



Wait

- Environmental cues—cue transfer
- Curb or other boundary
- Dropped leash (in my other presentation this week!)



What I'm Gonna Do Cues

- "Sniff" - I'm going to go walk around slowly in some grass
- "This way" - I'm going to change direction



Transitioning to Naturally Occuring Reinforcers



Leash Handling Skills

- How to hold leash
- How to hold clicker, if using
- Where to wear treats
- How many treats to put in the bag
- Clicker mechanics
- Keeping a "J" or "smile" in the leash
- Keeping leash between dog and handler
- The twirl, the flip, and other dance moves
- Leash gathering
- Treat placement

Getting Organized

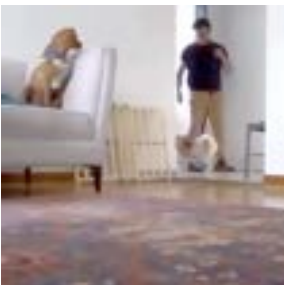


Treat Delivery/Placement

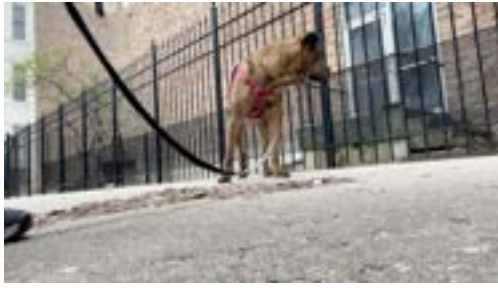
- Same exercises as for "reorient after distraction"
- Start in low distraction



Keeping the Leash Between Dog and Handler



Turning Without Tangling



Managing Leash Length



H/T MIKE SHIKASHIO, ORISHA STEWART

Turn it Into an Attention Cue!



Extend the Sequence Into a U-turn



When the Leash Goes Tight

- Do I want the leash to go tight?
- Will the leash inevitably go tight?
 - Inattentiveness or clumsiness on my part
 - Sudden attraction on the roadside
 - Walking two dogs with different interests
- Moving in the direction of leash tension for R+ and R-: "collar cues," "silky leash," etc.
- Can we rely on tension less?

Leash Dip: Slack as Attention Cue

- Walk butt up under spine
- Walk up/gather leash if needed
- Lower forearm
- Mark as leash dips, deliver treat



Leash Dip: Slack as Attention Cue



Leash Dip: Slack as Attention Cue



Leash Dip: Slack as Attention Cue



Leash Dip: Slack as Attention Cue



Leash Dip: Slack as Attention Cue



Leash Dip Practice



Leash Dip Practice



Other Ideas to Explore

- Conjugate schedules for walking (CAAWT)
- Emily Larlham on slow pacing for puppies (Kikopup)
- Other alternatives to “giving” to leash tension

KIKOPUP: [HTTPS://YOUTU.BE/UX7YLC6B62](https://youtu.be/UX7YLC6B62)

Parting Thoughts

- Loose leash walking is a suite of skills
- This is true no matter what you want it to look like
- Cues during walking come from you and from the environment
- So do reinforcers
- Your behavior works the same way; learn your cues!
- Component behaviors for both dog and handler can be taught separately and linked using cues as reinforcers

Where to Find Me

- kikiablondogtraining.com
- Instagram: @kiki.yablon
- Facebook (less often): <https://www.facebook.com/KikiYablonDogTraining>