



WAG & TRAIN^{LLC}
Animal Behavior Specialists

370 Kalamath St. Denver, CO. 80223 720-312-5499 www.wagandtrain.com

Avoiding Leash Frenzy and Teaching Leash Courtesy

Here is the scene: You get home from work. You let your dog out of the crate or laundry room. She's jumping and screaming and whining and crying and scratching... You take the leash off the hook...the frenzy continues and she gets even more hysterical... you put the leash on your dog's collar while she jumps up and smashes your nose and breaks our glasses.... and then you rush out the door for a walk. Guess what- your dog wins! And, you have taught your dog that if she jumps and screams when you go to put the leash on, she gets to go for a walk! Why are you rewarding such frenzied behavior?

I have a better idea. Let's teach your dog that when you take the leash off the hook or out of the front closet, she must sit nicely and quietly so that you may put it on her collar and then she gets to go for a walk. Teaching leash courtesy doesn't just help your dog 'settle' to get her leash on, but it can actually transfer to other 'self-control' behaviors. Here's how to do it!

1. Purchase some small high-value treats (like Zuke's) or cut up a hotdog into tiny pieces.
2. Walk to the door you usually go out of without grabbing the leash. Tell your dog 'Let's go for a walk' (I know, the 'W' word that most dogs can spell!). When she runs up to the door, ask her to 'sit'. Treat and praise for sitting. If she jumps or screams, simply walk away and ignore her. Try again when she is calm. If she continues to be frantic, walk away and ignore her. Continue this until she can sit and be calm when you say "Let's go for a walk". This could take 5 minutes or several days.
3. Once she is calm at the door, take the leash off the hook. If she starts jumping and screaming again, put the leash down and walk away like you did before when you were practicing without the leash.
4. Let her quiet down, and try again. Pick up the leash and continue to put the leash down and walk away every time she starts her frenzy behavior.
5. Keep trying and the first time she doesn't jump and scream when you pick up the leash, ask her to 'sit'. Treat and praise her when she sits calmly. If you go to put the leash on and she jumps up and cries again, put the leash down and walk away.
6. Continue this repetition until she is sitting quietly while you put the leash on. Soon, she will learn that she must be sitting nicely and quietly every time you put her leash on. Again, this may take 5 minutes or several days.
7. In addition to actually practicing with the leash at the door, try some 'desensitization' or carrying the leash around at other times for no reason. For instance, when you make your coffee in the morning, take the leash off the hook and set it on the counter or simply walk around with it for 2 minutes. Ignore your dog's frantic behavior and put it back on the hook after a short amount of time. In the evening or on the weekends, carry the leash with you in the house, maybe wrapped around your shoulder like a stethoscope. The more your dog sees her leash and it is not proceeded with going for a walk, it becomes a more mundane stimulus, and thus the frenzy will start to decrease.

Also, keep in mind that once you begin ignoring her for acting crazy, her frenzy may get worse before it gets better. She will try harder (jump more, cry more) because in the past, that same behavior got her what she wanted- a walk! So, be patient and consistent and you should be able to put the leash on your calm dog before you know it.