



Backing Up On Leash

Introduction

Backing up can be difficult for some of our puppies as it is not a natural movement for them. They like to turn in arcs like boats or planes. Nevertheless, being able to back up is a great skill for them to start learning in the foster puppy program as later they may need to move backwards to open a door, help pull a client up to standing, or to move out the way of a wheelchair.

During the foster puppy program, we do not use a verbal cue for backing up. We will add this later in the training process.

There are two parts to teaching your puppy to back up. To begin with, we are going to teach them to back up while facing us, and in then once they have the backwards movement established, we will ask them to move back with us while on leash in heel position.

Backing Up in Front

If possible, start in a small hallway or with a parallel surface on each side of your puppy, for example between your couch and a coffee table so you form a chute. It's probably best to have your puppy on leash initially so they don't get distracted and wander off. Have some tasty treats ready to reward your puppy!

- ☐ Stage 1 - Have your puppy facing you in a standing position. Hold a treat in between your thumb and the palm of your hand so your foster puppy can see the treat, but not take it. Put your treat hand to your puppy's nose, and take a step toward your puppy. If your puppy moves back, even a small amount, mark with a "Yes!" and give them a treat. Reset and repeat a few times in each training session.
- ☐ Stage 2 - Once you puppy is reliably starting to move backwards as you move towards them, you can start increasing the distance they move back before you reset them.



- ☐ Stage 3 - Remove your chute and practice some more!

Backing Up in Heel Position

Just as with backing up in front, it's a good idea to start this exercise in a hallway or next to a couch so you have a parallel surface on one side of your puppy to form a chute. You will need to have your puppy on leash with some tasty treats ready to reward them!

- ☐ Stage 1 - Position your puppy so they are between you and the parallel surface in heel position. Have your leash in your right hand and a treat in your left hand and holding the treat between your puppy's nose and their chest, start to move back and lure them to move with you. As soon as they start to move back with you, mark with a "Yes!" and then give them the treat. Reset and repeat a few times in each training session.

If your puppy is sitting instead of moving backwards, you are probably holding the treat too high, moving it back over their head, and accidentally luring them into a sit!

- ☐ Stage 2 - Gradually increase the distance you and your puppy move backwards using a food lure until you can do three or four steps. Reset and repeat a few times in each training session.
- ☐ Stage 3 - Once your puppy is reliably moving backwards with you using the food lure, we can start to fade the lure. The end goal is to have your body movement as the cue to move backwards, but to begin with, you may need to still have to have your hand (without a treat) between your puppy's nose and chest to encourage the movement. When your puppy is successful, make sure you mark with a "Yes!" and then reward them with a treat! Reset and repeat a few times in each training session.
- ☐ Stage 4 - Once your puppy will move backwards with you for a few steps without using a food lure, you can start to practice the movement without using a chute. Be realistic with your expectations though and go back to a fewer number of steps to begin with!



How to Set Up for Success

- ✦ When using the food lure, if your puppy is sitting instead of moving backwards, you are holding the treat too high, moving it back over their head, and accidentally luring them into a sit! Make sure the treat is between their nose and their chest.
- ✦ As you start to fade the food and hand lures and when you remove the chute, you can add a small amount of light leash pressure to encourage the backwards movement if your puppy needs a reminder.