



Leash Walking with Distractions

Introduction

Distractions to challenge your loose leash walking skills can come in many forms and will be unavoidable as you start to work in more challenging environments with your puppy.

Your puppy's reaction to distractions can change depending on their developmental stage or emotional state. Something your puppy finds distracting one day, they may walk on by the next.

There are various tools and tricks we can use to deal with distractions when we are out and about, so it's a good idea to familiarize yourself with some of these to maximize your loose leash walking success!

What are Distractions?

A distraction is anything that breaks your puppy's focus on you while you are walking on the leash. Some of the most common distractions are:

- ✿ Other dogs.
- ✿ Other animals such as rabbits or squirrels.
- ✿ People.
- ✿ Items on the ground such as leaves, dropped food, or sticks.
- ✿ Moving objects such as cars, bikes, or items blowing in the wind.
- ✿ Sensory elements such as loud noises, interesting smells, or bright/flashing lights.
- ✿ Combinations of any of the above!



Dealing With Distractions

Anticipation is one of the strongest tools you can use to ensure that your puppy does not have the opportunity to lose focus when you are practicing loose leash walking. Your proactivity can prevent reactivity from your puppy. However, this can be hard to achieve as it means constantly scanning your environment for possible distractions and making sure your puppy is engaged with you rather than reacting to the distraction.

Below are some tools you can use, either on their own or in combination, to manage your puppy around distractions!

Encourage Check-Ins

If you spot something that could be potentially distracting to your puppy, encouraging check-ins will help to keep their focus in you.

Change Pace or Direction

Increasing your pace or changing direction can sometimes be enough to sharpen your puppy's focus on you and away from an oncoming distraction. A change of direction can be very useful to avoid distractions such as people or other dogs who are showing strong signs of wanting to engage with your puppy!

Increasing Distance

If you see something that you know your puppy will find distracting, keeping your distance from that distraction can prevent your puppy losing focus. For example: You are walking through your neighborhood, and you see a neighbor with a reactive dog walking towards you, so you cross the street.



[Leave It](#)

If you spot something on the ground the cue “Leave It” is a very useful tool to make sure your puppy does not pick up the item. There are numerous PAWS Curriculum articles to help train your puppy with the “Leave It” cue.

[Look at That](#)

If there are distractions that your puppy is struggling with, the “Look at That” game is a great way of conditioning your puppy to remain neutral around more stimulating distractions. More details and a video can be found in the PAWS curriculum resources on the PAWS website.

[Emergency Lure](#)

If there is a distraction that your puppy is becoming over-stimulated by, sometimes the best solution is to leave! The Emergency Lure is a great tool for leaving the scene with a minimum amount of fuss and more details and a video can be found in the PAWS curriculum resources on the PAWS website.