



Sniff Walks

Introduction

During our foster puppies' journey to becoming Assistance Dogs we are working towards them being able to walk calmly alongside us in heel position, regularly checking in, and unfazed by distractions. Most of the time when we are out and about with our puppies, this is what we are focusing on, but sometimes it's good to give them a break and give them a chance to "be a dog" but in a structured way.

This is where sniff walks come in! Your puppy explores the world through their nose. The part of your puppy's brain that analyzes smells is around 40 times bigger than yours so the opportunity to smell and explore not only allows them to get information about new places, but it is also very stress-relieving.

How To Introduce Sniff Walks

- ✿ Start out on the sidewalk close to your home so it's an environment your puppy has some familiarity with.
- ✿ Walk for 30 seconds or so with them in heel position on a loose leash, encourage check-ins, and mark and reward the check-ins with treats.
- ✿ Stop by some grass and ask your puppy to sit.
- ✿ As their reward for sitting, you can release them to sniff the grass. You can use the cue "Free" or "Go Sniff" and let them have the full length of their leash to go and explore.
- ✿ When it's time to move on and keep walking, use their name to get their attention and the cue "Let's Go," shorten your leash and start walking again.
- ✿ Repeat this sequence for the duration of your walk.

Alternatively, you can also use "go sniff" as a reward for your puppy practicing good behavior on leash when approaching something they really like to sniff. For example, if your foster puppy always wants to



sniff a particular mailbox you regularly pass on walks, you can practice approaching it until they are walking appropriately and not pulling, and reward them with “go sniff” to check it out.

Set Up for Success

- ✦ It’s probably best if your puppy has some basic loose leash walking skills before you attempt to do sniff walks with them.
- ✦ Start with the 30 seconds walk/30 seconds sniff schedule, but as you progress with your puppy you can vary the duration as you wish.
- ✦ Even though this is like “free time” for your puppy, the same rules apply about picking up/eating things they shouldn’t have, so be prepared to use “Leave it” or trade if you need to!