

Balance Leash For Dogs

Pulling on the leash is a common problem for dogs and their people. Generally the more pressure you have on the dog's collar the more it triggers him to pull and pulling causes many dogs to be more reactive. This is not intentional on the part of the dog but rather a reflex – for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction.

Taking the pressure off the neck and onto the chest puts a dog in better balance and brings his weight back over his feet instead of leaning forward.

You can use nearly any leash as a 'balance leash' which is simple and very effective to stop pulling. If you are on the right side of your dog the leash is attached to the dog's collar as usual and held in your left hand with thumb pointing towards the dog's collar. With your right hand holding the end of the leash, drop the middle of the leash across the chest of the dog from the left shoulder to the right.

Make sure that the part of the lead running directly from the collar to your left hand is slightly slack and keep the portion of the leash across the chest with little or no tension. The feel of the leash across the chest is enough to keep many dogs from pulling.

When your dog pulls take the slack out of the leash and gently pull and release on the line around his chest. Take care not to pull the line upward onto the dog's neck. This is especially effective on medium to large sized dogs.

In the case of small dogs or dogs that back out of the balance leash we use a slight variation called the Balance leash plus. Instead of dropping straight across the chest the leash goes behind the elbow, on the opposite side from where you are standing, and comes up between the dog's front legs and on your side of the dog's head (see drawing). A second variation of the balance leash plus brings the leash between the front legs as described and then up through the dog's collar which helps keep the balance leash in place.

The Balance Leash is useful in the shelter or vet hospital for leading dogs to and from their run as so many dogs pull in excitement and end up choking from pressure on their neck. It is also effective if you are sitting in the vet waiting room and your dog is pulling towards other dogs or people. Just drop the line around the dog's chest and presto you can easily bring the dog back into balance.

Drawing: Shows stopping with the balance leash—the middle of the leash is dropped around the chest of the dog to take pressure off of the neck.

The end of the leash is held in the outside hand. Generally other hand would be lower than shown in the drawing so the hand closest to the dog would be closer to the dog's collar. Be sure that the connection to the collar has a bit of slack so there is no pressure on the dog's neck.

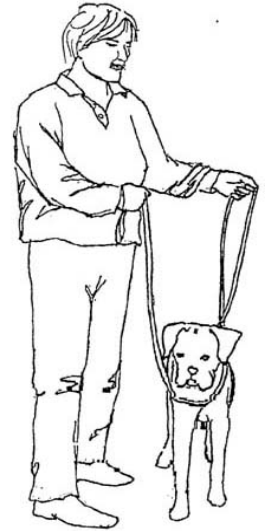


Photo: Shows the balance leash on a small dog. Sometimes the leash will slide up with a small dog, or a dog that is quite strong. In those cases use the Balance Leash Plus as shown below.



Drawing: shows the Balance Leash Plus. It works well with small dogs and those that back out of the Balance Leash.

The drawing shows the leash coming straight up in between the dog's legs without the leash in the outside hand coming up and through the dog's collar.

Use an upward motion to ask the dog to stop.



Photos: show the Balance Leash plus. The leash goes behind the elbow from the side you are standing and comes up in between the dog's front legs and then coming up through the dog's collar. This helps keep the leash in place.

The intent is to keep the leash relaxed unless needed. Bring the dog into balance and relax the contact.

Part of our TTouch Training for Companion animals includes spending time in local shelters to work with the dogs to help make them more adoptable. Helen McGraw assists in the training in Quebec. One day when we were at the shelter she approached a volunteer to show him the balance leash. The following is a letter that he sent the next day.

Greetings,

On Monday of this week, while I was walking dogs for the SPCA, a person approached me regarding T-touch and offered to demonstrate to me an alternative method/technique for leash management and controlling the dog while walking.

I am not certain if you are the correct person or not. If not, I would appreciate help in locating that person, and the presenting of this letter to them.

I wanted to begin by apologizing. When you approached me offering unsolicited advice, if I appeared cold and or skeptical, please accept my humble apologies. I was tired, both physically and mentally, and so perhaps my pride was more easily bruised. My initial reaction was to very skeptical, and I felt the closeness of the dog physically would make it unfeasible. Regardless, I wanted to thank you once again for taking the time and interest to convey the alternative techniques in leash use.

Since that day I have experimented with this, and on many of the more difficult dogs. Quite frankly I was rather surprised, no, amazed with the results. Dogs that were pulling (and thus choking themselves) were much more willing to walk in an orderly manner when this technique was used. Furthermore, it seemed to me that after walking for some distance in this manner on the street, that when I reverted to the standard technique for wild paths, that the dogs were still far more cooperative than normal.

with some of the most difficult dogs at the shelter, and found that in all but one case I was able to get the dog to accept the technique within 1-4 attempts (persistence is key with strong-willed dogs...). Only one dog (A very large Akita with limitless energy) continued to struggle, and even jump out of the more advanced form that you showed me. Still, I was persistent, and after many attempts he started to accept the technique for longer periods. I am confident that if I continue to work with him, and do not give in, he will come to accept it in time.

I was extremely pleased with the realization of the potential of this technique. I have never liked "choke-chains", and I use them rarely. However, I had thought them a necessary evil for dog that were either extremely difficult to control, dogs that I did not trust, or dogs that I was unfamiliar with. I now see choke-chain use as almost completely unnecessary. I cannot emphasize enough how much that meant to me. Now I would only see choke chains as being legitimate to use on dogs that are potentially dangerous...and I choose not to deal with such dogs.

Be assured that I will continue to use this technique on all dogs who "pull" while walking on street/sidewalk. I will continue to use the standard technique when walking in the wilderness or on trails since it allows them more freedom (I allow them to walk me in these situations). However, as I stated, even using the T-Touch method first greatly improves their behaviour once we reach the trail...and they do not choke themselves or pull me. I am looking forward to seeing if there is a long-term impact in their behaviour. If this is the case, then your gift is truly great, for it would mean that you are not just saving my arm and back as well as the dog from temporary pain...but doing a long term good, and perhaps saving dogs lives...for the better behaved the dog becomes, the better it's chances for eventual adoption.

Both I and the dogs of the Western Quebec SPCA thank you.
Regards, Paul