PREPARING YOUR FOSTER DOG FOR ADOPTION

The goal is to teach the foster dogs all the good manners they will need to be highly adoptable, and well behaved new family members. A dog that has inappropriate indoor manners may end up getting to spend little time indoors; a dog that is hassle to walk on lead may end up not getting the necessary exercise, and some behavior may be a deal breaker that leads to the dog being returned to us.

**Training Good Behavior: Nothing in life is free;** This practice is very simple; most behavior issues and bad manners stem from lack of leadership and as Cesar teaches, the need for rules, boundaries and limitations are crucial. I know it may sound a bit harsh but as you read through this section keep in mind your human kids and those that are taught manners and respect vs a spoiled child, are well behaved kids loved any less, are they less happy? Not at all and the same goes for pets!

Nothing is free is practicing passive dominance; it’s how dogs communicate with us and other animals in the pack. Dogs display active and passive dominant behaviors. **Active dominant** displays are protection of food, objects and spaces with growling, snarling and biting their humans. Removal from food and spaces (couch, place on human and beds) may cause a growl, snap or bite. **Passive dominant** displays are leaning against the human, blocking doorways or pathways, sitting on feet, sitting on human, laying on human, standing over human, paw or head over a human body part or placement above human’s head on bed or couch.

Practicing passive dominance is a way of communicating in a **safe** and **non-threatening** way our leadership role with our dogs. It’s not so much a training technique as a way of life, and as someone that has implemented these practices in my home a few years ago with my five dogs I can tell you that it has solved so many issues and the family and the dogs are much happier.

Practicing passive dominance: You have to become the source of everything the dog GETS and DOES. You must teach the dog that everything comes from you - food, water, play, affection, walks, etc. Nothing is OWED to him, he must EARN everything. This is achieved by asking for a SIT or other command before everything! Consistency is a must with every interaction. Ask for a SIT before: feeding, treats, going outside, coming inside, placing a leash on dog, going for a walk, wiping feet, affection, bathing dog, giving a toy or starting a play session. This is a form of passive dominance. The dog has to calm themselves and perform a short action before they gain anything. See I told you it was simple, maybe you are thinking too simple to be effective?, well give it a try and I think you’ll be pleasantly surprised how helpful it is with teaching the dogs to be well behaved and respectful.

**Food Guarding:** The food issue is really not a difficult problem to correct, if you are
willing to put forth the effort to train him. You should already have the dog on a schedule of one or two feeding times a day. The dish will be removed when dinner is finished (about 20 minutes). When you get ready to feed your dog, literally "hand feed" every morsel of his food to him. Make him take it gently from your hand and stay calm. After he is done, take the dish and put it up. Every feeding is the same until he willingly lets you handle his dish and food while he is eating. Once hand feeding is a success you can allow the dog to eat from the bowl but you are only going to put in a few bites at a time so the dog has to stop and wait patiently on you to give him more food in his bowl. If he ever reverts to food guarding, go back to basics and hand feed him until he gets the idea again. Be sure to praise him when he doesn't object to your handling his food dish.

**Counter Surfing:** This is a situation where you have to actually catch the dog in the act to make any progress in the training. Once he has gotten the food off the counter, he's had his reward. The easiest way is to "Change the Environment" and keep the counters free of any food items or items that the dog might find interesting. He will soon get tired of no rewards and give up checking the counter for goodies. You can also bubbly trap the counter lol. Use cans loaded with pennies or pebbles to set around the edge of the counter; when the dog counter surfs and knock over the cans causing a enough noise will startle them and they'll have a negative association with counter surfing. This works best if you can tie the cans together so you get the best bang out of the disturbing the countertop. You can also tie the cans to some bait food so when the dog grabs the food from the counter and takes off it's followed by a lot of noisy cans. Dogs will eventually stop attempting to counter surf so this isn't something that's required to be kept on your counters forever lol. DO NOT undo all your training by offering the dog a treat or food off the counters!

**Getting on Furniture:** Many adopters do not want or allow dogs on the furniture and therefore the foster homes need to abide by the policy of not allowing the dogs on furniture to insure the dogs are suitable for the majority of adopters. One of the most common questions we get about from potential adopters is if the dog gets on furniture and if we have to say yes then most time they will pass on the dog due to this habit. I assure you for those adopters that don’t mind for their pets to get on the furniture, they can teach their new dog that it’s o.k. in about five seconds, whereas breaking a dog that isn’t allowed on furniture can be a huge chore for the adopter.

Does this mean that fosters’ owned dogs can’t be allowed on furniture?, absolutely not. It is very common for one dog to be allowed to do something that another dog in the household isn’t allowed to do, for instance many of us let our small breeds ride in the front seat but wouldn’t dare let a giant breed ride up front due to the safety issues.

Once a dog forms the habit of getting up on furniture, change is difficult. If you want to keep your dogs off the furniture, your best bet is to start EVERY puppy and new dog in
your home with "off the furniture" as the CONSISTENT rule. This means everyone in the family cooperates in keeping the dog off the furniture.

Do not leave the puppy or dog alone around furniture until training is complete. Someone must supervise, just as you will be doing anyway for housetraining and to teach the dog to chew only dog toys, not inappropriate items. Be gentle when removing the dog from furniture. It's best not to touch the dog at all, other than to lift a puppy or small dog and place gently on the floor. Puppies and small dogs can be injured by jumping off furniture.

For larger dogs that won't be harmed by getting down on their own, it is safer and more effective to lure and/or cue the dog to get off the furniture, and reward the dog for being back on the floor. People often arouse aggression in dogs by angrily ejecting them from furniture, which can both trigger defense drives in dogs and cause pain if the dog has an orthopedic problem. Orthopedic problems, both inherited and injury related are so common in dogs that this is a frequent cause of a dog reacting aggressively when forced to get up from a comfortable position and jump down to the floor.

For new adult dogs to your home, consider keeping a leash on when teaching the dog to get off furniture in order to have good control. A head halter is an additional safeguard if the dog shows any tendency to react defensively. Don't drag the dog off furniture with the leash. Induce the dog to return to the floor while you simply hold the leash, keeping it slack, with no tension pulling against the dog. The leash is simply a safety, "just in case." If the dog is off-leash, avoid grabbing the collar or otherwise physically forcing the dog. Either of those maneuvers can be dangerous.

Keep tempers out of it. You're teaching the dog what you DO want, not scolding or punishing for the behavior you do not want. This approach will lead to everyone in the family eventually being able to remind the dog about furniture when necessary without risking a defensive reaction from the dog.

Remember that you need a place for the dog to comfortably rest. You're teaching the dog WHERE to rest, not just WHERE NOT to rest. So have the comfy bed in place. The place for it is near the family so that obeying you does not place the dog in social isolation.

Reward the dog in the chosen resting place. Do this both when you have just cued the dog to go to the place, and also when you notice the dog has gone to that place without a cue. Use tiny treats, special chew toys, praise, petting, toys with food inside them, and other rewards your dog can enjoy while resting on the bed.

**Oops, A Habit:** If your foster dog has already formed the habit of getting up on furniture, changing that can be challenging. The dog will probably always have some
tendency to get up on furniture when no one is around. You will need to keep the dog from having access to the furniture when you're not supervising, for quite some time, and possibly even for life.

Some people find a Scat Mat (you can buy it through pet catalogs) will keep a dog off the sofa. It gives the dog a shock. Obviously, you can't have the Scat Mat on the sofa if you're using it. Electric shock also carries the risk of "superstitious behavior," too, with a dog developing fear or aggression toward something experienced at the same time as the shock.

A plastic carpet runner--the kind intended to lie over the carpet to protect it, like at an open house when a house is for sale-can help. Turn the carpet runner upside down, so the plastic points that were intended to grip the carpet are instead pointed up, making an uncomfortable surface for a dog.

**Rushing the Front Door:** It's very embarrassing and concerning if someone rings the doorbell, you open it and the first thing your visitor encounters is a very nosy dog, or worse the dog gets out and make a mad dash down the street. Adopters and visitors will not like a bad mannered or disobedient dog, and find themselves possibly returning the dog or limiting the dog's time indoors with the family.

Reward container technique: Use the command “Away” for sending the dog away from something you do not want him to be close to. So when you hear the doorbell ring, order your dog to his designated place in the hall or to his bed. It is a simple command but very effective and extremely useful too. When the dog does go to his place when a door is opened be sure to reward his good behavior.

You can get a friend to help you with teaching your doggie good door manners. So when a door opens, command your dog to ‘sit’ and ‘stay’ before you open it. Then greet your friend and ask her in. Tell her to initially ignore your dog that is sitting expectantly in his designated place. Then call your dog over to greet her. Do not make him wait too long. Otherwise his excitement will get the better of him and he might disobey your ‘stay’ command. Such behavior is a setback to any training schedule. And if your dog does approach your friend without your permission to do so, then just tell your friend to ignore him until he calms down. Then send him back to the ‘sit’ and ‘stay’ position.

Constant reinforcement of this exercise will instill in him the discipline of good door manners. Your dog will learn that rushing out to an open door without your permission to do so is unrewarding and unappreciated.

**Pushing Through Doors:** When you go near a door and the dog is with you, the tendency in him to be the first one out is predominant. You need to wean him away from such behavior, it is a passive dominate behavior and also shows a lack of patience.
Again request a friend to assist you in this faction of training. So put your dog on a leash and stand with him near the door. Ask your friend to ring the doorbell. When she does so, just open the door one teeny weenie bit only. The little crack of an opening in the door will be invitation enough for your dog to poke his inquisitive nose through. When he does so slam the door shut. Of course make sure that his snout does not get trapped in the door. The loud thud will startle him into jumping backwards.

Go through this exercise a few more times. Soon your dog will learn that he must not try to push past you when the door opens. He will learn to stand quietly by your side and the door opens and you go out first. By now he would have learnt that pushing past you does not fetch him appropriate rewards.

Next you can tutor him to ‘sit’ and ‘stay’ when you open the door. When he obeys you must reward him. Gradually you can start opening the door wider and wider. Next you can teach your dog to ‘sit’ and ‘stay’ while your friend enters through the open door.

**Teaching Basic Commands:**

- **Sit:** Using a food treat, hold the food over the dog's nose and slowly move it up and back over the dog's head. As the puppy follows the food with its head it will sit down. After several successful repetitions, couple the word 'sit' with the action when the butt contacts the floor. The upward motion of the hand as you hold the food treat also serves as a visual cue for the puppy. If the pup lifts his front legs you are holding the food treat too high. As soon as the puppy sits give the treat. After a while you can start using a verbal cue, like sit, when he performs the behavior that you want. Many repetitions will be necessary for the pup to learn the association. Gradually, as the puppy understands what you want him to do, you can start to give the treat rewards intermittently, rather than every time. For example, give a treat every 3rd or 4th time the puppy sits and give verbal praise in between.

- **Lie down:** Start with the pup/dog in a sit position. To get the dog to lie down, take a treat and lower it between the dog’s front paws. Usually the puppy will follow the treat and go down. If the puppy does not lie all the way down, slowly push the treat between the paws and if the puppy lies down give it the treat and of course add the cue 'down' when he successfully completes the behavior. If the puppy stands up, start over.

- An alternative method is instead of pushing the food treat backwards is to slowly pull the treat forward. If that does not work, sit on the floor with your legs straight out in front of you and slightly bent at the knees. Take a hand with a treat in it and push it out under your knee from between your legs. As the puppy tries to get the food treat, slowly bring it back under your knee. As the puppy tries to follow, it will usually lie down. Once the puppy understands the 'down' command, make sure that you vary the starting position. You should try to get your puppy to 'down' from both a stand and a sit.

- **Stay:** Puppies can be taught to stay for short periods of time at a young age. Once they sit on cue each and every time they are asked, without the need for food
inducements, training can proceed to more difficult concepts such as "stay". First the pup is taught to stay without moving as you stand in front for 1-2 seconds. Remember you are actually teaching two things; first, "don't move" and second, "don't move when I move". Initially give the puppy the 'sit' cue, say 'stay' (using a hand as a stop sign can be a good visual cue), take one step away, and then return to the puppy and reward it for not moving. Be very careful that the puppy does not stand up or move as you present the reward because then you will have rewarded 'getting up'. Gradually increase the distance by a step at a time and the length of the stay by a few seconds at a time, until the puppy can stay for a minute or more with you standing at least 10 feet away. It is important to set up the puppy to succeed. Proceeding very slowly, and keeping a long lead attached to the puppy so that it cannot run away can help ensure success. Be patient. It can take a week or more of daily training to get a puppy to 'sit' and 'stay' for 1-2 minutes. Over a few months it should be possible to increase the 'stay' to 15 minutes or more, and to be able to leave the room and return without the puppy rising from its 'stay'. For these longer stays it may be better to use a 'down-stay' (lying down and staying in place) combination, and to train the dog in a favored resting or sleeping area. Once extended 'sit-stays' are accomplished, the cue can be used to prevent many potential behavior problems. For example, if you practice 'sit and stay' by the front door, this cue can then be used to prevent running out the door and jumping on company. Have your puppy sit and stay while you place the food on the floor and then quickly give him an 'OK' or release command.

**Stand**: Place your dog in a 'sit' position. Take the food treat palm facing up and move it forward and away from the dog as you say 'stand'. Your dog should again follow his nose and stand up. Don't pull your hand so far away that the dog follows you, but just until it stands up.

**Housetraining**- During your dog's waking hours, take her outdoors on a schedule. How often she needs to go out depends on her age. Even young puppies can be expected to "hold it" for at least a short period of time. As a general rule, that can translate to one hour for each month of age, give or take an hour. For example, your 3-month old puppy might resist urination for three to four hours. Assume that puppies may need to eliminate after eating, naps, strenuous play, or whenever there is a change of activity. Adult dogs should be given an opportunity to go out about every four hours when possible, but can reasonably be expected, once trained, to hold their urine for 8 hours or longer.

**You should take your dog to the same place to eliminate every time.** Not only will your dog make a visual association with that location and the reason why they are being taken there, but in time there will also be an olfactory cue (odor) as well. Dogs generally like to eliminate where they have done so before. Unless your dog has already shown a preference for eliminating in a certain spot, choose a potty area to your liking. Chances are that even after your dog is housetrained and going out on her own, she will continue to use this spot. If you do not have a yard and need to
walk your dog to relieve herself, consider establishing a toilet area directly adjacent to your home. Take your dog to the toilet area as soon as you exit the house, and remain there until the dog urinates and defecates.

- **To teach your dog to eventually signal to you** when she needs to go out, you should always take her out and back in through the same exit door. However, it is important to be aware that not all dogs learn automatically to signal the need to eliminate, in a way that their owners understand (such as by barking or scratching at a door).

**Principle #1**

As your dog finishes eliminating (but not before she has finished), immediately praise her verbally and give her an extra special food treat. In order for your dog to understand that the treat is for the elimination behavior, it must be delivered immediately following that behavior. Always take your dog out to eliminate on a leash during the housetraining process in order to be able to deliver her reward in a timely manner.

It may also be helpful to withhold a play session or walk until after your dog has eliminated, so that she learns that eliminating must always occur before other fun activities begin. If you reward both generously with high value food treats and with a walk, the walk actually becomes a reward for elimination. This way, you do not need to walk with your dog for an indeterminate length of time until she eliminates, thereby allowing the dog to set the length of the walk. It's easiest to establish this routine at times when you know your dog really has to go, like first thing in the morning and when you return home from work. Urination may be easier to train in this way than defecation, as some dogs need to move around in order to defecate (e.g., walk a little bit), and some do not defecate at regular times (e.g., once in the morning and once in the evening, every day).

**Principal #2**

Avoid allowing your dog to make mistakes by:

1. taking your dog out with adequate frequency (see above),
2. taking her out on a regular schedule, and
3. directly supervising or confining her when she can't be outdoors.

Unless your dog was previously confined for long periods in dirty living conditions, she will naturally tend to avoid eliminating in places where she must sleep or eat. This instinct is important when it comes to housetraining and one of the reasons why the use of a crate as well as other long-term confinement areas can be helpful, especially for puppies.

**Use of a crate to aid in housetraining:** see crate training section
To paper train or not to paper train: To ease cleanup and to train your dog to urinate and defecate on a specific surface, you may place newspapers or wee-wee pads in the previously soiled area. The dog can then be rewarded for eliminating on these surfaces. She will eventually need to be taught to make the transition from eliminating on the papers or pads to voiding outside, on grass, dirt, mulch, etc. It is important to remember that the dog will not necessarily make this change easily (particularly if the weather, etc., make it more comfortable to eliminate indoors). The use of newspapers, so-called paper training, can be avoided altogether if you can take your dog outdoors frequently from the beginning.

Dirty Dog Syndrome: If your dog had been closely confined in the past for longer than she was able to hold her urine and feces, you may not be able to use a crate for housetraining. Dogs forced to eliminate where they eat and sleep tend to adapt to those living conditions, usually making housetraining a more difficult proposition. In this situation, you may need to tether your dog to you with a light line about 6 feet in length ("umbilical cord"), to keep her close to you so that you will be alerted by her preparations to eliminate (e.g., sniffing, circling, squatting), and be able to distract her and take her outside immediately. If this is not feasible, the dog can be confined with you wherever you are. You will have to be alert to the above behaviors. The idea is to prevent her from eliminating "in private" in another part of the house. Some dogs who have been scolded or punished for eliminating indoors in their owner's presence will avoid eliminating if any person is present. It can be a challenge to convince such dogs that it is "safe" and desirable to eliminate when you take them outside; they may resist eliminating until they can get away from you, even for a short time. You may also leave your dog in a larger area such as the long-term confinement area mentioned under crate-training when you cannot supervise her.

Crate Training: the dog will enter the crate and settle without showing signs of stress, anxiety or destruction of item in the crate such as bedding. The dog will also exit the crate in a mannerly fashion.

Crate training has long been accepted by professional trainers and veterinarians as one of the quickest and least stressful ways to mold desirable behaviors in dogs. Although many new dog guardians initially reject the idea of using a crate because they consider it cruel or unfair to the dog, a crate helps satisfy the dog's instinct to be in a den while alleviating many problems dogs and their people experience.

The crate should be just large enough for a dog to stand up and turn around comfortably. The crate is a place for the dog to be when no one is around to supervise him. It is the dog's bed and sanctuary. Its purpose is to provide confinement for reasons of safety, security for the dog, housetraining, prevention of destructive behavior, and/or travel.
Why use a dog crate? Correctly & humanely used, a crate can have many advantages for both you & your dog:

You...

- Can enjoy peace of mind when leaving your dog home alone, knowing that nothing can be soiled or destroyed-and that she is comfortable, protected and not developing any bad habits.
- Can housetrain your dog quickly by using the confinement to encourage control, establish a regular routine for outdoor elimination, and prevent accidents at night or when your dog is left alone.
- Can effectively confine your dog at times when she may be under foot (i.e., when you have guests, at mealtimes), over-excitied, or bothered by too much confusion or activity (such, as lots of children running around the house).
- Can travel with your dog safely and be assured that she will more easily adapt to strange surroundings as long as she has her familiar "security blanket," her crate.

Your dog...

- Can enjoy the privacy and security of a den of her own, to which she can retreat when tired, stressed or not feeling well.
- Can avoid much of the fear, confusion and anxiety caused by your reaction to problem behavior.
- Can more easily learn to control her bowels and to associate elimination only with the outdoors.
- Can be spared the loneliness and frustration of having to be isolated, in the basement or outdoors, from indoor family surroundings when she needs to be restricted from certain things.
- Can be more conveniently included in family outings and trips instead of being left behind alone.

How To Crate Train Your Dog

The crate training process Crate training can take days or weeks, depending on your dog's age, temperament and past experiences. It's important to keep two things in mind while crate training. The crate should always be associated with something pleasant, and training should take place in a series of small steps - don't go too fast.

**Step 1: Introducing your dog to the crate**

Put the crate in an area of your house where the family spends a lot of time, such as the family room. Put a soft blanket or towel in the crate. Bring your dog over to the crate and talk to him in a happy tone of voice. Make sure the crate door is securely fastened open, so it won't hit your dog and frighten him. To encourage your dog to enter the crate, drop some small food treats near it, then just inside the door, and finally, all the way inside the crate. If he refuses to go all the way in at first, that's okay - don't force him to enter. Continue tossing treats into the crate until your dog will walk calmly all the way into the crate to get the food. If he isn't interested in treats, try tossing a favorite toy in the crate. This step may take a few minutes or as long as several days.
Step 2: Feeding your dog his meals in the crate
After introducing your dog to the crate, begin feeding him his regular meals near the crate. This will create a pleasant association with the crate. If your dog is readily entering the crate when you begin Step 2, put the food dish all the way at the back of the crate. If your dog is still reluctant to enter the crate, put the dish only as far inside as he will readily go without becoming fearful or anxious. Each time you feed him, place the dish a little further back in the crate.

Once your dog is standing comfortably in the crate to eat his meal, you can close the door while he's eating. At first, open the door as soon as he finishes his meal. With each successive feeding, leave the door closed a few minutes longer, until he's staying in the crate for 10 minutes or so after eating. If he begins to whine to be let out, you may have increased the length of time too quickly. Next time, try leaving him in the crate for a shorter time period. If he does whine or cry in the crate, it's imperative that you not let him out until he stops. Otherwise, he'll learn that the way to get out of the crate is to whine, so he'll keep doing it.

Step 3: Conditioning your dog to the crate for longer time periods
Once the dog is eating his regular meals in the crate with no sign of fear or anxiety, you can confine him there for short time periods while you're home. Call him over to the crate and give him a treat. Give him a command to enter such as, "kennel up." Encourage him by pointing to the inside of the crate with a treat in your hand. After your dog enters the crate, praise him, give him the treat and close the door. Sit quietly near the crate for five to 10 minutes and then go into another room for a few minutes. Return, sit quietly again for a short time, then let him out of the crate. Repeat this process several times. With each repetition, gradually increase the length of time you leave him in the crate and the length of time you're out of his sight. Once your dog will stay quietly in the crate for about 30 minutes with you out of sight the majority of the time, you can begin leaving him crated when you're gone for short time periods and/or letting him sleep there at night. This may take several days or several weeks.

Step 4: Part A: Crating your dog when left alone
After your dog is spending about 30 minutes in the crate without becoming anxious or afraid, you can begin leaving him crated for short periods when you leave the house. Put him in the crate using your regular command and a treat. You might also want to leave him with a few safe toys in the crate. You'll want to vary at what point in your "getting ready to leave" routine you put your dog in the crate. Although he shouldn't be crated for a long time before you leave, you can crate him anywhere from five to 20 minutes prior to leaving. Don't make your departures emotional and prolonged, but matter-of-fact. Praise your dog briefly, give him a treat for entering the crate and then leave quietly.
When you return home, don't reward your dog for excited behavior by responding to him in an excited, enthusiastic way. Keep arrivals low key. Continue to crate your dog for short periods from time to time when you're home so he doesn't associate crating
with being left alone. Your dog should not be left alone in the crate for more than four to five hours at a time during the day.

**Part B: Crating your dog at night**

Put your dog in the crate using your regular command and a treat. Initially, it may be a good idea to put the crate in your bedroom or nearby in a hallway, especially if you have a puppy. Puppies often need to go outside to eliminate during the night, and you'll want to be able to hear your puppy when he whines to be let outside. Older dogs, too, should initially be kept nearby so that crating doesn't become associated with social isolation. Once your dog is sleeping comfortably through the night with his crate near you, you can begin to gradually move it to the location you prefer.

**Potential problems:**

- **Too much time in the crate:** A crate isn't a magical solution. If not used correctly, a dog can feel trapped and frustrated. For example, if your dog is crated all day while you're at work and then crated again all night, he's spending too much time in too small a space. Other arrangements should be made to accommodate his physical and emotional needs. Also remember that puppies under six months of age shouldn't stay in a crate for more than three or four hours at a time. They can't control their bladders and bowels for longer periods.

- **Whining:** If the dog whines or cries while in the crate at night, it may be difficult to decide whether he's whining to be let out of the crate, or whether he needs to be let outside to eliminate. If you followed the training procedures outlined above, your dog hasn't been rewarded for whining in the past by being released from his crate. Try to ignore the whining. If your dog is just testing you, he'll probably stop whining soon. Yelling at him or pounding on the crate will only make things worse.

  If the whining continues after you've ignored him for several minutes, use the phrase he associates with going outside to eliminate. If he responds and becomes excited, take him outside. This should be a trip with a purpose, not play time. If you're convinced that your dog doesn't need to eliminate, the best response is to ignore him until he stops whining. Don't give in, otherwise you'll teach your dog to whine loudly to get what he wants.

- **Separation anxiety:** Attempting to use the crate as a remedy for separation anxiety won't solve the problem. A crate may prevent your dog from being destructive, but he may injure himself in an attempt to escape from the crate. Separation anxiety problems can only be resolved with counter-conditioning and desensitization procedures.
Leash walking: Loose leash walking is one of the most challenging behaviors to teach. It's not a particularly "natural" behavior -- there's nothing equivalent in the dog world -- and walking relative to something else is a non-discrete behavior, which means there's no obvious "right" or "wrong" -- the trainer decides what's acceptable. So it's tough on the dog AND tough on the trainer. That said, it is possible to teach your dog to walk on a loose leash. However, to be completely fair -- and to give yourself (and the dog) the highest probability of success -- you need to look at the whole picture. Very often the trainer considers only his own agenda -- walk nicely on this leash -- and doesn't consider the dog's wants and needs in the situation.

Choosing the Right Approach for the Age of Your Dog  How old is the dog you're training? Different age dogs need different approaches because their own needs are different.

• Puppies (0-6 mos.) Puppies are brand new to the world. Literally. Everything is new to them. They have little or no history -- good or bad -- related to what you want. They also have a very short attention span.

  With puppies, I've found the best method is to have a few steps of highly reinforced loose leash and attention followed by a lot of playing/sniffing/exploring. Then a few more exciting, highly reinforced steps followed by more playing/sniffing/exploring. Think of it as "on" and "off" -- and have cues for each. I use "with me" and "go play."

  This isn't a gift you're giving your dog. It's necessary. Your dog must learn about the world around him. It's part of his socialization. If he doesn't experience lots of things at this critical time, he's likely to be fearful and insecure later.

• Adolescence (6 mos. - 3 years) I'm not exaggerating about that time period. Your dog may look like an adult, and you may feel like he's been around forever and "should act better" but if he's under three, you've still got an adolescent on your hands.

  Adolescence is a time of growing and boundless energy. It's the time when the dog grows up mentally -- when he begins testing all of the choices available to him and making decisions about which path he's going to follow. (Remember when you were an adolescent?) This isn't rebellion. It's not stubbornness or defiance or dominance. It's a necessary part of growing up. "Because I said so" doesn't cut it anymore. He has to find out what works and what doesn't.

  This is a challenging age. Your foster dog is bigger and stronger, and he's full of energy. Now, more than any other age, you need consistency. Remember, every time you give in and let him pull, you're not only reinforcing pulling, but you're putting it on a variable schedule of reinforcement and STRENGTHENING it.
When you don't have time to work on walking on a loose leash, MANAGE the situation. Get a Gentle Leader (head collar) or no pull harness and use it. If he pulls in the head collar/harness, circle him until he's paying attention. When you have time to work on walking on a loose leash, work on it. The "on and off" game works well for this age too -- especially if they have a place where they can really run and get the ya-yas out. Once all the ya-yas are out of them, they are capable of working for longer, more concerted periods of time.

• Adult dog (3+ years) At some point after three years, dogs begin to settle into adulthood. THIS is when you can take long walks and reasonably expect your dog to walk quietly -- this is, IF you have built a reinforcement history. On and off is still a nice concept, and adults still have exercise needs and still need to get the ya-yas out, but overall, this stage is the goal.

Teaching Loose Leash Walking:
Step 1: Define It: The first step is to define what you want. Seriously. Maybe you want the dog to walk attentively sometimes and inattentively (sniffing, etc.) at other times. Maybe when the leash is on, you want attention at all times. What level of tension in the leash is okay? (If you're using a Flexi, you're going to have tension.) Maybe you want the dog to know that when on a Flexi he can walk one way, and when he's on a leather leash, he walks another way. It's up to you. But you can't progress until you define what you want. If you do, you'll be inconsistent, which isn't fair to your dog.

Step 2A: Attention: The second step is to work on attention. If your dog is in front of you, or sniffing, or looking around, you ain't got his attention. Can you get it? Always? If not, you need to work on that. It's the single most crucial behavior you can possibly train because if you can't get your dog's attention, you aren't going to get *any* other behavior.

Attention is like every other behavior. It has to be taught in increasingly distracting situations. Start in the house. Just click and treat every time the dog looks at you. Don't call the dog's name or pat your leg. Just wait and click the offered behavior. Do this throughout the day whenever attention is offered. If you don't have food, just reinforce with smiles, pets, and kind words.

Move to different rooms. Gradually increase your criteria -- start with a glance and work up to a second or two at least. Then go outside. Just stand there and wait. You may have to wait a while, but eventually he will get it. Keep taking him to different locations - starting in boring locations, of course.

Step 2B: Practice Off-leash: What practice loose leash walking without the leash? The leash is a tether for safety in case of emergency. It's not a guide to hold the dog in
position. The goal is to teach the dog is to walk in the proper place, so what difference
does it make if you're using a leash? The reason I named this step "2B" is because it can
be taught while you're working on attention even before you take your dog on the leash
outside.

Practicing off-leash walking: You can start by “baiting” your dog with a treat to help him
get into proper heel position. You can also pat your leg as you call him to get him into
position. Just wander around and randomly call him to “heel”. Make being at your left
side the most reinforcing place in the world. Once you have success you can start
replacing some of the treats with a “good boy” and other verbal praise.

Practice anywhere it's both safe to let your dog off leash AND quiet and small enough
that he's not going to forget about you completely. (Remember, you're supposed to be
practicing attention too. Perhaps get him focused on you and THEN practice off-leash
walking....)

Step Three: Walking in the Correct Position: Next, teach the dog that walking in the
correct position -- and you defined that in the first step -- is reinforcing. Don't skimp on
this step. Shovel treats when they're doing it right. Make it the best place to be. How
long do you have to do this? Until it's a habit. If the dog is wandering off, tripping you,
jumping around, etc., it isn't a habit. You can even use your dog's dinner, piece by piece,
morsel by morsel, on walks until the habit is ingrained.

Step Four: Be A Tree: Fourth, teach your dog that it's not worth the trouble to go to the
end of the leash. This is the "Be a Tree" method we talk about. Use the "Be a Tree"
method when the dog is pulling out of natural exuberance, NOT when he's trying to pull
toward something specific. The basic idea is simple: Never, ever take another step if the
dog is in front of you. Stop moving. Freeze.

The success of "Be a Tree" is dependent upon several factors:

- Maintain a high rate of reinforcement when the dog is in correct position. This is
  one of the biggest mistakes I see. People forget to maintain a high rate of
  reinforcement in correct position, and the dogs quickly figure out that they can
  go to the end of the leash and back to get a treat.
- Don't increase your criteria until the dog is actively offering the current criteria.
  If the dog wanders to the end of the leash and spends five or ten seconds staring
  at something before turning to look at you, you are *not* ready to increase the
  criteria.
- Always, always, always deliver the reinforcement in heel position. Click for
  whatever criteria and, if necessary, lure the dog back into the correct position
  before delivering the treat. Teach your dog that treats ONLY come in heel
  position -- and that they are available freely there.
Step Five: Environmental Rewards: Finally, the fifth step is to teach your dog that you are the giver of all environmental rewards. The dogs are pulling and excited because there's neat stuff out there. That's not a bad thing. Just take the time to teach them that 100% of that stuff comes from you.

Use "penalty yards" (TM pending, Lana Horton): Walk nicely to the bush, and you can sniff. Whoops! You lunged, let’s walk back to the starting point and try again.

Think of the environmental rewards as just that -- rewards. You say you lose your dog's attention even when working with the very best treats? Then use what he *does* want -- a chance to sniff and mark and play. "On and Off" can easily be used as a reinforcement system -- pay attention and walk nicely for a few steps and you can go do what you want for a few seconds.

**Dog Toys and How to Use Them:** Many behavior problems in dogs are the result of boredom or excess energy. Toys offer mental and physical stimulation and enrichment. Directing your dog's energy into play with toys can prevent or help resolve such problems as digging and chewing on furniture, shoes or shrubbery.

- **Interactive Toys:** These are toys that require your participation:
  - *Fetch toys* -- many dogs enjoy chasing balls and Frisbees®. Oddly shaped rubber toys (such as Kongs®) bounce erratically and make the game more fun. Flying disks come in many shapes and sizes, including soft versions that are easier on the dog’s mouth. And devices for throwing the ball increase the distance the dog must run to get the toy.
  - *Rope toys*, such as Tire Biter® toys, are good for tugging. See note below on playing tug-of-war with your dog.
- **Distraction Toys:** These are toys that keep your dog busy when you don’t have the time to play:
- **Food Delivery Toys:** Designed to be used with kibble or small treats, the dog must manipulate the toy with his mouth and/or paws to get the food to fall out. Some examples are: Buster Cube®, TreatStik®, Tug-a-Jug®, Kibble Nibble® and Everlasting Fun Ball®.
- **Chew Toys:**
  - Hard rubber toys that are hollow with holes at both ends, such as Kongs, are good chew toys. To make these toys more attractive, they can be filled with kibble or treats. You can also encourage chewing by putting a small amount of peanut butter or cream cheese inside the toy.
  - Dental chew toys are hard toys that the dog can gnaw on and safely ingest small particles. Examples include: Greenies®, bullie sticks, and Petrodex® dental chews. You should watch your dog to make sure he does not break off and ingest large pieces of these toys.
Chew challenge toys are toys that make an edible chewy more challenging for the dog to consume. Examples include Funny Bones®, the Kong Goodie Bone®, and the Everlasting Treat Ball®.

- **Puzzle Toys:**
  - Food puzzle toys require the dog to solve a puzzle in order to get treats. Examples are the Nina Ottoson® line of dog toys including the Dog Spinny® and the Dog Brick®.
  - Toy puzzle toys require the dog to solve a puzzle to get to a toy. Examples are the Kygen® line of toys, including the IQube®, Intellibone®, and Hide-a-Bee®.

- **Comfort Toys:**
  - *Soft stuffed toys* are good for several purposes but are not appropriate for all dogs. For some dogs, the stuffed toy should be small enough to carry around. For dogs that want to shake or "kill" the toy, it should be the size that "prey" would be for that size dog (mouse-size, rabbit-size or duck-size).
  - *Dirty laundry*, like an old T-shirt, pillowcase, towel or blanket, can be very comforting to a dog, especially if it smells like you! Be forewarned that the item could be destroyed by industrious fluffing, carrying and nosing.

- **Getting The Most Out Of Toys**
  - Rotate your dog's toys weekly by making only four or five toys available at a time. Keep a variety of types easily accessible. If your dog has a favorite comfort toy, like a soft "baby," you should probably leave it out all the time.
  - Provide toys that offer a variety of uses - at least one toy to carry, one to "kill," one to roll and one to "baby."
  - "Hide and Seek" is a fun game for dogs to play. "Found" toys are often much more attractive. Making an interactive game out of finding toys or treats is a good rainy-day activity for your dog, using up energy without the need for a lot of space. For example, scattering a handful of kibble in the grass or on a patterned carpet will require your dog to use his nose to find the food.
  - Many of your dog's toys should be interactive. Interactive play is very important for your dog because he needs active "people time." By focusing on a specific task, like repeatedly returning a ball, Kong® or Frisbee®, or playing "hide-and-seek" with treats or toys, your dog can expend pent-up mental and physical energy in a limited amount of time and space. This greatly reduces stress due to confinement, isolation and/or boredom. For young, high-energy and untrained dogs, interactive play also offers an opportunity for socialization and helps them learn about appropriate and inappropriate behavior, such as jumping up or being mouthy.
  - **Tug of War:** Tug of war has long been thought to be an absolute "don't" in many dog-owning households. However, by taking a few precautions and setting some basic rules it can be a fun game for you and your dog. Puppies that are not yet trained to not use their mouth and biting as play should Not play tug games yet.
    - Choose a toy that will be reserved exclusively for this particular activity. This will help prevent your dog from grabbing and tugging anything you have in your hand.
o Teach two commands:
  • "Let's tug" begins the game. Never allow the dog to initiate tug on his own and always use your starting phrase when you begin the game.
  • "Give" or "Out" ends the game. Teach your dog to release the toy by offering a treat or better toy in exchange. Do not start playing tug with your dog until he is consistently releasing the toy on command.

• Safety: There are many factors that contribute to the safety or danger of a toy. Many of those factors are dependent upon your dog's size, activity level and play style. Although we cannot guarantee your dog's enthusiasm or his safety with any specific toy, we can offer the following guidelines:
  o Toys should be appropriate for your dog's current size. Balls and other toys that are too small can be easily swallowed or become lodged in your dog's mouth or throat.
  o Avoid or alter any toys that are not "dog-proof" by removing ribbons, strings, eyes or other parts that could be chewed off and ingested.
  o Monitor your dog's toys and discard any toy that starts to break into pieces or has pieces torn off.
  o Ask your veterinarian about the safety of items like bones, hooves, pig's ears and rawhides. Very hard rubber toys are safer and last longer.
  o Take note of any toy that contains a "squeaker" buried in its center. Your dog may feel that he must find and destroy the squeak source and could ingest it, in which case squeaking toys should be given only under supervision.
  o Know your dog's chewing habits before leaving him alone with any toy. For example, some dogs will carry a plush toy around for years. Others will enjoy "disemboweling" the toy by pulling all the stuffing out. Still others will chew it apart and ingest the pieces, creating a safety hazard for that dog.