

The Training Tether

A training tether is a temporary management tool that can be used to prevent behavior problems or assist in resolving an existing problem. The idea is to tether your dog in the places where your family spends time, such as the kitchen, the TV room, or the bedroom, so he can be with you but doesn't have to be the center of attention, and he can't wander off and get into trouble. *The training tether should only be used when you are close by; never leave a dog tethered when you are not at home.*

Getting Started

A tether should be 2 to 3 feet long and preferably made of plastic coated wire cable with a snap at both ends. The plastic coating protects furniture and the wire prevents the dog from chewing through it. A leash or rope may be used but should be soaked in a taste aversive (see our handout "Aversives for Dogs") to prevent the dog from chewing it.

Attach the tether to a heavy piece of furniture or to an eyebolt screwed securely into the wall. Attach the other end to your dog's buckle collar. Choke chains, prong collars or head halters should never be used with the tethering technique.

Make the tether short enough that the dog won't get tangled in it, and make the tethering spot a happy place – put a rug or mat there and a chew toy. Don't use a ball that can roll out of range.

Getting Your Dog Accustomed to the Training Tether

Start by putting your dog on the tether a few times a day for five to ten minutes. Give him a reward as soon as he gets to the tethering place, then give him a special treat – like a food stuffed Kong (see our handout "Dog Toys and How to Use Them), while you settle down nearby to watch TV, read, etc.

Slowly extend the length of time the dog is on the tether, but also vary the time, mixing short sessions with longer ones.

If the dog barks or whines while on the tether, leave the room until he is quiet. Then return and reward his quiet behavior. The idea is to ignore unacceptable behavior and reward calm behavior with quiet praise and/or a small, soft treat.

Using the Training Tether for Behavior Problems and Problem Prevention

- ↓# Your new dog - containment and management: If you are busy (reading, watching TV, doing dishes) put your dog nearby on the tether so he can be with you, but he can't wander off and chew something he shouldn't. Supply him with a stuffed Kong or a chew toy and remember to reward him when he is calm and quiet.
- ↓# Housetraining: Dogs generally will not eliminate in the space they have to lie in, so the tether can be used between trips outside for elimination. (See our handouts "Re-housetraining Your Adult Dog" and "Housetraining Your Puppy.")
- ↓# Jumping up: If your dog jumps up on guests, put him on his tether before visitors arrive. After the guests are seated and your dog is behaving calmly, allow him to meet everyone.
- ↓# Separation anxiety: If your dog follows you from room to room, use the tether to help him learn to relax without you. Leave for short periods -- starting with seconds and building up to minutes. Don't make a big deal of leaving or returning. (See our handout "Separation Anxiety.")
- ↓# The attention junkie: If your dog pesters you constantly for attention or play, use the tether to teach him that he can be with you without being the center of attention.
- ↓# Door darting: If your dog attempts to escape through the door any time someone comes or goes, be sure he is on the tether before the door opens.
- ↓# Begging at the dinner table: Place your dog on his tether while you are eating dinner.

Rules for Using the Training Tether

- ↓# Only put your dog on the training tether when you are around to supervise. Never leave a dog tethered when you are not at home.
- ↓# Use only a buckle collar with the training tether; never use a choke chain, slip lead, prong collar or head halter with the training tether
- ↓# The training tether may also be used outdoors; for example, while you garden or have dinner on the patio, but only when someone is close by.
- ↓# The training tether area should be a pleasant and safe place for your dog. Never use it as punishment. Don't allow children or other pets to bother your dog when he is on the training tether.
- ↓# Reward calm behavior with quiet praise and tasty treats.