THE TOP 5 MISTAKES DOG OWNERS MAKE when walking their dogs
Do you ever find yourself staring at those dog owners who seem to have it all together? You know the type...

The ones who have a latte in one hand, their dog's leash in the other, and their dog is completely relaxed, sauntering along at their side.

Then, you think sheepishly about your own dog, who is dragging you every which way on walks. Who quite frankly downright embarrasses you when you are in public.

Have you tried the tools? The harnesses, the collars, the haltis and the fancy leashes? Anything that could give you just a little reprieve and some semblance of control on your walks?

And have you ever felt hopeless, defeated and downright frustrated with your dog who seems to go selectively deaf when you are anywhere but home?

**It doesn't have to be that way.**

Learn the top 5 mistakes dog owners make that regularly obliterate their walks, and learn what you need to do to avoid them.

*It's time to reclaim your dog walks.*
**MISTAKE #1**

1. **HAVING UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS**

Answer this...

The first time you took your dog for a walk...what did you do to prepare? What did you do to show him what the leash was all about? And what did you do to teach him to accept the leash?

For most people, the answer is a sheepish "Not Much". In fact, more often than not, we simply slap the leash on our dog and head out the front door. We expect them to know how to react and what to do, without every really showing them.

And meanwhile, all your dog sees is a long rope that holds them back. A tool that restrains them and keeps them from getting what they want. Or, if your dog is a little timid, a tool that stops them from escaping when things get scary.

It's no wonder leash walks aren't going to plan.

For most of us, we never spent time setting the right expectations. Teaching our dog how to walk with us, and to calmly accept the leash before hitting the pavement for a long walk!

**IT’S NEVER TOO LATE**

It's never too late to set expectations. Spend time teaching your dog to accept the leash and walk with you at home, in a comfortable and distraction free setting. Grab their favorite treat and reward them for being relaxed on the leash before heading out to a busy area where things will compete for your dog's attention.
2. LETTING YOUR DOG GET TOO EXCITED

I get it. It can be so fun to see your dog filled with excitement, bursting at the seams because he gets to go for his walk.

I mean, you love your dog. And you want him to be happy. And when you grab that leash and he starts bouncing up and down, you know you've hit the happiness jackpot.

But think about this...

If you want your dog to be calm and relaxed on their walk, how does getting them all riled up before hitting the pavement accomplish that goal?

It doesn't.

In fact, it sets the wrong tone before you even step foot out your front door. By getting your dog excited for their walk, you are in essence setting them up to fail.

CHANGE IT UP!

Your dog loves her walks. There's no doubt about it. And your dog will love her walks just as much if you ditch the pre-walk go-nuts ritual. In fact, I'd venture to say she'll love them even more.

To get started, simply change up your pre-walk routine.

No more "Wanna go for a walk?" in your highest pitched tone.

And if your dog gets excited when you grab your leash, make it a point to grab it a dozen (or two!) times throughout the course of the day. Walk around with it. And then put it down. Pretty soon that leash won't be hardly as exciting.

You can do the same with any other triggers that get your dog amped before your walk.

Putting on your shoes? Put them on several times throughout the day. Picking up your keys? ... You get the idea.
3. GIVING THEM GOOD STUFF, FOR BAD STUFF

I hate to break it to you, but your dog pulls on lead because…it works!
They get good stuff for pulling. And that good stuff far outweighs the mild discomfort of pulling against their collar or harness.
Think about it, if your dog wants to GO…he pulls and…you go!
If your dog wants to greet another dog, he pulls and gets there.
If your dog wants to sniff a tree…
Or greet a stranger…
Or do anything on walks…he pulls, and you follow.

USE IT TO YOUR ADVANTAGE!

If you know what your dog wants in any given moment, you can use that knowledge to your advantage.
All you have to do is STOP giving your dog what he wants for pulling, and start giving it to him when he's walking nicely.
Want to sniff that tree?
If you pull, we'll stop moving entirely. But if there is slack on the leash, I'll let you check it out!
Want to go forward?
Pulling isn't going to get you there.

Become a master of knowing what your dog is after in any given moment, and use it to reinforce the behavior you like! Not the behavior you don't.
4. INTERACTING WITH OTHER DOGS

Often times dog owners want their dog to be able to say "Hi!" to potential doggy playmates as they pass.

But doing on leash interactions can put your dog in a tough spot.

Leashes can make your dog feel trapped, and can increase the likelihood of a bad reaction or experience.

Not only that, if you let your dog interact with other dogs on leash regularly, your dog will become very interested in other dogs, and will oftentimes start pulling to get to them.

DROP THE LEAD

Your dog walk is time for YOU to spend time with your dog. It’s time for the two of you to bond. So avoid introducing your dog to other dogs while she is on lead.

Instead, for social dogs, reserve doggy playtime for spaces where your dog can be off lead, or where you can safely drop your lead.

And keep the leash walk as a time for you to spend one on one with your dog.

Not only will this help you reclaim your dog walks, but it will also help your dog to feel more secure when she meets new potential doggy playmates.
5. HOLDING THE LEASH TIGHT

When our dog misbehaves on walks, and we want to get control, it's natural instinct to hold the leash tight.

We'll hold our dog close to us, keeping the leash snug to prevent them from pulling or dragging us to the ground.

The problem with this idea is that it activates something called "Opposition Reflex", or the reflex to pull. Plainly stated, if you pull against your dog, they will reflexively pull back against you. So doing so tends only to make matters worse.

CUT HIM SOME SLACK

Whenever possible try hard to maintain slack in your lead. And rather than holding your dog close to you, spend time teaching him how to walk nicely at your side.

Grab a stash of your dogs favorite treats and practice at home, before even leaving your house. Walk your dog around your yard and spend time rewarding him when he isn't pulling.

If your dog pulls, stop moving and stand still. Act like a tree and don't say anything. As soon as your dog gives into the leash and stops pulling, give him a treat and start walking again.

By rewarding your dog when the leash is slack, and by practicing at home without distractions competing for your dog's attention, you'll set your dog (and yourself!) up for success.
RECLAIM YOUR WALKS

Walking your dog should never be a chore. It should be a way for you to unwind after a long day. It should be a time for you to bond with your best friend, to get exercise together, and to spend quality time with one another.

*It's time to reclaim your walks.*

**KEY TAKEAWAYS:**

- Spend time practicing at home, before taking your dog out into new environments. It will be much easier for you to introduce good leash manners when there isn't so much competing for your dog's attention.

- Don’t let your dog get good stuff for pulling. If your dog starts to pull, just act like a tree, stay still and wait for him to stop before moving forward or letting him access whatever reward in the environment he's after.

- Take your time. Don't get frustrated. With a little patience, and by celebrating and rewarding your dog's good behavior when it's offered, you CAN reclaim your dog walks!