



When Dogs Talk™

Hand and Finger Leads

By Sarah Hodgson



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Hand or Finger Leads

Get a handle on your dog—literally! A hand or finger lead—a short leather loop that clips to your dog’s collar or harness—is designed to be worn continuously when supervising your dog to give you quick and steady control. Even though you’re not normally holding the leash, its dangling presence around your dog’s neck reminds her that you’re watching. It also allows you to step in and reinforce directions when necessary because let’s face it: being good is hard sometimes!

Tip: Do you grab your dog around the neck or by the collar? It may seem like a fast and easy way to control your dog, but to your dog, it feels threatening. Some dogs may become fearful and others may become defensive.

I like to compare using the short leash to holding a child’s hand. It’s a calming, comforting gesture that offers guidance and control without intimidation.

If you’re trying to establish calmer doorbell manners, better off leash rituals (inside and out) or a more restrained response to running kids or fleeing cats, a short hand or finger lead is very helpful.



Using Your Hand or Finger Lead

The Finger Lead is a short, 1.5" lead that can be worn by dogs over 7 pounds. The larger, 8" Hand Lead provides more leverage and is suitable for dogs over 20 pounds and at least 14" tall.

The Doorbell Problem

Does your dog lose it when the doorbell rings? If she does, you're not alone. Rare is the dog who ignores the doorbell—its sound indicates an arrival...someone coming into the "den." *Alert! Alert, everyone! It's the doorbell! It could be an intruder! Or pizza! Hurry!*

Door behavior is important. If your dog is over-excited, nervous or aggressive when someone comes to the door, it is because she is unsure who is in charge or how to act. Reclaim your authority and steady your dog with the short lead.



When someone comes to the door, gently pull your dog behind you and instruct "Get Back." Open the door and instruct "Wait." Do not allow your dog to interact with anyone until she has calmed down. If she's very fired up, offer her a toy or bone to distract her.



Tip: Stations

Your dog loves routine. She wants to know where to go and what to do. How can you give your dog the gift of routine? With stations. Just like your favorite comfy chair, a station is your dog's "go to" station. Create a station in every room you share with your dog. Furnish it with comfy blankets and a selection of toys and bones. For more information on stationing and products to ensure stationing success, visit WhenDogsTalk.com.

If your dog rules the doorway during entries and exits, use the short lead to lead her in. At the threshold, instruct your dog to "Wait" as you hold her back with the short lead. If your dog is a determined dasher, use the Station Lead to work on this behavior.



Dinner Manners

I had a client who regularly supplied hand towels to dinner guests to mop up the excess drool supplied by the family Newfoundland. There is a better way: use a hand lead to keep the slobber at a distance. Gently but firmly pull your dog back from the table saying “Away.” Direct her to to her station and tell her to “Stay.” If she ignores you, consider using a station lead to gently but firmly reinforce this command.



Kid-Directed Walking

Kids love to train and walk the dog, until they don't—at which point they may drop the leash and simply walk away. Don't allow kids under 12 to handle your dog without supervision. When walking your dog together, let your child use the 8" hand lead to presume authority experience the feeling of control. I say “feeling of control” because you will be bringing up the rear with your 6' lead, quietly exercising parental supervision.



Dogs and puppies of all ages and temperaments benefit from the behavior-enhancing short leash:

Shy Dogs

Change. Loud noises. Life can be scary for shy dogs. If you allow your dog to approach nervously, lurk tentatively or run away when she's frightened, the behavior becomes habitual. Attach a short leash to your dog's collar so you can hold her—safely and reassuringly—during stressful times. To help reduce and stabilize her reactions, calmly direct her to "Stay."

Assertive Dogs

If your dog marches out in front and seems to say "Stay back! I'm in charge!", you've got an assertive dog. That's not necessarily a bad thing, but if you allow your dog to greet people first or blast through the door ahead of you, you're reinforcing her belief that she's the boss. This is not good for either of you.

When your dog moves in front of you or blocks your path, use the short leash to pull her aside while directing "Get back" or "Off."

If your dog growls at you, stop what you're doing and call a professional for help. Aggression is a serious problem. Get help immediately, no matter the size of your dog.



Puppies

Oh, puppies. It's so hard to resist their adorableness, but remember that your houseplant-digging, toy-stealing, garbage-tipping bundle of energy will not stop these behaviors without some well-planned guidance. Discourage naughtiness without creating fear or tension with a short leash. When she waddles too close to your prized orchids or your kid's vast collection of stuffed stuff, redirect her attention by gently grasping the leash and redirecting her attention to a more appropriate location, such as her play station or toy.

In The Car

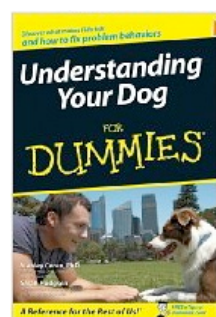
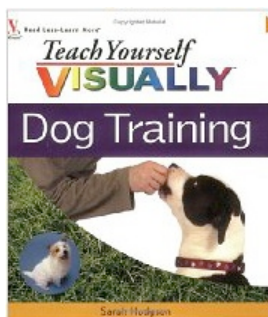
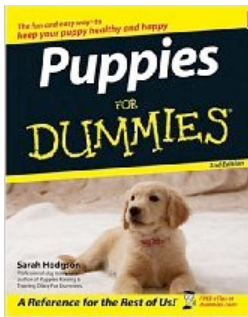
Does your dog hurl herself at the window at every passing squirrel or try to insinuate herself into the front seat at every opportunity? Even the most mellow dog can be overstimulated by the heady speed and freedom of the open road. For everyone's safety, your dog should be confined when she's in the car.



Use a short leash in the car to discourage reactive or dangerous behaviors. Choose an appropriate seat for your dog. Insert the seatbelt buckle through the loop of the 8" hand lead and latch the seatbelt into its cradle. Attach the clip of the hand lead to your dog's buckle collar or harness.

Tip: When secured, your dog should be able to sit up comfortably but not walk around or jump.

For more information on housetraining, basic manners, problem solving and all-around dog behavior improvement, visit the WhenDogsTalk.com bookstore.



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