

LEASH BITING



Leash biting often occurs due to boredom, excitement during a time the dog doesn't know an appropriate way to give outlet to that feeling, not wanting to go somewhere, or the dog's desire to engage in play. Consistency and positive reinforcement when this does happen will go a long way towards helping curb this behavior.

UNDERSTANDING WHY




- 🐾 It's important to figure out why your dog is biting and pulling at their leash. Dogs can do this for different reasons, and figuring out the cause (or noticing different triggers and different causes) will help you tailor your training approach to them. Are they biting it when they're anxious or when they don't want to be walked where they're going (like not wanting to go back home, or not wanting to leave home, or the park)? Are they doing it when they get excited, like when they first go out, or when they get a burst of excited zoomies and take it out on the leash? Are they doing it out of frustration, like seeing another dog they want to get to and can't, or because they can't get somewhere because you're pulling them back from it with their leash? Are they bored and letting out pent up energy? Understanding these patterns will help you understand how your dog is feeling in these moments, may help you avoid some of these situations, and can help you prepare to handle it as it's about to begin.
- 🐾 Another thing to evaluate is how much exercise and mental stimulation your dog is getting each day. If you're seeing this behavior, your dog could be feeling pent up, bored, or overly excited because the walks aren't as frequent (so they're always going to feel EXTRA exciting). A satisfied, tired dog is less likely to engage in this type of behavior (although that doesn't mean they won't!) and longer, more frequent walks and interactive playtime can help curb it (along with consistency in how you deal with this behavior in the moment).

WORKING ON IT

- 🐾 **STOP MOVING!** If your dog is biting the leash because they want to go somewhere further/ are excited, stopping movement every time they begin to bite the leash will teach them that they do not get anywhere once they start biting the leash. Reward them with treats and continuing the walk once they stop.
- 🐾 **HIGH VALUE TREATS:** If your dog is biting at the leash because they don't want to go somewhere or want to go in a different direction more, stop moving until they stop biting at the leash, and use high value rewards like cut up hot dogs, string cheese bits, or chicken breast to redirect their attention and lure them in the correct direction, rewarding them for following.
- 🐾 **BRING A TOY ON YOUR WALK:** If your dog enjoys carrying something during walks, try bringing toy along for them to keep in their mouth.

-  **WORK ON “WATCH ME”:** If your dog doesn’t want to carry a toy, work on teaching them to look at you as you walk. While walking, call them to look at you using the cue “watch me!” frequently, and give them high value treats to reinforce this behavior and keep them engaged. If they grab the leash during this time, trade it for a treat.
-  **PRACTICE “LEAVE IT”:** Teach your dog the “leave it” command and use it to redirect them. Reward them for it as soon as they drop the leash.

WHAT NOT TO DO

-  **DON’T LOSE YOUR COOL:** Avoid reacting with frustration or anger because this can inadvertently reinforce the behavior. Stay calm and composed and stop movement.
-  **PLAY TUG WITH THE LEASH:** This can reinforce the behavior and signal to your dog that this is a game and encourage them to continue tugging in the moment, and during other moments they get excited while on leash.
-  **DON’T PUNISH YOUR DOG FOR UNWANTED BEHAVIOR– USE POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT INSTEAD!** Punishment can cause more behavioral problems long term in addition to making negative experiences for your dog. Rewarding good behaviors teaches them to behave in the way we want them to over time, and no damage is done to develop further issues. These training sessions can also become a bonding experience for your dog and become a fun source of mental enrichment learning new things.