

How to help prevent accidents and incidents during lockdown

Dog Walking: Do's and Don'ts

Do: Keep your dogs on lead, or a longline.

Why is this important?

Keeping your dog on a lead, especially around roads and built up areas, helps to keep your dog close and under more control. It also helps to prevent road traffic accidents. It is generally good practice to walk your dog on lead. While you know your dog and how they behave around others, you don't have that knowledge when it comes to other dogs. Keeping dogs on lead avoids any unpleasant interactions or fights with others.

My dog is used to free running in the park or enclosed, dog-specific areas. Should I still keep them on a lead?

Yes. But you could use a longer lead, known as a longline. This still enables you to keep the desired control but allows your dog to wander more freely.

My dog 'plays up' when on lead. What should I do?

Now is a great opportunity for you to carry out some lead training with your dog. There are fewer distractions out and about, and you may find that you have more time on your hands. Lead work is a great way to keep your dog stimulated and will come in handy long-term. Below, are some tips on teaching your dog lead manners:

TEACHING YOUR DOG TO WALK POLITELY ON LEASH

PART ONE: Start in a small, boring space. Go at your dog's pace.

The most important step in teaching your dog to walk politely on leash is showing your dog where you want him to be while he is on leash.

To make things easier for your dog, start practicing in a small, boring space. This improves the odds that your dog will stay close to you.



PRACTICE WITH NO DOG

Practice clicking and feeding a treat at your pant seam, at the level of your dog's head.

PRACTICE WITH DOG

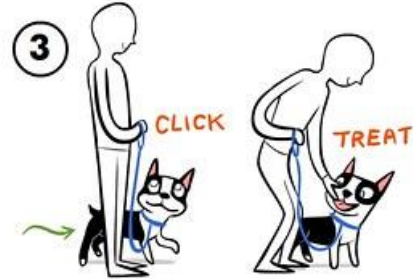
Practice holding the leash at your bellybutton as you click and feed.



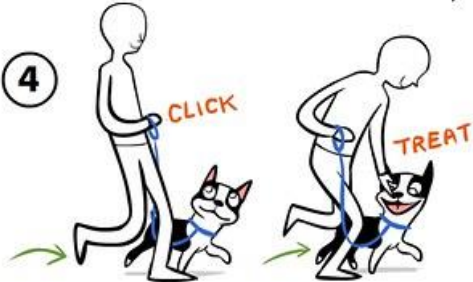
Click and treat rapidly a few times in the correct position.



Move slightly out of heel position and wait for your dog to move closer to you.



As soon as your dog moves even the tiniest step closer to you, click and feed at the "ideal" head position.



Repeat until your dog moves into heel position every time you move out of it.



Gradually take more and more steps between clicks and treats. If your dog gets confused, go back to just one step and then increase the number of steps more slowly to help him understand.



Then start changing direction and speed.



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Next, move to a larger or more interesting space, and start over from STEP 1. When your dog can handle STEP 6 in the new space, move to another new space, starting over from STEP 1 again.

TEACHING YOUR DOG TO WALK POLITELY ON LEASH

PART TWO: Help! My Dog Is Pulling!



If pulling on the leash gets your dog where he wants to go, he'll keep pulling. To avoid teaching your dog that pulling is a good strategy, use one of the techniques described below.

TECHNIQUE 1: "I AM A ROCK"

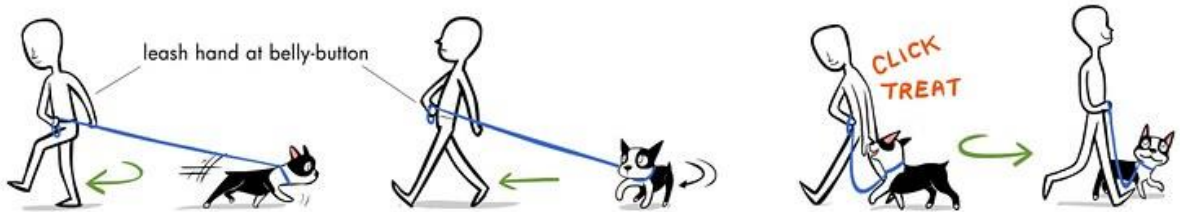


When your dog pulls, stop in your tracks. Wait. As you wait, pretend you have no dog.

When your dog backs up or turns to you, click and feed a treat at your pant seam.

Then move forward again.

TECHNIQUE 2: "BACK & FORTH"



When your dog pulls, turn around and walk purposefully in the opposite direction. When your dog catches up to heel position...

Click and treat. Then turn around and continue in your original direction.

TECHNIQUE 3: "OFF AT AN ANGLE"



This is a great technique for dogs who are very strong. When your dog pulls, simply move away at a random angle that isn't 180 degrees.

Wait for your dog to catch up to heel position.

Click and treat. Then turn around and continue in your original direction again.

If your dog keeps pulling, the environment is probably too exciting. Go back to teaching your dog polite leash walking in a less exciting place. Then build up gradually to walking on leash in the exciting environment again.

Remember to go back to PART ONE every time you practice in a new place.

Do: Only walk your dog from your home and back.

Don't: Drive to a separate area, away from home, to walk your dog.

Why is this important?

This is following current procedures in place by the government. Among other things, consider the strain on our National Health Service. Taking your car out on a regular basis increases the chances of RTAs (road traffic accidents) and incidents, even if the chances are slim. It is not worth the risk, and the government is calling on us not to drive to take exercise.

Do: Walk your dog at cooler temperatures

Don't: take your dog out for a lengthy walk at midday, in the sun.

Why is this important?

All dogs are susceptible to heat stroke, and many dogs will not be used to such lengthy walks. Many dogs are walked more than once a day, which is why it is tempting, under current restrictions, to take them on one lengthier walk instead. But keep your dog's abilities and health in mind.

If there is more than one adult in your household, consider splitting your daily exercise so that one person can take the dog out in the morning, and another in the evening.

Do: Pick up after your dog.

When your dog does its business, stick to the habit of cleaning up afterwards using the appropriate measures: a poo bag, and a designated bin. Do not throw your poo bag into bushes or long grass.

Why is this important?

It is generally good housekeeping: It prevents faeces, and other unsavoury germs and bacteria from spreading onto feet and paws, etc. Using the designated bins prevents wild animals from eating or get tangled up in the bags. Please think of the environment.

What's more, you could end up with a fine if you do not clean up after your dog.

Do: Fill a water bowl for your dog before leaving the house.

Why is this important?

This allows time for the water to reach room temperature. Drinking very cold water, particularly when your dog is warm and thirsty after a walk, can cause stomach upset and vomiting.

Understanding & Preventing Bloat (Gastric Torsion)

What is Bloat?

Bloat, in dogs, is also known as gastric torsion. It involves a twisting of the stomach after filling with gas, which can impact on other organs such as the spleen and can disrupt blood flow. It can cut off blood supply to the gut, as well as creating a block for anything needing to escape, such as food and gas.

Why is it important to avoid bloat from happening?

Bloat, as a common term in humans, might not sound like an urgent matter but, in dogs, it is a life-threatening emergency. Although uncommon compared to other medical emergencies, it is worth noting the signs and symptoms of bloat, as well as possible preventative measures. Being extra vigilant during lockdown could save your dog's life and avoid unwanted vet bills.

Signs & Symptoms

Signs and symptoms will likely include one or more of the following:

- Retching without being able to vomit
- A swollen and/or hard belly (which may also be painful, when touched)
- Excessive drooling
- Distress, panting, whining, withdrawing, pacing,
- Digging at the ground can also be indicator of pain

Can I prevent it?

Promoting good health and behaviour around food and exercise may help to prevent bloat in your dog, although the exact causes are still not fully understood. There are, however, measures you can take that may make bloat less likely to happen.

- Feed little and often rather than all in one big meal
- Create a leaner diet that is lower in fat
- Maintain a healthy weight: overweight and underweight dogs seem to be more prone to bloat. If you are unsure of the healthy weight range for your dog, you may be able to find information online
- Teach your dog to eat more slowly using a slow-feeder bowl/toy, especially if they eat very quickly or seem to gulp down their meal
- Avoid exercising your dog within one hour before and one hour after feeding, particularly playing/running or other high-energy exercise

Keeping Animals safe Outdoors

Keep Cool:

Make sure that, while your animal is outdoors, in the yard or garden, they have access to shade and room-temperature water. If you can, keep the water bowl in the shade and out of the sunshine.

Allow your animal to have supervised time outdoors, ensuring that this is for shorter periods on warmer days (avoiding midday when the sun is hottest) and avoid the outdoors, if you can, on days with a very high temperature.

This is especially important if walking or exercising your animal on asphalt/concrete. Roads and paths can become too hot for paws to walk on, and they can easily burn.

All animals are susceptible to heat stroke. So, while we are sunbathing and enjoying the warmer days, it is important that we allow our animals time out of the warm weather, and to keep them cool indoors or in the shade. Paddling pools and sprinklers can also help keep your animals cool if they enjoy the water. But avoid excessive time outdoors in the sun, even with water.

Secure & Supervised:

Avoid leaving your animal outdoors, unsupervised. Particularly small furrries such as rabbits. It may be tempting to allow your rabbit to roam in your garden and have free access at all times, but consider the risks:

- Your animal escaping / getting lost or injured
- Wild rabbits entering your garden and mating with your pet
- Predators entering your garden, such as cats / foxes / birds of prey

Ensure that you supervise outdoor access and keep your animals safe and secure overnight and/or during times where you won't be there to supervise.

Poisonous Plants:

There are some common garden plants, seeds or weeds that may be harmful to your pet. Make yourself aware of what these plants are, how they look, and how to safely remove them from the area.

They can include:

- Ragwort
- Lilies
- Blue-green algae
- Fungi
- Conkers
- Acorns
- Daffodil bulbs
- Rhododendron
- Rhubarb leaves
- Sweet pea
- Tulip bulbs
- Ivy
- Hyacinth

Stinging Insects:

Again, ensure that you supervise your animal's outdoor access. Discourage them from chasing and/or snapping/playing with insects, including bees and wasps. It is very easy for your animal to get stung.

Signs that your pet has been stung may include:

- Swelling of the area affected
- Redness / soreness of the area
- Pawing/biting/excessive licking at the affected area
- Signs of distress: panting, pacing, whining, drooling

If you suspect your animal has been stung, call the vet for advice.

Cats on Lockdown

We are currently in Kitten Season – so now, more than ever, it is important to help prevent cats from breeding and putting strain on shelters, owners and vets.

Kitten Season floods animal rescue charities around the world with unwanted and unowned litters. This is one of the many reasons we encourage neutering in your pets. However, during lockdown, it is unlikely that you will be able to book your cat in to be neutered. So, here are some temporary, preventative measures to avoid your cat from mating/becoming pregnant:

- Keep unneutered males and females in separate areas of the home as much as possible
- Keep your unneutered cat indoors during lockdown – and find other ways to entertain them, such as:
 - Training games (our [plant pot game](#) for dogs is also fun for cats)
 - Toys
 - Climbers
 - Scratchers
 - Grooming/brushing

For context on how easy it is for unwanted pregnancies to occur in cats, here's some info on Kitten Season, from our friends over in Oz: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n5v7NSq8rTA>

Dogs on Lockdown

To help keep your dog safe, well and stimulated during lockdown, please refer to our existing blogs/info:

[Mind Games for your Dog](#)

Dog Walking Do's & Don'ts (see above)

Pets Outdoors (see above)

Frustrated Dogs:

Remember that, while our daily routines have all been altered in one way or another, the same goes for our dogs. Be mindful of your dog's wellbeing, and boundaries. If there are children in the household, ensure that they are allowing your dog some downtime, and a space to call their own, without interruption. **(The same goes for cats, and all animals in the home)**

Even if your dog enjoys your children and has never shown any signs of distress or frustration around them, these are challenging times with unexpected outcomes and changes in behaviours, inevitable. Dogs can easily become overexcited, anxious and frustrated. Understanding the signs of stress could be an important preventor of unwanted incidents. So, look out for combined body language that may include one of more of the following:

- Whale eye (showing the whites of their eyes)
- Repetitive yawning
- Panting
- Excessive drooling
- Avoidance (head turning, leaning away)
- Licking of the lips
- Showing teeth
- Growling
- Cowering / tail lowered or between legs
- Even tail wagging, in combination with any of the above can be a sign of fearfulness or anxiety

Overall, it is important to allow your dog some time to be calm, quiet, and undisturbed – as they usually would in your normal routine.

Do not shout at or punish your dog for showing warning signs of frustration or fear, such as growling. Their body and 'voice' i.e. bark/growls etc, are their only means of communication. It is up to us to listen and act accordingly. Instead ask, why might my dog be growling? Diffuse and take yourself, your children or your dog out of the situation.

Unneutered Dogs:

If your dog is unneutered, ensure that you keep him/her on a lead while out on walks to avoid unwanted pregnancies, vet bills and the relaying strain which may come as a result, on vets and shelters.

If you have an unneutered pair, male and female (even of the same litter), in the household, keep them separated as much as practically possible, and always when unsupervised, such as overnight.

Basic Grooming is Important

Keeping your pet clean and groomed is important during lockdown.

While groomers are not operation, there are some things you can do to avoid coats from becoming too thick, heavy, and matted.

Invest in a good brush, suited to your pet's coat. Many pet shops are still open, and you can also order online. A zoom-groom, brush and comb are three useful items to have at hand.

This will help to keep your pet clean, lighter, and cooler in spring and summer, until you can take them to a professional groomer.

If you are bathing your pet, ensure that you use pet-safe shampoo and rinse with warm to cool water, ensuring that you avoid shampoo around the face, eyes, ears and mouth.

If your pet has a skin sensitivity, we advise that you speak with your vet about the appropriate bathing method and avoid using pet shampoos that may irritate the skin.

Make sure to rinse very thoroughly, washing off all excess shampoo before drying.

Dry as thoroughly as you can, to avoid your pet getting cold.

There are a range of YouTube videos that may be useful for how to brush your dog or pet and give advice as to the best equipment.

Action Plan – What happens to Your Pet if You Fall Ill?

If you were to fall ill during lockdown, do you have a plan in place for your pet whilst you are receiving treatment or in recovery?

It is important to think ahead, even if the chances are low, you could still get sick.

A good place to start is to brainstorm about possible scenarios. Think:

- Is someone else able to look after or transport my pet in my absence?
- Call a friend or family member and seek their permission to keep their details on hand as your pet's temporary carer if you were to fall ill.

- If you do not have a suitable friend or family member to care for your pet were you to fall ill, can you call on a neighbour for help?
- Write your action plan down as clear, instructive information, and put it in a clearly marked envelope where someone can see it. Make sure people know of your wishes.

If you become ill and you have nobody at all who can temporarily care for your animal, call our National Control Centre (or ask someone to call on your behalf/leave in your instructions) on 0300 1234 999.