

The Use of Safety Lines (Long Lines)

Long lines are an aid, not a substitute, to your regularly assigned "Come When Called" training! Please read and practice all of the class work and homework assigned to you by your instructor!

We never suggest that the "Come!" response is 100% reliable. Dogs are "only human." One never knows what combination of environmental variables will sabotage even the best of come-when-called responses. Don't bet your dog's life on your ability to train.

Long lines are not used with Gentle Leaders.

Early on, get your dog used to a safety line. Also known as a light line, long line or drag line, they are between 10 and 30 feet long. You can make one yourself. They are usually thinner than a regular leash. A long line allows the dog more range to explore and have fun, but is your insurance policy that your dog will come back to you. It's an excellent transition from indoor training to training in the real world of unlimited and unpredictable distractions.

In a safely enclosed area, attach the line to your dog's collar or harness. If your dog wears a Gentle Leader, attach the long line to an additional collar on the dog. Do not attach to the Gentle Leader—the Gentle Leader was designed for close work only. Next make a big deal of unsnapping the regular leash and dramatically throwing it away. Release your dog and let him explore. Call him. When he arrives, make a fuss of him, give a treat and let him go again. Come should not always end the fun of exploring.

Holding vs Dragging:

It's best to hold on to the leash, however it is possible, depending on the safety of the situation, to drop your line and allow it to drag behind your dog. In either case, your dog will get used to the feeling of the line behind him. There is a chance it will snag on something now and then, but the knowledge that your dog is safe counterbalances any slight inconvenience at having to untangle the leash. If you are using the long line as a drag line, make it a point to know where the end of the leash is. Tying a brightly colored ribbon on the end will help you see it.

If at any time your dog is a bit slow, is distracted or does not come when you call him, simply hold tight or step on the leash. He will feel the pressure and will orient toward it. The second he glances at you, turn on the charm, back up and make a fuss over him when he gets to you. Let him know he made the right "choice" !!

Tips for use of the safety line:

- Beware of jerking a dog while running full force. If afraid of this possibility, use a body harness with the ring over the back, not front. No Gentle Leaders.
- Be careful! Dogs are quick, and can get farther than 30 feet from you in a hurry.

- Practice at home indoors at first, so there will be minimal distractions. Then move to the outside. Then progress to outside with distractions.
- Surprise your dog with your dog! Set up a distraction. Have a friend step on or hold the long line. If your dog doesn't come, your friend keeps dog where he is while you go over to an imaginary dog and play, making a big fuss and feeding the imaginary dog.
- Remember the basics: Name, one call, then action (yours or dog's), never call 2x
- Keep "come" fun while training: Don't call the dog away from fun or to you for punishment.
- Don't allow drive bys. Be ready to focus your dog when he arrives. Reward for at least three seconds while he is in front of and paying attention to you.
- Don't use the long line to reel the dog in, dragging him to you.
- Don't pick up lead when dog is running - rope burns.
- Try tying a few knots in the rope so you can a few good gripping places.

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