



It's safer and more fun to go hiking or camping with a well-trained dog. Read on to learn some valuable skills your dog will need when he explores the great outdoors. Please visit the [ASPCA® Virtual Pet Behaviorist at aspcabehavior.org](http://aspcabehavior.org) to find any of the articles mentioned below.

WALK NICELY ON-LEASH

Although some trainers believe a dog should walk directly beside or behind her pet parents, held in that position by a tight leash, we think that hikes are far more enjoyable when dogs have a little more freedom to see the sights and smell the smells. As long as your dog isn't yanking you around, there's no harm in letting her have some fun on a walk! Please see our article on **Teaching Your Dog Not to Pull on Leash** for specific leash-training tips.

If your dog doesn't yet walk politely on-leash, you can use one of the following management options to prevent injury while she's learning leash manners:

- Head halter/head collar – Please note that head halters should not be used with very long or retractable leashes. If your dog runs quickly to the end of a long leash, she may injure her neck.
- No-pull harness

To learn more about choosing an appropriate collar, head halter or harness, please see our article on **Walking Equipment for Your Dog**.

COME WHEN CALLED

Training your dog to come to you when called—a skill known as the “recall”—is the most important lesson you can teach her. If she responds quickly and consistently when you call her, she can enjoy freedoms that other dogs cannot. She can play in the dog park, hike with you off-leash (where permitted) and stay out of trouble in most situations. Even if you never intend to let her romp off-leash, accidents happen. Collars break, leashes break or slip out of your hands, and gates or doors are inadvertently left open. In these unexpected situations, having a reliable recall can save your dog's life.

If your dog does not reliably come when called, resist the urge to let her romp off-leash in unfenced areas. If you'd like to work on a reliable recall, please see our article on **Teaching Your Dog to Come When Called**. In the meantime, keep your dog on a regular leash or keep a long line attached to her collar. (Long lines are lightweight leashes that usually come in 15-, 20-, 30- or 35-foot lengths.) Let the line drag on the

ground so that you can easily pick it up to catch your dog if she doesn't come when called. If she does come, be ready to reward her good behavior. Be sure to have some tasty treats or your dog's favorite toy on hand. Individual pieces of string cheese are a great reward because they're conveniently wrapped in plastic, and most dogs find them delicious.

“LEAVE IT”

Like coming when called, the “Leave it” skill can be useful in many situations and can even save your dog's life. “Leave it” is a phrase that you can use when you want her to leave something alone. After your dog learns what “Leave it” means, you can tell her to avoid things that might hurt her, such as trash or debris on the ground, sharp objects, chicken bones discarded in the park or hooks left near fishing spots. You can also use the “Leave it” skill to redirect your dog's attention when she notices other things that might get her into trouble, like unfriendly dogs, wildlife or people who don't want to meet her.

If your dog doesn't know how to “Leave it” yet, tasty treats, like chicken, cheese or jerky, will come in handy if she picks up something she shouldn't have. Use the treats as a trade for any “treasures” she finds. Our article on **Teaching Your Dog to “Leave It”** explains all the steps in teaching this important skill.

SIT-STAY ON THE TRAIL

While hiking with your dog, you may encounter cyclists, horseback riders and people who don't like dogs. The polite thing to do, especially if your dog is off-leash, is ask her to move to the side of the trail and sit or lie down. If your dog doesn't yet know how to stay, you can make yourself more interesting than moving distractions like horses, hikers or cyclists by feeding her a steady stream of tiny treats as they pass. (Please see our article on **Teaching Your Dog to Stay** for training tips.)

TRAINING GAMES FOR HIKES

It's a good idea to teach your dog that you're unpredictable and won't always follow her. She needs to keep an eye on you so you won't get “lost!”

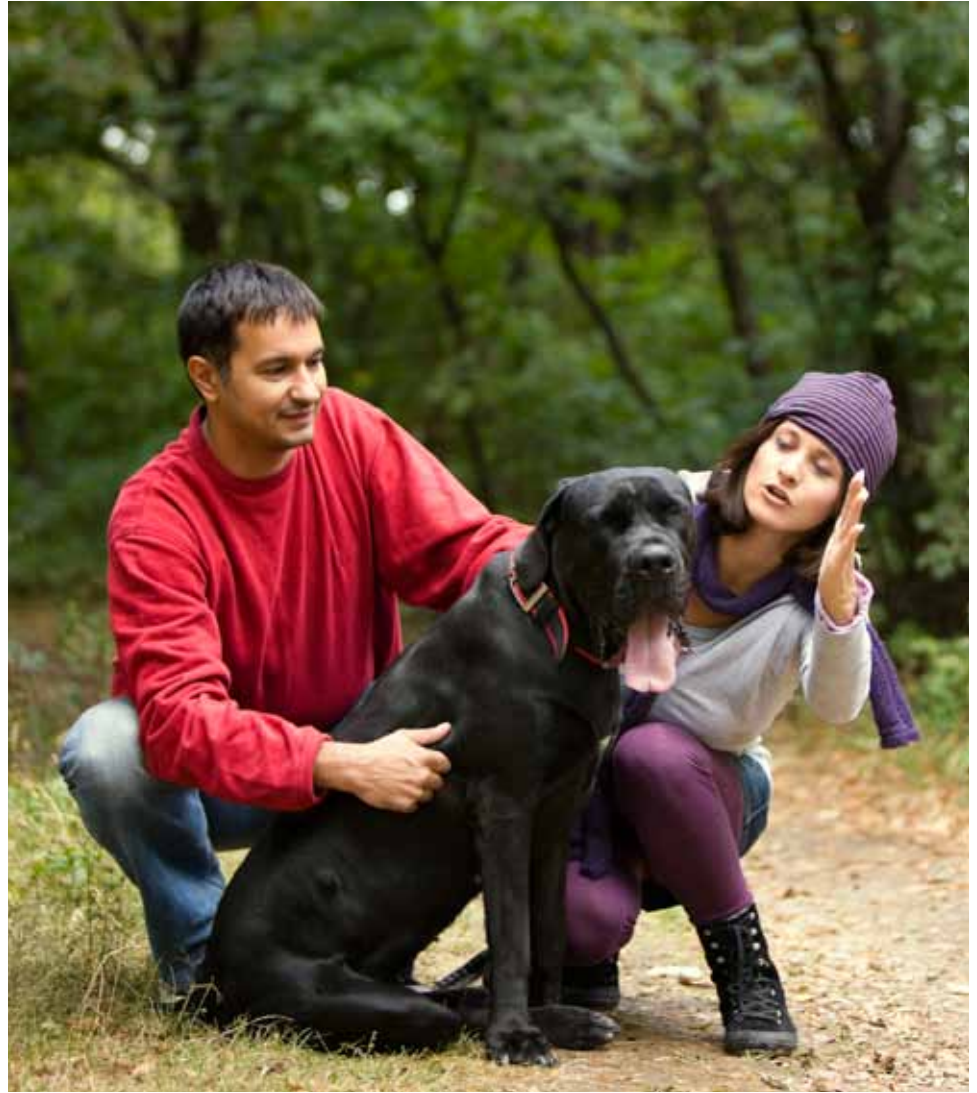
- Whenever you come to a fork in the path, choose the one your dog has not taken. Call her name as you walk along the new trail. It may take her a few moments to notice that you're no longer following her, so keep an eye out for her. Praise and encourage her when she catches up to you.
- If it's safe to do so, try hiding from your dog occasionally. (If it's not safe, ask a helper to hold your dog on a leash or long line while you sneak away.) Just step behind a tree and wait for her to notice that you're gone. Let her look for you. If she has trouble finding you, you can eventually make some sounds to clue her in. When she finally discovers you, celebrate! Finding you should be a lot of fun.

CONTINUED...



Here are some other training exercises you can practice while out and about:

- Bring along some delicious treats. Periodically call your dog to you, give her a treat and then release her to explore again. This exercise teaches her that coming when called usually means she'll get two good things—a treat and a chance to keep enjoying her off-leash romp!
- Work on sit-stays beside the trail when other people, horses or dogs aren't nearby to distract your dog. Give your dog praise and treats for good performances. This will solidify her training and make it more likely that she'll listen when there are distractions.
- Practice "Leave it" while your dog is on-leash, using interesting things on the trail as temptations. Remember to reward good behavior generously, and occasionally release your dog, if it's safe, to investigate something she successfully resisted.
- Many dogs learn to avoid reaching hands when off-leash. Who can blame them? Getting "caught" usually means that the fun's over. Practice grabbing your dog's collar or harness, giving her a treat and then immediately releasing her again. That way, she won't learn to duck away when you need to catch her.



NEED HELP?

If you'd like a professional's guidance as you train your dog, contact a Certified Professional Dog Trainer (CPDT) in your area. Please see our article on **Finding Professional Help** to locate a CPDT. If you have time to prepare for next year's outdoor adventures, consider taking your dog to an obedience class. If you prefer private help, many CPDTs offer in-home sessions as an alternative to the group-class setting.

DISCLAIMER

The ASPCA® Virtual Pet Behaviorist specializes in the resolution and management of pet behavior problems only. Only licensed veterinarians can diagnose medical conditions. If you think that your pet is sick, injured or experiencing any kind of physical distress, please contact his veterinarian immediately. A delay in seeking proper veterinary care may worsen your pet's condition and put his life at risk.



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