

Long Lines (Training Leads)

Recommended use and conditioning of equipment - long lines

Long lines/training leads are a great tool, especially if your dog doesn't have the greatest recall, or needs to stay on lead due to being nervous. Unlike a flexi-lead, you have more control and less risk of injury (if used correctly). But remember: we don't want you to become tangled up! It's also important to know how long the long line is, this is easier to see if you line them out flat or have some kind of colour code system.

Common uses for long lines

- Recall training
- Building confidence with a reactive dog
- Improved control (over a flexi-lead)
- For BAT set-ups (Behaviour Adjustment Training)

Why I don't recommend flexi-leads for general training:

The number of flexi-lead burns on people's legs I've seen is concerning, and the brakes can and do fail. I've heard horror stories of dogs pulling out near cars, as well as people tripping up as they are often hard to see the line. There may be a place for them, in open areas and with a calm dog, but (for training purposes at least) I find that long lines are much more suitable.

Tips on using a long line:

There are a variety of different ways to use a long line. Please take into factors such as the size and weight of the dog and, if you are new to using a long line, I recommend starting with a slightly shorter/shortened style.

*Long lines are more suited to a dog you have experience with and know you have a little more control but there have seen situations where once I've changed to a longer line, the dog actually pulls less. As with all advice, safety is the main priority and a long line/lead with an unexperienced handler/stronger dog can be potentially dangerous.

- **Always use a harness**

It can be incredibly dangerous if the long line is on normal collar, as they could potentially build up a lot of speed before it runs out, and never attempt to use on a head collar.

- **What about the handle?**

Try not to hold the end of the long line, even if it has a handle. This can lead to a lot of slack trailing between yourself and the dog (in which the dog can tangle itself) or enable the dog to build up a lot of speed, then stop instantly... which can be dangerous, potentially damaging your fingers and wrists, or even pulling you over!

*This advice is when you are working with a dog that you have more control with, some people use scaffolding when considering training bigger/stronger dogs, a long line and a shorter lead in combination.

- **Hold the line with an open grip**

Hold the line with an open grip, allowing it to flow through as the dog moves away, then take the slack back in as you get close again. This allows the dog to feel like it has more freedom, closer to being off lead, as well as never feeling like they must 'fight you' to get to where they want to go.

*As above safety first and this advice is situation dependent.

- **Let the back-end trail behind you**

Some owners prefer to coil the back end up, as dragging the lead on the ground behind you can make it wet and muddy. I advise to let the back trail (and just wash as needed when home) as the constant coiling can not only become tiresome but can make it more difficult for the dog to move out freely if it becomes tangled/caught on your arm.

- **Hold the line up above the dog**

Holding the line up from the ground can help to prevent the dog from getting their legs tangled. While the back of the line should be trailing behind you, the line between yourself and the dog should always be angled above them.

- **Tie a knot towards the end**

Tying a knot towards the end of the line can give you a clear signal that you are running out of length before you reach the end.

- **Letting it go?**

If, for whatever reason, the dog suddenly makes a break for it, and you realise too late that you are about to reach the end of the lead and the dog is at full speed – my advice is to just let go (unless you are in a dangerous environment, e.g. within running distance from a busy road, if livestock are around). As mentioned earlier, a sudden stop from full speed risks injury to both the dog and to yourself; you may be concerned about losing control, but you'll have more control on your feet than you will lying on the ground with an injured wrist. Even a dog who thinks being caught is a game is more easily brought back under control when they're trailing 5+ metres of lead behind them.

Special considerations

- Anxious and nervous dogs

The main purpose of long dog training leads, when working with a reactive/anxious dog, is to enable the dog to have more freedom/feel more relaxed compared to a shorter lead. It can also prevent/discourage them from either running towards or away from the trigger (making it potentially dangerous for the dog). They also can help raise awareness (if coloured yellow or just in general) that the dog is in training.

- BAT leash skills

When using 'BAT Leash Skills', the handler of a reactive dog will hold the entire (5m) dog training leash in their hands and in this case no leash trailing on the ground. The handler will let out and take in the leash, as the dog moves, to give the dog the sense of being off-leash; they will use special techniques to avoid tension, jerking or pulling the dog or suddenly stopping the dog, on the long-line. *See Grisha Stewart for more details.*

* Please note all advice here is given for particular circumstances and all clients and dogs are individuals. Safety and welfare are always paramount.

Example of Using Long Lines

Here is an example of a yellow 'awareness' long line. The handler holds the lead up high (to prevent tangling) and lets the end drag behind them (to allow the lead length to be adjusted more readily). There is no tension in the lead, and it is attached to the back of the harness (never to a collar). Yellow is often the colour for 'do not approach' or informs others the dog may be anxious.



Here is another example of the yellow 'awareness' long line. The line is held in the middle, not by the handle, with an open grip. Notice the knot towards the end? This helps tell the handler that they are coming to the end of the line as it slides through the hand.



This line has been shortened in length, so it is easier to manage.

Here is an example of a horse 'lunge line'. The lunge line is thicker and has a smooth texture to limit friction burn in the hand. It is attached to a 'Perfect Fit' harness, and I recommend using with a glove with larger dogs for better control. The lunge line is only 5 metres long, giving the dog less chance to build up speed before reaching the end of the lead.

