



# Guide Dogs for the Blind

## Puppy Raising Department

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### Hand Tether in Motion Game

#### Fixed Leash Pressure Introduction for Young Puppies

#### 8 to 16 Weeks of Age

##### **Goal Behavior** (what the desired behavior looks like)

Around a variety of distractions, puppy chooses to keep a loose leash while slowly moving forward (walking one step at a time). Handler holds the leash against their left leg, creating fixed pressure to the puppy's collar.

Puppy demonstrates impulse control around a variety of distractions by choosing to remain next to the handler, keep a loose leash, and relate to the handler.

##### **Training Session Objectives** (what we want to achieve in each training session)

Practice the handler's skill at providing a Fixed Pressure to the puppy when walking slowly.

Continue to build a strong history of food reward for choosing not to pull against fixed collar pressure, around a variety of distractions.

Continued mark and rewarding of desirable behaviors while gradually expanding the time between rewards.

##### **Session Set Up** (description of environment and/or equipment needed and preparation)

- Controlled environment; distractions are "under control" (difficulty can be decreased or increased) with all enticements out of reach of the puppy.
- Handler holds the leash firmly, against the left side of their leg. (Hand/arm in contact with hip/leg to prevent inadvertent movement.)
- Leash length from hand to puppy is approximately one foot. Short enough to prevent the puppy from reaching enticements on the ground while long enough to ensure a loose collar when the puppy is offering desired behavior.
- Handler has suitable food rewards.
- Real world distractions (i.e. leaves, tissue, friendly people, food) are organized for session use.

##### **Video reference** (supporting documentation)

GDB DVD "Hand Tether Game"

##### **Key Handling Points (Behaviors to Reward)**

- Handler takes single steps forward, marking and rewarding the following desirable behaviors from the puppy:
  1. Not pulling towards a distraction
  2. Moving with the handler's movement forward (each single step the puppy takes forward is marked)
  3. Looking at a distraction, but not moving towards it
  4. Looking to the handler when nearing a distraction
- Handler strives to offer rewards close to their left leg to support loose leash behavior.
- Number of steps the handler takes prior to marking and rewarding gradually increases in relation to how successful the puppy is offering desired behavior.
- When the puppy makes a wrong choice (tries to reach a distraction), the handler firmly fixes the leash to mimic an immovable tether. If it appears the puppy may still reach the distraction, the handler may back away from that distraction while still applying fixed leash pressure.

Note: Moving past and over enticements is much more difficult for the puppy than making stationary decisions.

Set-up distractions are meant to challenge the puppy's impulse control while still at a level that the puppy can be successful.

- When a puppy offers desired behavior when initially moving close to a distraction, effective learning is taking place.
- If a puppy continues to pull towards most distractions it gets close to, that puppy has not had a sufficient reward history for making desirable choices. Distraction difficulty should be lowered to allow for more successful repetitions or the puppy should receive more stationary tether sessions.
- Attempts to pull towards a distraction should become few and far between, with the majority of decisions from the puppy being desirable.

### **Completion / Next Steps**

Once the puppy offers loose leash behavior in motion (slow walking next to handler), around a variety of distractions, loose leash walking at a more normal pace can commence.