

CLOSE TETHER TRAINING

“Close tethering” does NOT mean tying your dog outside for hours. That would only stir up anxiety, fear, and even aggression. In fact, you should NEVER leave your dog tied up outside.

In contrast, close tethering is a safe, gentle, useful technique that teaches your dog to be comfortable and even to enjoy being tied up near you for short periods. A close tether is a two- to three-foot lead. Think of it as the tie that binds.

Being close tether trained means your dog will be able to accompany you to more places; you can “park” her knowing she won’t fuss or bother anyone when you have company or take her along on outings. This training benefits your dog greatly because she gets to please you, be near you, and see you clearly as the leader of the pack – an authoritative owner is deeply reassuring to a dog.

Getting Hitched

The first step is to purchase the right tool for the job. To prevent your dog from getting tangled, the tether should be short. Ideally, it will have a strong clip on each end. These fasteners enable you to quickly attach the tether from the collar or harness to any solid object. It can also be used in the car with a dog seat belt.

Start by tethering your dog where you can be close to her. Tether her to your chair when you are reading, watching TV, or working at your desk. If she whimpers or fusses, and you are in the process of housetraining her, see if she needs to go out. If you’re confident she doesn’t, literally turn your back on her fussing. When she’s quiet, praise her with “good quiet!”

Note: If all she wants is attention, it is imperative that you ignore her while she cries or whines. If you give in, she’ll continue to cry and whine whenever she wants you – or anything else.

Here are eight great reasons to tether-train your dog:

8. Better bonding. If your dog is overly independent and doesn’t recognize your leadership, an excellent bonding exercise is to tether her next to you every possible minute when you are home. If you have trouble finding an object to tie her to, attach the tether to your belt or ankle. This is known as “umbilical cording.”
2. A feeling of safety. Close tether training gives a fearful dog the security of knowing where she belongs. She’ll also adapt more easily to new environments since she will “know the ropes.”
3. Easier house training. Dogs will avoid eliminating in their immediate surroundings, so tether-training can help you with house training. Take your dog out regularly, and praise her lavishly for going in a sanctioned spot. If she doesn’t do her business, return her to the tether and praise her for resting quietly.

4. A calming effect. Inside your car or at home, tethering will settle a hyperactive dog. If your dog gets especially wild around guests, designate a spot as hers and tether her there when you entertain. Set up a comfy bed there, so she can rest comfortably.

5. Soothing separation anxiety. If your dog gets upset when you leave or aren't nearby, close tethering is a useful technique. Gradually increase the time you keep her tethered, by just a minute or so each time and never so long that she shows signs of anxiety. Then tether her farther from you, gradually increasing the distance until you're out of her sight. Do this incrementally, so she's always comfortable (otherwise you could make the problem worse). When you need to go out, untie her, but ignore her when you leave and for a few minutes after you arrive back home. Making a fuss will undo this "independence training."

6. No more demolition dog. If your dog chews your shoes or digs up your flowers, tethering can limit her ability to destroy your possessions. While she's tethered, give her a Kong filled with goodies or a "chew puzzle" (another kind of chew toy with food inside). If you think separation anxiety might be causing the destructive behavior and close tethering isn't helping, consult a professional behaviorist.

7. You're the boss. If your dog behaves aggressively, give her a calming "time-out" by tethering her near you for five to 10 minutes. By immediately establishing your leadership, tethering dispels her confusion over her status in the household hierarchy. If necessary, have your dog drag a leash from her collar, so you can control any volatile situation.

8. A member of society. You can use the tether as part of a socialization program. It's a way to allow your dog to see and be involved in people's activities without being the center of attention. Remember, a dog who can be peacefully tethered possesses a skill that will prove handy in countless situations over her life.

Close tether training is especially useful for rescued dogs, especially those that lived their lives in a commercial breeding facility, with very little positive human interaction. They may perceive normal, everyday activities as "scary". Close tethering will help communicate to her how to perceive her new environment, conduct herself and, most importantly, that you are in charge so there is no reason to be afraid of new people or situations.