



## Behavior Adjustment Training Leash Skills

With BAT, the leash is a line of communication – literally and figuratively. This physical connection to your dog is an extension of your mental connection. It's where a dog's need to control its own movement and our need to provide support and safety finds a happy balance. The leash is our key to success in BAT; it opens the door for a dog to make good choices in the presence of a trigger and experience Naturally Occurring Reinforcers for doing so.

We recommend attaching the leash to a harness, preferably on the back of a harness vs. the front.

We recommend using a 15 ft (5m) leash in Set-Ups or in other situations that allow for exploration. If you're working in smaller spaces, or on a walk in a busy neighborhood, use a standard 6ft (2m) leash, keeping in mind you can still use most of the BAT Skills.

No matter the length of the leash, it's critical to observe the dog's body language. This means knowing when to keep a loose leash and follow the dog, or when to do a Slow Stop. Please reference the handout on BAT Zones to learn more about canine body language and when to follow or when to stop.

The instructions below are for right-handed people. If you are left handed, please use the opposite hands.

1. Handle **Why**: Allows you to hold on to the leash safely, while still able to release it in case of an emergency. **How**: Put your right wrist through the handle on the leash and grab the base of the handle so that the leash crosses your palm and is clasped by the V between your thumb and forefinger. The base of your thumb pins the leash in place when you need your other fingers for other things, like Mime Pulling. **Tip**: Never wrap the leash around your wrist over and over; this can lead to a leash that is too tight or worse, injury.

2. Braking Distance **Why**: Allows you to stop the dog slowly to avoid pain/pressure to you or the dog. **How**: With both palms up, slide your left hand, aka Braking Hand (the one not holding the handle), away from your Handle Hand about 2.5ft (.75m) – just enough so the distance between your hands is about as wide as your hips. Your left hand controls the direction of the leash; this is your Braking Hand. The amount of leash between your hands is your braking distance; it helps to make sure both hands stay on and you don't run out of leash. **Tip**: Keeping your palms up helps keep your wrists in alignment with your shoulders.



3. Basic Position. **Why:** Helps you to check your Handle, Palms Up, Braking Distance, and Centered. **How:** Have your bows in your Handle Hand, your Braking Distance the width of your hips, your Braking Hand with palms up and the leash relaxed and level with your knees. **Tip:** It's super easy to hold your hands up high at your rib cage but relaxing them at your hips helps to relax the lead, too!

3. Slide **Why:** Allows you to communicate to the dog that you are stopping or that you need his attention. **How:** Think of pulling in a rope, but without actually pulling. Gently move Hand over Hand. This is the TTouch™ technique of feathering. **Tip:** Slide is a great move to help disengage a dog focused on something other than a known trigger - such as a food wrapper on the ground, or a bunny in the distance!

5. Slow Stop **Why:** This signals to the dog you'd like her to slow down her pace or come to a gentle stop. **How:** Let the leash slide through your fingers for about one foot (30 cm) as you apply pressure on the leash, then release/pressure, then release. Think of tapping the brakes on a car vs slamming your foot on the pedal. You may then come to a complete full stop, or just a slower pace. **Tip:** Think of the Slow Stop as a Yellow Light at a traffic stop.

6. Relax The Lead **Why:** When you stop your dog with the leash, he is often out of balance if he had been pulling. If you can relax the pressure of the leash after stopping, he will be able to get into balance. **How:** Put a "smile" into the leash after you stop the dog. A) Super-slow: Lean or extend your arm very slowly until the leash is loose and the dog is back in balance. B) Stutter: Quickly let out a tiny bit of slack, ½ inch at a time, until the leash is loose and the dog is back in balance. **Tip:** If you can't get the dog to balance, you're too close to the trigger and need to increase distance.

7. Center Yourself **Why:** If you are off-balance when your dog pulls, you may fall. Standing with tension in your body may also encourage your dog to go over threshold. **How:** Stand with your body softly balanced above your feet, knees relaxed, and hands at your side. Turn slightly to the side relative to your Braking Hand, so that you will be harder to tip over if the dog suddenly pulls. **Tip:** Keep breathing! Centering ourselves is a good reminder to take a second to relax our bodies, too!

8. Shorter **Why:** It's dangerous if the leash drags on the ground as you or the dog may trip or tangle in the line. **How:** Shorten the leash so that it is still loose but is above the dog's knees. If the dog moves closer to you or you move closer to the dog, gather the extra leash by making a Figure 8 (or bows, or floppy ears). **Tip:** Watch Grisha Stewart's DVD [Walk With Me](#) for visual tips on Shortening a Lead.



9. Longer **Why**: When a dog is restrained, he is more likely to become tense. A long and loose lead gives him more options and allows him to make better choices. Unless you are using the leash to stop your dog, the leash should have some bend in it. **How**: A) If the dog moves away from you, let the lead slide through your Braking Hand. Your Braking Distance will let you know how much lead is left. B) Let the leash slide through your Braking Hand as you step away from the dog. **Tip**: Don't let out too much lead, especially if it's a large dog. Think "Loose Leash" more than "Lots of Leash."

4. Mime Pulling **Why**: Gets the dog's attention more quickly than Slide. Used when the dog is too focused on something and you need her to disengage and move away. **How**: Do Slide where the dog can see you (they have 270 degree peripheral vision). Make inviting eye contact and stay connected as you bend your knees and pivot your body away from the dog in the direction you want to go. You are sort of doing a 'play bow' to encourage movement. **Tip**: This is best used in the Orange Zone of behavior, meaning after the dog is clearly a little stuck but before they start to bark, lunge or tremble.