

Parking Your Dog

You will use park

- for safety
- for talking
- for resting
- for taking a break
- for meeting and greeting

For examples:

- In class owners use it when they have to listen to the instructor
- You need to text or use your phone on your walk.
- A stranger wants to greet your dog on your walk and says the silly thing “I don’t mind if he jumps up” You do though.
- To allow a push bike or another dog and owner to pass by.

On the surface this technique appears to be for the benefit of the person. The dog is anchored by the lead under your foot whilst you take care of what you need to do. I see this as a technique that gives a clear series of cues to the dog on how to behave and protects them from many of the errors that can occur whilst we don’t have our attention on our dogs.

Rules of Park

1. You must have a lead that is at least 6foot or 2 metres. Your foot will be placed on the lead and there must be sufficient length for you to maintain a good grip on the handle whilst comfortably standing upright.
2. The dog must be able to choose the behaviour that is most comfortable for them. There is no necessity to require a lying down position. The lead will prevent upward jumping
3. Good shoes are effective, bare feet, round soled shoes and flip-flops (sorry Thongs) are unsuitable. The surface needs to be stable, sand and gravel or sloping ground will be unsafe.

4. Use common sense.

You will need

- 6' or 1.8m lead
- Good pair of shoes
- And a friend to talk to...

Getting into park

1. Invite the dog in to your hand and take hold of the collar, asking them to wait and stop forward movement
2. loop the lead to the floor as if you are going to skip
3. Don't skip, step on the lead with one or both feet
4. Release the collar and stand up straight.
5. Don't forget to breathe

Once in park do not give reinforcers to the dog i.e. treats or praise. The information we need to give the dog is one of settling down whilst we are busy. If on some occasions you are you not that busy and treat the settled positions and on other occasions when you are too distracted too notice the good behaviour it can be unintentionally ignored which can force the dog to try and gain your attention and ruin the settled behaviour. Settled behaviours as a collection, either standing with stillness, sitting, lying down, sleeping all have the same emotional context – calmness. For many dogs the chance to earn treats is very arousing so let the break from thinking be its own reward.

Parking the Dog Video

- The dog can stay standing ...or lie down, It's the dog's choice.....
- The dog cannot make an error (i.e. jump on people)
- Learns people are boring.

As with all teaching protocols, gradual, will be the key objective. Parking is not a punishment or “time out” strategy. Its purpose is a series of clear environmental cues to the dog as to their behavioural limitations at the moment. For example when a stranger starts heading towards your puppy, the puppy is either going to

- Respond with alarm and shy away
- Or respond with glee and try to jump at the strangers face.

If the puppy is safely parked it cannot be punished for any error in response to this stranger’s lack of thought. For the cautious puppy you can ask the person to just admire the pup from a distance with no touching and for the enthusiastic pup you can ask for a controlled sit before saying hello. The point is that the choice is under your control, if your pup isn’t in park you are going to be forced to pull your pup back and accept that your pup has been reinforced for lunging on lead and jumping up once again.

Ending Park

1. Step off the lead and gather lead up.
2. Wait for the dog to check in and move away together.

Video

Parking will be your life saver....

Behaviours you might encounter when first introducing Park.

The first few occasions might be a little confusing for the dogs but they will soon learn that your focus (keep your chin up) is elsewhere and you are relaxed (Keep a relaxed posture; weight on one hip works well).

Lead chewing can sometimes be seen, this is a re-directed frustration that being on a lead represents. The dog has learnt that all the good things end when on lead and that

nasty pulling starts, get the owners to do laps to reduce stress (See circuit training worksheet).

NOTE: Lots of techniques can be taken and used in an abusive fashion. At no time do we advise that we are putting our foot on the lead to force the dog to lie down, or keep the lead so short that they can't move about. Parking should be a pleasant, comfortable experience that benefits the dog.