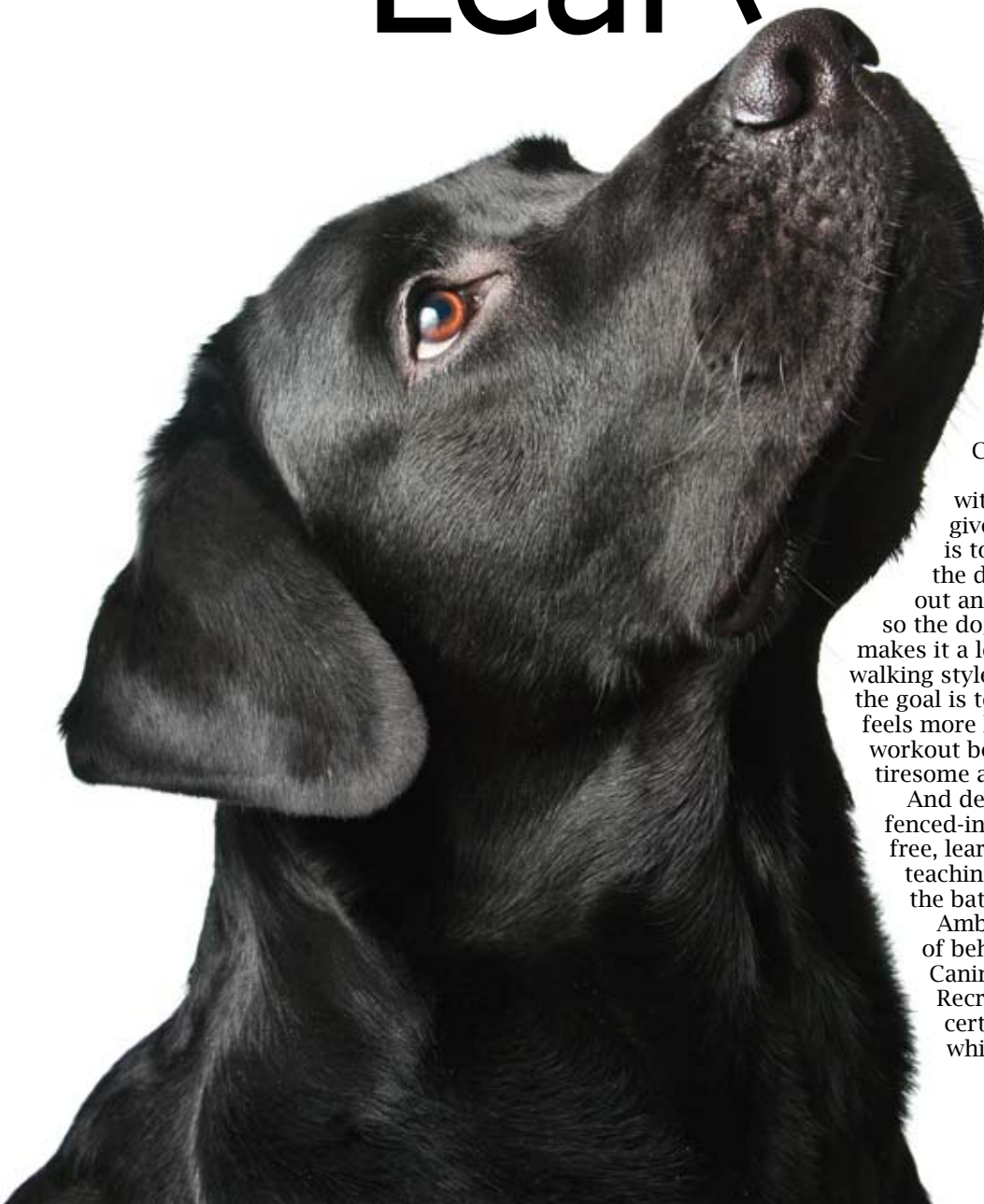




Sit. Read. Learn.



We have all seen the struggling dog owner, yanked along the street with his much-loved pet leading the way...

or perhaps you have been in these shoes, feeling the force of your dog every time you go for a walk.

Teaching your dog to walk harmoniously with you while it's on a leash—known as loose leash walking—is one of the primary components of training your dog to have good manners, says Layla Amberger, an animal behavior counselor and trainer at the Klondike Canine Academy, affiliated with the Blair Animal Clinic in West Lafayette.

"If you don't learn to walk correctly with your dog, then a lot of people just give up," notes Amberger. The idea is to keep trying, but practice walking the dog with a looser leash: "Let's get out and walk fairly loosely, closer to me, so the dog is not pulling the owner, and it makes it a lot more enjoyable," she says. The walking style does not have to be perfect, but the goal is to fit into a relaxed routine, which feels more like a country walk than a rigorous workout because the latter becomes too tiresome after a period of time, she adds.

And depending on whether you have a fenced-in yard where your dog can roam free, learning to walk easily is tied into teaching your dog the routine of going to the bathroom.

Amberger, who serves as the director of behavior and training at Klondike Canine Academy and Klondike Canine Recreation and Sports Park, is a certified professional dog trainer, which is granted by the CCPDT, the ➤



Certification Council for Professional Dog Trainers. The CCPDT conducts an independent, not-for-profit certification process to ensure that scientific and ethical standards are upheld for instructors who obtain the credential.

Of course, the first, most basic skill a dog has to learn is that all the world is not a bathroom, says Peggy Marsico, the owner of Courteous Canines in Battle Ground. To master this skill is not a given, but she offers some easy-to-follow tips. Marsico provides one-on-one training to owners and their pets. She opened Courteous Canines in 1990 in Ohio, and then moved her business to Battle Ground in 1998.

"In order to house train a dog, you have to put it on a schedule. I usually recommend that people keep a journal so that they write down what time the dog ate, and they will see a pattern form as to how long it takes after the dog eats to when the dog has to eliminate," notes Marsico. That way, the owner knows when to take the dog outside before he or she has the chance to eliminate in the house. Usually, it's about 15 to 20 minutes after the puppy has eaten.

"You take the dog out, and I suggest taking a few pea-sized treats. As soon as the puppy has finished going to the bathroom, reward the puppy right then and there with a treat." She adds that the owner must work fast to bestow the reward: "You have less than three seconds to give the reward because if the dog has to cross the lawn to get to you and the treat, then in its mind, the treat is for crossing the lawn, and has nothing to do with eliminating."

The dog must associate the treat directly with the task accomplished.

"Canines are very much into timing and body language," explains Marsico.

That idea of associating a specific task with a reward, or concrete positive feedback, is the crux of the Canine

Companion Clicker Course offered by the Klondike Canine Academy in West Lafayette. Owners hold a small clicker, which they click immediately after the dog has performed whatever task they have been asked to do, and then immediately after the click, a treat is granted.

"A clicker can be a great tool for teaching behaviors," Amberger says. "I think of it as a shutter button on a camera. When you press the clicker, you are actually capturing that behavior. The sound of the click is as if to say to the dog, 'You did it,' and it's always paired with some type of reward—usually food in the beginning."

Clickers can be purchased at pet stores, or you can make your own clicker, with the top of a pen, for example. The goal is for the dog to respond well to the sound.

Amberger usually teaches about six to eight dogs and their owners in the clicker course, instructing the canine and human students with a wireless microphone:

"I think it's time for me to talk about recall, coming when called," Amberger says. "So let's start off with any recall type of work that you did this weekend or since the last class. Did anyone practice recalls, and how did it go?"

Coming when called, sit, stay, and polite interaction with other dogs and humans are some of the basic skills taught in the course.

Also, students use the clicker to refine skills they have already taught their dog. Michelle and Matt Westhuis' dog, Remy Waffles is very refined because he uses a doorbell to let his owners know when he has to go outside to use the bathroom. They learned how to use a clicker in the course, and Michelle taught Remy to ring a doorbell that is placed on the floor of their home by using a clicker and a food reward. Remy has his own doorbell, Matt says.

"The doorbell is shaped like a paw that has a button that he rings, and it also has a little doorbell chime that came with it, so it's separate from the main doorbell for the house. So that way we know when it's him ringing it, instead of somebody at the front door."

Just as most humans thrive on positive feedback, dogs literally eat it up. Kendra Haberzette's dog Loki responded very well to the idea that good behaviors were marked with a clicker and a treat, and bad behaviors were not.

"Loki is very treat motivated, so for him, he was quick to learn the right thing to do if I rewarded him for it, and if he didn't get a reward for the wrong thing, then he soon dropped that behavior," explains Haberzette.

While Marsico's business is titled Courteous Canines, she does do some consultation and training with cats.

"I don't get a lot of calls for cat behavior problems," she notes. "People just seem to deal with the cat problems more than they do with the dog problems." Often times, a cat is not using the litter box, and that's frequently because the owner is not cleaning it enough or there are too many cats using the same box, she explains. There also is the possibility of a urinary tract infection.

Overall, the time and money invested in a little bit of training, can vastly improve everyone's quality of life.

"Dogs are very willing to learn, and they are happy to be with humans," says Marsico. "Training is easy to do if people would just work on it a little bit instead of giving up on the animal. Once the owner understands what the dog is telling them, which is key, they will have a much better relationship, and it just continues to improve over the lifetime of the pet." ❄



For more information about training your four-legged friend:

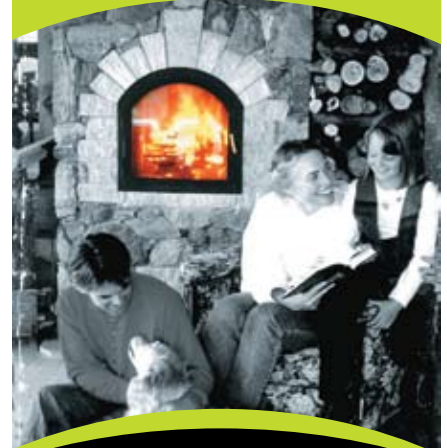
- blairanimalclinic.com
- **Courteous Canines, 765.567.2084**
- vet.purdue.edu
- apdt.com – Association of Pet Dog Trainers
- www.ccpdt.org – Certification Council for Professional Dog Trainers

Layla Amberger, a counselor and trainer with Klondike Canine Academy, and her dog, Tibby.



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Helen is Eighty-Two.



Helen Crane

(She's 2 ½ here, at home in Canada.)

As a child, Helen loved playing rummy, sewing, ballet and ice skating. Today she volunteers, embroiders, attends the symphony, travels, and enjoys an occasional late night snack. She still likes cold weather. But she loves how warm Westminster Village makes her feel. For her, successful aging means living in a retirement community that feels like family. She's found that right here...



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