



# Guide Dogs for the Blind

## Hand Tether Game

### *Fixed Leash Pressure Introduction for Puppies 8 to 16 Weeks of Age*

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

With a variety of distractions just out of reach, puppy chooses to not pull against the hand-held leash, keeping the leash loose with no pressure on their collar (handler is holding 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 close to the stationary 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 while holding the leash. Continue to build a strong history of food reward for choosing not to pull against fixed collar pressure, around a variety of distractions. Continued marking 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 1 to 2 feet; short enough to prevent the puppy from leaving the handler; long enough to allow room for the puppy to make choices (staying with the handler versus moving towards distractions).
- Handler has suitable food rewards.
- Real world distractions (i.e. leaves, tissue, friendly people, food) are organized for session use.

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

- Hand Tether Game: <https://youtu.be/b5VbDvEjHqc>

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

- Handler remains stationary and allows the puppy to react to fixed leash pressure, marking and rewarding the following desirable behaviors:
  - Ceasing pull on the collar (progressively: delay marks a few seconds after puppy ceases pulling to increase time puppy keeps leash loose before marking).
  - Looking at a distraction, but not moving towards it (high rates of rewards for initially not moving towards the distraction).
  - Looking to the handler when distraction is presented.
- Handler strives to offer rewards close to their left leg to support loose leash behavior.
- Increasing challenging distractions are introduced out of reach of the puppy.

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

- When a new distraction or more difficult version of a distraction is introduced, the puppy's initial decision to offer desired behavior demonstrates effective learning is taking place.
- If the puppy continues to pull towards every new distraction, the puppy has not had a sufficient reward history for making the desired choice to "not pull". Distraction difficulty should be lowered to allow for more successful repetitions prior to raising the difficulty again.

- Attempts to pull towards a distraction should become few and far between, with the majority of decisions from the puppy being the desirable behavior.

**Completion/Next Steps**

Once the puppy demonstrates offering to keep a loose leash (hand-held) with challenging distractions, the next step is for the handler to begin moving the puppy around and over distractions: Hand Tether in Motion Game.