

Leash Skills for BAT

BAT is a dance between the dog and the person. The human is the one who has a general plan for the dance, but the dog is the one who has the understanding of rhythm. Your trainer will teach you to read your dog and know when to cue him to run away, or when to wait to let your dog gather information. It's helpful to note signs of increasing arousal, like the dog focusing on the trigger, so that you know when to stop moving forward.

The leash is a force field, not a correction tool. Your leash is there for safety and gentle communication to your dog. It should be attached to a harness, preferably the back of a harness for set-ups (possibly the front of a harness on walks). *This physical connection to your dog is an extension of your mental connection, not a replacement.* It should not be used for leash pops. Apply the brakes slowly, as you would with a car, rather than forcing your dog stop to quickly.

I find it helpful to use a 15-foot (5-meter) long leash for BAT. I don't recommend much longer than that, or it just gets awkward and tangled. If you don't have a longer leash, you can clip two leashes together.

These longer leashes may take some practice to use on walks, but they are pretty cool. Only do so if you feel that you have control over your dog's safety and the safety of others. For example, **never let your dog go around a corner without you!**

For a BAT set-up and on walks, there is a time when you slowly stop the dog so you are not going too close to the trigger. After you stop the dog, you will then wait for the dog to decide what to do at the "Choice Point." Whenever you are done braking, the leash should be a little loose, as if it is the smile in a smiley face. **Putting a smile in the leash is important!**

As you run/jog/walk away in the reward phase, keep the leash loose, even letting out some line if you have to, so that your dog can jog away at her own pace.

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These instructions are for right-handed people. If you are left handed, use the opposite hands. Your trainer may use these phrases to remind you of each skill.

1. Handle

Why: Letting go of the leash is a safety risk.

How: Have a good grip on a loose leash. 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.

2. Braking Distance

Why: Allows you to stop the dog slowly to avoid pain/pressure to you or the dog.

How: Your left hand (the one not holding the handle) controls the direction of the leash. The amount of leash between your hands is your braking distance, which is how much leash you can let out as you slow down your dog.

3. Slide

Why: Allows you to communicate that you are stopping or that you need the dog's attention. Use when you want to get the dog's attention with the leash or as you slow the dog down.

How: Hand over hand. Grab the leash with one hand. Softly slide your other hand along the leash toward you. (Repeat, switching hands). This is the TTouch™ technique of feathering.

4. Mime Pulling

Why: Gets the dog's attention more quickly than slide. Used for times when the dog is too focused on something and/or you want them to go a different way.

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

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pivot your body away from the dog in the direction that you want to go. You are sort of doing a ‘play’ bow to invite chase.

5. Slow Stop

Why: Your dog is less likely to bark when you come to a stop more slowly. It is also easier on your body and on the dog.

How: Let the leash slide through your fingers for about one foot (30 cm) as you stop the dog. Your body can also act as a sort of shock absorber: if the dog is moving quickly or is large, slow yourself to a stop instead of suddenly stopping.

6. Rebalance

Why: When you stop your dog with the leash, he is often out of balance because he is leaning into the leash. If you 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, 1/4 – 1/2 inch at a time, until the leash is loose and the dog is back in balance.

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 leash, so that you will be harder to tip over if the dog suddenly pulls.

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8. Shorter

Why: It's dangerous if the leash drags on the ground because 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 into your right hand.

- a. Loops: This is how you'd gather up a garden hose, just loops of leash. It is easier, but a little less safe. If your dog sprints away from you, the loops may tighten on your fingers.
- b. Bow: Make a figure 8 with the leash with the center of the 8's in your right hand.

9. Longer

Why: When a dog is restrained, he is more likely to show aggression, frustration, or fear. A longer leash 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: If the dog moves away from you, you can let out line instead of stopping the dog or running to keep up. Use your left hand to grab some leash from the right hand and let out the slack.