



# Evaluation of Three Leash Training Approaches with Canines

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## Introduction

For a dog handlers' safety and leisure enjoyment it is important to have a leash trained dog.

Different leash training techniques are promoted in canine training literature, but no published research has systematically made comparisons of them.

The current study examined how long it would take for a dog to reach mastery of leash walking using one of three distinct training approaches.

Each dog was randomly assigned to one of the three conditions and the number of training intervals required to achieve leash walking mastery was measured.

The results of this study are of primary importance to those dog trainers with relatively limited training time.

## Method

### Participants and Setting:



None of the dogs in the study were able to politely walk on a leash for five minutes prior to the start of the study.

Each dog was trained to emit the target behavior of walking for five minutes with three or less errors using one of the three walking conditions.



**Major-Minor:** "Major" Error: dog pulls/jerks the leash, and/or shoulders go ahead of the trainer, trainer quickly pulls the and turns the dog in the opposite direction to redirect it, Error: the dog begins to go off to the side of the trainer or begins to lag behind trainer, trainer emits a brief pull of the leash. Trainer does not redirect the dog.



**Make Like a Tree:** When dog creates tension in leash, trainer stands still and waits for the leash to become slack again. When the dog stops pulling, trainer treats with either hotdog and/or praise. Trainer never pulls the leash.



**Penalty Yard:** Using a 60 foot rope in a straight line, trainer and dog walk toward a specified goal object until dog creates tension in leash. When dog pulls, trainer and dog walk backwards to start line and starts process over. When dog reaches goal object, allow dog the goal object.

## Results

Due to high rates of adoption during spring time, only six completed our research. The number of training sessions for each dog ranged from five to fifteen across the three walking programs.



Dependent Variable = the number of intervals required for the canine to reach skill mastery.

### Major-Minor



Average intervals to skill mastery:  
8.75 intervals: ~43.75 min.

### Make Like a Tree

No participants reached skill mastery via this training approach.

### Penalty Yards



Average intervals to skill mastery:  
12 intervals: ~60 min.

### Procedural Integrity

- Measured for 100% of trials
- Make Like a Tree = 100%
- Penalty Yards = 100%
- Major-Minor = 100%

### Interobserver Agreement

- Measured for 32% of trials
- Make Like a Tree = 95%
- Penalty Yards = 100%
- Major-Minor = 98%

## Discussion

### Implications:

The results from this study indicate that the Major-Minor Walking Program is most successful in training loose leash walking with the Penalty Yards Walking Program second.

No participants completed the Make Like a Tree Walking Program, either due to adoptions or the ineffectiveness of the program.

These findings suggest that an interactive correction procedure of immediate reposition and redirection, like those found in both the Major-Minor and Penalty Yards Walking Programs, are most effective.

### Possible Confounding Variables:

By using multiple trainers across (and within) canines we may have compromised treatment integrity. Although our Procedural Integrity was high (100%) it is possible that our procedural integrity measure was not sensitive enough to detect meaningful differences across trainers.

### Future Research:

Provide a reinforcer assessment for the Penalty Yards Walking Program. Examine a percentile reinforcer delivery system to use while walking.

Thank you to ECCHA Director Lauren Evans, The B.A.R.C. Team, and UWEC ORSP.