



Guide Dogs for the Blind

Ground Tether Game #1

Ground Tether Introduction for Young Puppies 8 to 12 Weeks of Age

Goal Behavior (what the desired behavior looks like)

With mild distraction, puppy chooses to not pull on ground tether, keeping the leash loose with no pressure on their collar (handler is standing on the leash, creating fixed pressure to the puppy's collar). It is desirable for Ground Tether Game #1 to be completed within 1 or 2 training sessions, effectively preparing the puppy for Ground Tether Game #2.

Training Session Objectives (what we want to achieve in each training session)

- Create a strong history of food reward for choosing not to pull against fixed collar pressure.
- Apply Mark/Reward ("Nice") for desirable behavior, creating desired behavior choices from the puppy.

Session Set Up (description of environment and/or equipment needed and preparation)

- Low distraction environment with the floor clear of any enticements.
- Handler stands firmly on the leash with balls of their feet.
- Leash length from feet to puppy is approximately 2 feet; short enough so that if the puppy jumps up on handler, the puppy feels collar pressure; long enough so the puppy's collar will be loose if the puppy stands close to the handler's legs.
- Handler has suitable food rewards.

Video reference (supporting documentation)

- GDB video "Ground Tether Introduction": youtu.be/wC66XzxEa2g

Key Handling Points (Behaviors to Reward)

- Handler remains stationary and allows the puppy to react to the ground tether, marking and rewarding the following desirable behaviors:
 - Ceasing pull on the collar
 - Looking at a distraction, but not moving towards it
 - Looking to the handler
- Handler strives to offer rewards close to their legs to support the puppy feeling a loose collar.
- Most puppies will display opposition reflex to the ground tether (trying to pull away from the tether). Handler strives to initially mark any reduced pulling on the collar to promote the puppy's understanding of moving towards the fixed pressure. Once the puppy is choosing to fully loosen their collar against the ground tether, the handler should begin only marking a fully loose leash/collar.
- Mild distraction is used to entice the puppy to pull away from the ground tether. This can be a toy placed a few feet out of reach or a person making calm noises out of reach. Note: distraction is meant to create a "minor" pull away from the ground tether, not an excitable reaction.

Completion/Next Steps

Once the puppy demonstrates offering to keep a loose leash with mild distraction, the next step is to initiate Ground Tether sessions with increasingly challenging distractions: Ground Tether Game #2.