



Management vs Training

When spending time with your dog, your efforts typically fall into one of three categories: letting them simply *be a dog*, *training* them, or *managing* their behavior.

When they're just being a dog, they're hanging out, exploring, or relaxing on their own. Training is when you're actively teaching new behaviors or reinforcing existing ones. Management, on the other hand, involves using tools, strategies, or setups that help teach your dog behaviors and scenarios.

For example, using a no-pull harness on walks, offering a slow feeder to keep them engaged for 20 minutes, or choosing low-traffic walking routes are all forms of management. There are countless ways to manage behavior that can be tailored to each dog and household.

While this balance varies from home to home, a rough breakdown might look like this:

- **75% Managing**
- **20% Letting them Be a Dog**
- **5% Training**

Let's face it—life gets busy. Finding time and energy for formal training can be challenging. And for many people, the frustration of dealing with problem behaviors can feel overwhelming or discouraging.

So go easy on yourself. If you're not up for training, that's okay. What's more important is having a management strategy that keeps life with your dog enjoyable—for both of you. Something as simple as using a belly band or a no-pull device on walks can make a huge difference and help reduce stress and frustration.

Here are a few commonly recommended management tools and strategies:

- **Enrichment** (long-lasting chews or food puzzles)
- **"Parking" your dog** (tethering them briefly in a safe spot with something to occupy them)
- **Walking at quieter times or in low-traffic areas**
- **Crates** (for housetraining, preventing destruction, or providing a calm space)
- **Interrupting escalating behavior early**, before it becomes a bigger issue

If you have a dog that is highly reactive—barking or lunging at other dogs or people—tools like the **Gentle Leader head halter** can offer more control, particularly over the mouth and pulling behavior. Often, when a dog can't rely on barking or pulling, they begin to explore different, more appropriate responses.

And finally, **distance** is one of the most powerful (and often underused) management tools we have. If your dog is reactive, giving them enough space to stay under threshold—ideally to the point where they'll still take a treat—can be the difference between a manageable outing and a meltdown.