

# Teaching: "Trail Manners!"

## Exercise Goals:

- 1) Your dog will follow you readily to a safe spot off the trail and sit quietly in front of you while people, other dogs, skateboarders, bicyclists, horses, etc. pass by
- 2) Your dog learns to be relaxed and comfortable with potentially exciting or scary distractions, without barking, lunging, chasing or trying to greet
- 3) You have a polite way of letting the World know that your dog is unavailable for greeting, petting or play

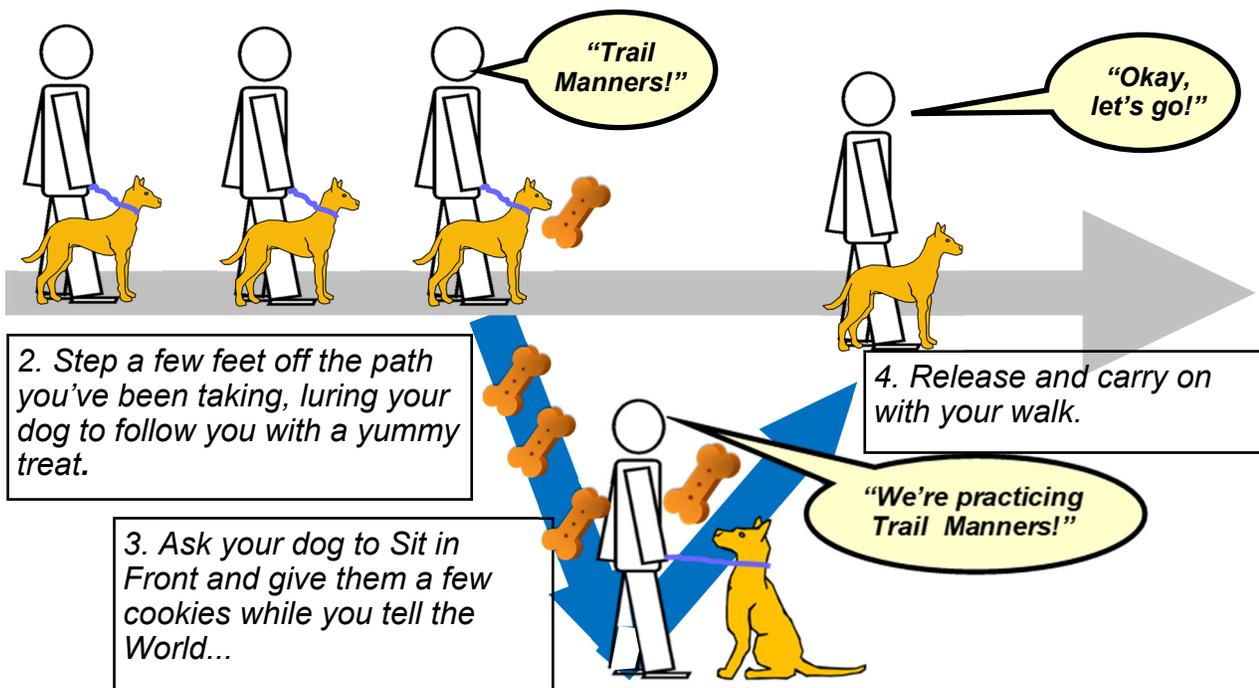
**Suggested cues:** "Trail manners! We're practicing Trail Manners!"

**Uses:** Many! Using **Trail Manners** gives your dog a clear "job" to do when distractions pass by. It also reassures people that you are being a responsible pet owner keeping your dog under control--you aren't going to let your dog run up and jump on them, invade the space of their (possibly fearful or anxious) dog, chase the bicyclist or skateboarder or bother the horse. And it's a polite, non-argumentative way to let the World know that your dog *isn't available* for petting or play at the moment, without having to give reasons or explanations. There's nothing wrong with you, your dog, or them. You're doing a training exercise--practicing Trail Manners--and that's that!

**What you'll need:** Your clicker, good treats, a leash and your dog. (Note: If you find using a clicker cumbersome for this exercise, a verbal marker signal like "Yes!" or the word "Click!" is just fine.)

**Where:** Out and about on walks--start in places with fewer, easier distractions and work your way up the Distraction Challenge Ladder as your dog improves.

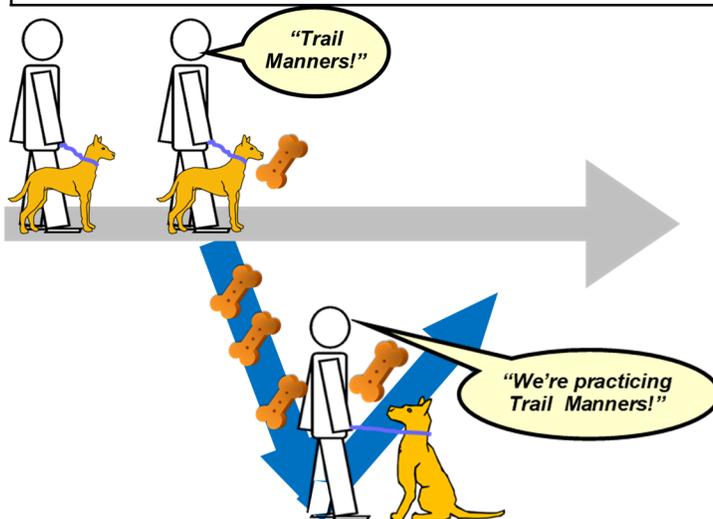
**Start By:** 1. As you're walking with your on-leash dog, periodically announce "Trail Manners!" **Do this at first when NOTHING is going by, just to get them used to the move.**



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**Next:** When your dog is fluent with nothing going by--easily following your lure, sitting at Front and happily munching those treats--start using “Trail Manners!” with real distractions.

**To help your dog be successful, start with more distance than you think you need!**  
If your dog is struggling, won't follow the lure or won't take treats, use more distance, easier distractions and/or better treats!!



### Distractions Can Include:

People walking by  
People with on-leash dogs

Bicyclists

Skateboarders

Joggers

Groups of children

Tractors & Quads

Horseback riders

**Or anything that might pass by when you're out and about...**

**Keep Going:** Make it a habit! Use Trail Manners anytime something needs space on a trail--the mountain bikers, the horse people, joggers, the dog owner with an anxious dog.

**They will all appreciate you and your dog's good manners so much!**

### Tips:

**Use good treats and be generous!** Remember that in this exercise, how your dog learns to *feel* is just as important as what she *does*, and we can use Pavlovian Association to our advantage! Your dog can learn that things going by aren't weird, scary or exciting; they're opportunities to earn awesome goodies!

**Choose locations thoughtfully**--especially when you first start. You want 1) good line-of-sight so you can see what's coming without sudden surprises, 2) enough space to get off to the side of a trail or road and take as much distance as you need for your dog to be successful and 3) enough of the distractions you've chosen to work on to get in some practice without overwhelming you or your dog--think slow, steady trickle instead of constant parade.

**Give Your Dog Clarity.** Emotions like fear or excitement are often driven by **expectations**--what your dog *predicts* is going to happen next. “Another dog--playtime! Yeah!” can get them all excited. Or “Another dog--it's going to get in my face and bother me--@#&%!” can lead to anxiety or fear. So tell your dog in no uncertain terms what's going to happen on your walks: that *they will not be meeting or greeting* (or chasing or playing with) whatever is going by (“Trail Manners!”) or that they are *released to “Go say hi!”* if it's appropriate and you want them to. (Obviously, ask if it's okay before releasing your dog to greet.) Once your dog learns that you will reliably tell them what to expect, *the mere sight* of something approaching becomes nothing to get excited or frightened about.

