

Animal Friends Presents Choosing the Right Leash for Your Dog



If you want to be overwhelmed, just take a peek at the leash selections in your average pet supply store. You've got thick ones, thin ones, long ones, short ones and all different types of materials. How is a pet owner supposed to pick the right one? Given that all communities have leash laws, this is a necessary purchase and Animal Friends would like to share a few tips to help make your leash-buying decision a bit easier.

Animal Friends recommends a 6-foot leather or nylon leash for use at shelter events and with our resident canines. Based upon our experience, we also recommend that this type and length leash be used in the home. The width of the leash will be dependent upon the size of your dog, but 1/4 inch to 1 inch should be suitable for most. Leather is very easy on your hands and is very durable. Nylon is also durable and while not as easy on your hands as leather, it does lend itself to cleaning in the washing machine. Six feet is a good length because your dog can do a bit of exploring, but not move so far away that you're no longer in control of his actions. It is also easier to untangle in the event that your pup decides to dance and twirl with another pup!

Retractable leashes have become very popular in recent years, but there are several reasons why Animal Friends does not recommend using them. These leashes give dogs too much freedom to roam. It's much harder to see what your dog is doing and even harder to control him when he is 10 or 15 feet away from you. Under these conditions, training is all but impossible as your dog's attention is invariably not on you. He can even turn corners before you are there to make sure he will be safe. Don't forget, while your dog may be friendly to other dogs, there may be a pup around the corner who is not so fond of his canine brethren!

Additionally, as hard as it is for dog lovers to understand, some people are afraid of dogs. The sight of your dog coming around the corner or down the sidewalk with no handler in the immediate vicinity can be terrifying for these folks. Additionally, retractable leashes are not very sturdy and can tangle easily. Finally, the construction of these leashes is such that the handles are bulky to allow for the mechanics. In the event that you or your dog becomes startled, it is easy to lose your grip and further startle him with the noise the handle makes as it hits the ground.

Another common offering is the metal or chain link leash. It is often difficult to get a good grip on the metal leash because it slides through your hands and attempting to do so can actually be painful. The metal conducts both cold and heat which further reduces the comfort level for the handler, and it tends to rust with exposure to the elements. The metal is rather heavy and could conceivably injure your dog if it hits him or you if your dog pulls and it wraps around your arm or leg. Finally, a particularly devoted leash biter could certainly break a tooth or two on the chain links if he tried chewing on them.

Stick with the six foot leather or nylon leash and enjoy many years of walks with your dog! You'll find a great selection at Animal Friends' on-site pet supply shop and boutique.

If you have any further questions about leashes or leash behavior, please feel free to call Animal Friends' Behavior Help Line at 412.847.7070 or use the form on the Behavior page of www.ThinkingOutsideTheCage.org.