

TURN, TURN, TURN (for dogs)

How to get an older puppy or adult to stop playing “Catch Me” or “No, I Will Not Come To You”

(An article from the renowned
Toy Sheltie Breeder Charlotte Cannon)

I want to share a leading technique that has made huge changes in older puppies and adults that are having trouble adjusting to their new home. Maybe this can help you too!

Occasionally a puppy goes home later than the ideal 8 weeks, or someone adopts an older dog. The dog may have been great at the breeders, but completely ignores the new family.

Here are some ideas:

Age may be the issue. After 10 weeks, they often go through a fear/defiant period when life changes. They have matured and become independent. New things may be scary to some, but for the ones that are bold, it may come out as if they are ignoring their new people.

During this period they will often play leadership games, like catch me if you can, and really test their boundaries.

They are used to following us, but now need to see you as the one to follow, their new leader.

I don't usually use treats with ours, mostly because, since we raise them, they will instinctively follow us from the beginning. But I will use treats as an added incentive if needed.

I have an exercise I use walking on a leash with older puppies and adults. It's called “Turn, Turn, Turn.

I know it sounds ridiculous, but it's incredibly effective if you do it. The issue is about leadership. You must demonstrate you are the type of leader that your dog wants to follow, that it wants to go to.

If you are aggressive, it won't want to be with you. Usually that's not the problem.

* If you seem weak to your dog, almost begging for love and acceptance, it will not want to follow a weak leader. Nobody feels safe if their leader is weak.

Finding that sweet spot, as kind as possible, but as firm as necessary, is the key to winning this game.

Turn, Turn, Turn doesn't tell the puppy/dog it is wrong, it doesn't discipline, it offers a solid leader to follow that is un-phased by their antics.

You choose speed and direction, and when the dog thinks it's taking over, by either stopping or running past you, you just change your mind and go a different direction. This takes the power away from either pulling past or slowing down.

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* Put your dog on a leash always using a harness, especially at this age, because Shelties are notorious for pulling out of collars and bolting.

To begin: start walking

- if the dog is following you nicely, just keep walking.
- if the dog refuses to come, turn and walk back the other way. By going the opposite direction, the dog's neck will turn and it will at least turn enough to face you. Each time it stops leading, just turn and go back the other way. Soon the turning will loosen its body and it will relax and start moving with you.
- if the dog charges ahead or pulls, turn and go back the other way. Again turning the neck to soften and relax the dog. The dog will quickly figure out that each time it rushes ahead and tries to take over the leadership, that you will change directions, and take that leadership position in front right back.

Dogs that walk or pull ahead of their people don't see their people as leaders, these dogs feel like they need to lead. If you keep turning and changing directions, they will relax and start following you, knowing at any moment you may as the leader change your mind. You choosing speed and direction is key to inspiring the dog to want to follow you.

- if the dog freaks out and runs sideways or backwards, turn and walk past the dog, going back the opposite way, taking the leadership over again. This dog is afraid and needs to believe you are aware of scary things. Only then will you be trusted to be a soft confident leader worth following.

If your dog is afraid of something and is pulling away from it, if you turn and move away too, it shows the dog you know how it feels, it can start trusting you to keep it safe.

Once your dog has relaxed, you can turn again and re-approach the scary thing. Approach, find its fear threshold, honor that, move away. When it is feeling better, re-approach. This builds curiosity and confidence. Your dog will trust you aren't going to force and trap it. It will start wanting to investigate.

Letting your dog run loose in a fenced yard is OK to potty and let off steam, but walking on a leash is all about it accepting and following your leadership. Your dog needs walking on a leash as much, or more than free running.

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When your dog is being especially good, stop and give it a treat. Don't bribe with treats, or your dog will see you as a Pez dispenser for treats, or an ATM of treats, and figure out all the ways it can motivate you to bribe it more. But a treat given at a confident, relaxed moment can be super motivating.

Its all about being a good, trustworthy, consistent leader, the "Goldilocks" of leadership, not too aggressive, not a doormat. I also think that's the key to life. Building a great partnership with your dog will lead to a happy life.



probably the best breeder of is President of the Toy Sheltie the top two photos), who is an "Rowan" (the tri female) who US and Europe (Rowan came Westminster Dog Show. The Club of America dog show held Charlotte is very "in touch" with many breeders and if we are unable to get you a small Sheltie please contact her. Charlotte is extremely busy and only answers her phone on a rare occasion - TEXT HER at (980) 722-2828 or email her at charlotttec68@icloud.com . We have always considered Charlotte a very dear friend who we have never been able to meet!

A note about the author. Charlotte Cannon is "Toy Sized Shelties" in the United States. She Club of America and owns "Elvis" (pictured in Agility Champion. She is also the breeder of holds many championships in agility in the In second in her division at the 2022 bottom photo is from the first Toy Sheltie at Fox Point Farms.