

Whole Dog Journal™



Reel It In - Why I Don't Like Retractable Leashes

Posted at 03:11 PM – [Comments](#): (49)

By [Nancy Kerns \(/authors/1.html\)](#)

There's an old joke about if there's one thing that two dog trainers can agree on, it's that the third one is doing it wrong. But if you know me at all, you know I hate online squabbles; I don't participate in digital fights about training methods or tools. That said, I think I've found something that very nearly ALL dog trainers agree on, and that I will defend anywhere, anytime, and it's this: Retractable leashes have no place in dog training.



It almost reaches the level of a joke: If you go to a dog park or almost any gathering of dog people and their dogs, the worst-behaved dogs will be the ones on retractable leashes. It's sort of a chicken or the egg thing: What came first, the poorly behaved dog or the leash that teaches him nothing?

I get how convenient it is to be able to walk along with your dog on leash and have your dog stop for a moment to smell something or take a quick pee, and you only have to slow your pace for a moment, rather than stop dead. When he's through or he hits the end of the retractable line, he can trot to catch up, and you don't have to scoop up all that line the way you would with a long leash, you can just allow the spring-loaded retractable thingie to wind it up.

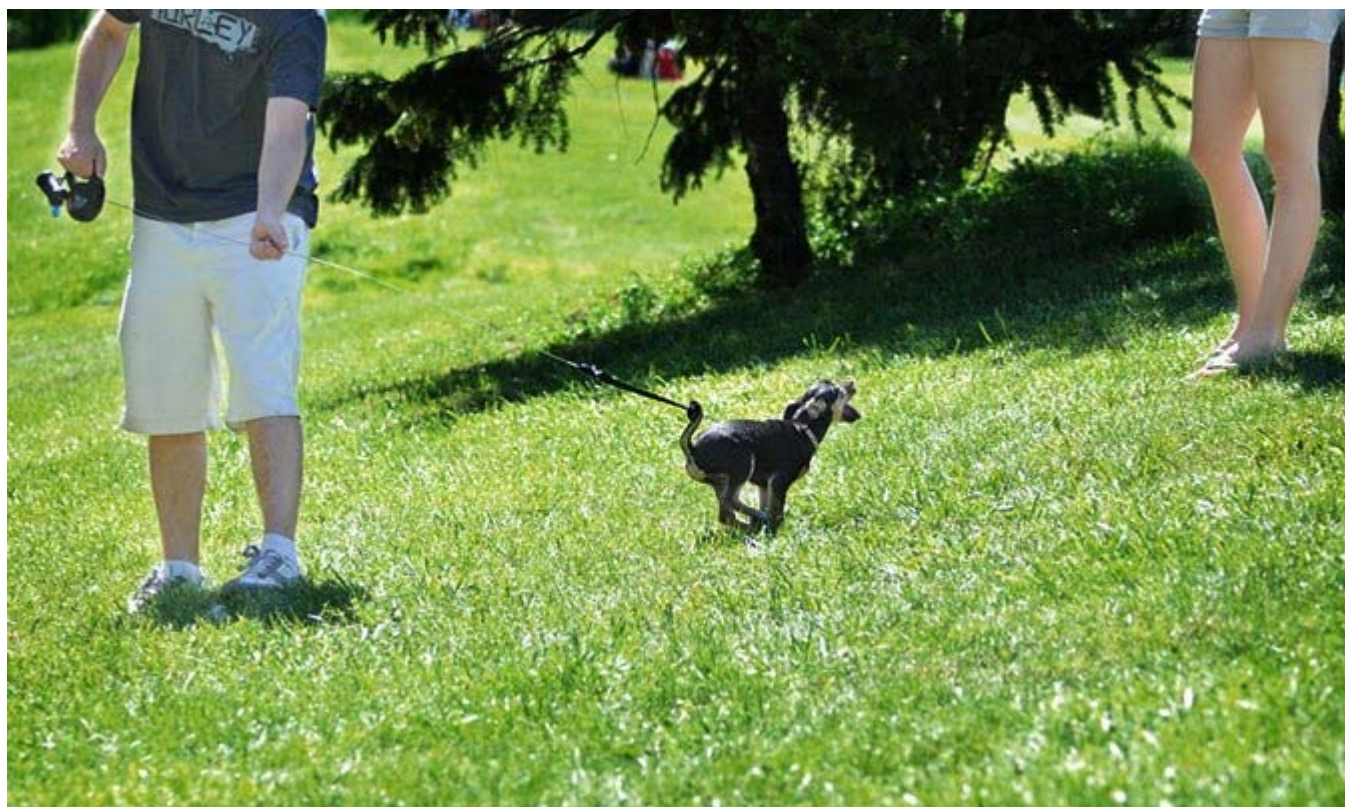
However, what do you do when your dog is at or near the end of the line and:

- You are suddenly confronted by a loose dog, looking a little aggressive, coming your way, fast.
- Someone walks quickly out of a storefront, in between you and your dog.
- Your dog suddenly sees a squirrel on the ground across the street and bolts into the street in an effort to reach the squirrel.

The biggest problem is with these and countless other situations, when your dog is more than a couple of feet from you, there is nothing you can do very quickly to get him back to your side. The products can retract only when there is not tension on the line. As you know if you've ever used one, you really cannot grab the part of the cord that retracts into the handle and pull even a smallish strong dog back toward you. About the only way you could pull a dog to safety would be to mash the lock button down, while quickly turning in the opposite direction and trying to call or drag your dog in the other direction – depending on whether you've trained him to do emergency U-turns or whether he's engaged already with the other dog or still on the hunt for the squirrel.

And to retract the slack when there is a chaotic situation brewing, like when that loose dog – or even one on leash! – is squaring off with your dog, and they are spinning around? Lock to prevent the dog from getting farther away, release to retract, lock, release, lock, release . . . it's darned hard to do in calm circumstances.

When I want a dog to explore his environment without taking him off leash, I use a long line – a 20 or even 30-foot leash. I only use a tool like this in an environment where there are NO other people or dogs who might get tangled up with us, and the line is as smooth and easy to handle as my leash; I can easily grab anywhere on the line and manually reel in the dog if I have to.



Ouch! See what that guy is trying to do? To pull his little dog back toward him? Great way to get a nasty rope burn or even a sliced palm.

And what about the many cases in which someone accidentally dropped the handle, which started dragging on the ground and clattering loudly behind the dog, and spooked him into running in a blind panic into traffic? A dog who takes off dragging a regular leash stands a good chance of being caught by someone who manages to step on or grab the leash. But the retractable leash is likely to retract after being dragged a way, so that it's short and very difficult to grab.

We don't even have to discuss emergency situations to get most trainers to chime in about how useless these tools are. They more or less train dogs to pull against pressure, by rewarding/reinforcing the dog when he pulls against the

product's spring (there is always some tension, even when the operator isn't pressing the lock button) in order to reach something he wants to investigate. Getting to sniff something he was curious about is a reward – and behaviors that are rewarded get repeated. Simple as that.

Yes, a person can lock the handle and prevent the dog from pulling the line out of the device, preventing him from getting this reward. But then, you may as well just have a fixed-length leash.

As a final point against them, all I can say is, when this blog gets posted to the WDJ Facebook page, go ahead and post your photos of the deep, slashing cuts that you or someone you know has received when a retractable cord got wound around their leg when a dog was going nuts. That should give a little credence to the warnings against these products.

Can anyone honestly make a case for the responsible use of retractable leashes?

Comments (49)

You missed a place where GOOD retractable leads are useful. I have 120 acres of wooded and secondary growth land. When I walk Pepper we follow gamr trails or trails we have made. She has to be on leash because for a good part of the year where I live it is illegal to let your dog be off lead even on your own property. She may want to go 8'-10' to the side to look at something. A long line could (and in the past several have) get caught on briars, bushes or a stump as she passes. Then we would have to work it loose. The retractable I use slows her down automatically if there is tension on it and she waits till I tell her to retrace her steps. If she is walking close to me I don't have to reel in the line and carry it looped around my arm. It takes care of that.

I wouldn't use a retractable in a populated area. But I avoid populated areas as much as possible.

Posted by: peppermum | November 13, 2017 4:10 PM

Like almost any object on the face of the earth Flexileads can be used well or badly. Comparing them to guns makes no sense at all because guns are designed to kill things and Flexis aren't. It might be more reasonable to compare them to something like a bike. There are good and bad places for both to be used and both can hurt the user and/or others when used improperly. Should we ban bikes too – along with everything else on earth that can be misused? Can't quite imagine how that would work or what life would be like if we tried.

I have a spaniel mix who lives to smell everything and I have no yard. She is walked on a belt-style Flexi when we are in places where there are good sightlines and few or no other pedestrians or dogs so she can exercise her nose, body, and mind. She is walked on a four or six foot lead anywhere that has poor sightlines or more foot traffic, like the vet, pet store, farm market or more populated trails. She is well-trained, listens to commands, and has no problem understanding which leash is attached to her collar and adjusting her behavior appropriately.

I also believe that Flexis – in the right place/situation – are actually safer than long lines. I have seen people tripped and a dog's leg get broken when an owner was not able to pull in the slack on a long line fast enough when a dog suddenly changed direction at a run. At least the Flexi retracts quickly so no loose line is laying on the ground to get tangled up in.

Posted by: fosterofmany | November 12, 2017 1:50 PM

I HATE Flexi leads!!! As the article states, you have little control over your dog with one of those things. I had a neighbor that used a Flexi when taking her Jack Russell out for walks. One day her dog managed to catch and kill a loose cat WHILE on leash. I was livid and took her and her dog out for a walk with a good old fashioned 6' foot leather lead and taught her how to walk her dog responsibly. A few weeks later I saw her using that dang flexi again. She felt bad that her dog couldn't wander around as he pleased on a 6" lead. Guess who pack leader was? One day the dog got away from her while off lead in her front yard and got hit by a car and killed. Fortunately she did not get another dog but, ironically, rescued a cat off the street.

Posted by: JustMe2 | November 12, 2017 12:15 PM

I had used a retractable leash successfully with my two retired racing greyhounds. Of course I did! They had already been trained to walk sweetly next to someone and listen to commands. Fast forward about 10 years. The greyhounds are gone and I've adopted an 8 month old, 65 lb. bully mix, who, of course, I had on a retractable leash. We were out for a morning walk and she spotted a bunny which ran across the road in front of us. I didn't get the leash locked in time, but held on to the handle, which resulted in me getting pulled off my

feet. I had road rash on my knees, hands, and chin!! Thankfully, my husband was with me to retrieve the dog, and no cars were on the road. The retractable went in the trash after that.

Posted by: MJC | November 12, 2017 11:02 AM

I use retractables on occasion as a tool for specific training exercises the dog is learning. For example, a dumbbell retrieve on flat or over high jump to reinforce a prompt and direct return. In case of retrieve over jump it can assist dog to jump on return and not go around the jump(jump height lowered and distance between handler and jump shortened). I've also used them for a direct recall and even a drop on recall. Occasionally for scent discrimination (articles) as well to teach a prompt and direct return to handler, or prompt return on directed retrieved. Of course the dog must already be used to the retractable and the slight pull coming and going (and the sound). Most training buildings I visit do not allow retractables Unless at direction / supervision of one of the instructors. But implying all trainers agree they are useless/terrible without exception is not quite true, particularly training for specific exercises.

Posted by: Holly1433 | November 12, 2017 10:00 AM

I use a flexi to walk my Beagle and my sister's Dandi Dinmont terrier. I think that it is a good way to let the dog stop and sniff and do dog stuff and then promotes a little more exercise when they have to trot to catch up. That being said, both dogs are adults, not other dog aggressive or reactive and there isn't a lot of traffic in our neighborhood and neither dog is obnoxious or boisterous on leash. Yeah, you do have to pay attention to the surroundings. My wild English Cocker gets walked alone and always on a flat 6' leash. When we are doing errands.....the gas station, the hardware store, the pet store or even the vet's....it is always a flat leash...if we go to the park, it is always a flat leash. Off leash runs with my dogs (who both have excellent recall), I drape the leashes around my neck. If I take my sister's dog (who will forget you exist off leash) to the park, I walk her on a flexi. That being said, I would not use a flexi with a strong dog who was boisterous and pulled on the lead all the time and bounced around or was reactive and there are a lot of circumstances when they just would be a disaster.

Posted by: Mel Blacke | November 12, 2017 4:56 AM

At the risk of being the lone dissenter and labeled an irresponsible dog owner, I will say that I used a retractable leash in walking my Rottweiler many times. The responsibility is being aware of your surroundings and proper training. And before anyone gasps in horror, I will explain that I used the leash that is specifically for large dogs. It is not a cord but an inch or so wide belt. I never let him get to the end, just out a little farther than a 6 ft. Leash would allow, and it was only used in areas where I wanted him to be able to explore his surroundings. However, he was trained – and was practiced and proofed regularly – to obey my "back with me" command. When necessary I would stop and he would literally back up to the heel position. I Also taught "stop", which was used on occasion. Just as a reliable recall can save a dog's life, so could the stop command. He was a rescue, easy to train and very responsive. One night we encountered a man walking his dog. The dog saw us, slipped her collar and ran toward us. My "stay with me" command was used. The gentleman finally caught up with his dog and complimented me that my dog was the best behaved dog he had ever seen. I say that not to brag, but to prove my point. (It's not me. These dogs are genius!)

My dog has been gone for 5 yrs. and I still miss him, but I will always be grateful that he was a great example of what a wonderful companion animal rotties can be.

Posted by: ADT | November 11, 2017 9:45 AM

Here's a problem no one has mentioned, the constant pull on your dog's neck can cause problems. I discourage tying up a dogs coat on top of it's head because it can cause real discomfort, remember what a tight ponytail felt like after a couple of hours? Likewise , try putting a collar on your own neck and have someone hold the retractable leash with the tension on. You will the tightness in your neck from the constant tension from the leash. What can this do to the structure in a dog's neck, especially after a long period of time? I've seen an 8 lb dog on a Flexi lead intended for a 100 lb dog, because the owner like the bigger handle! Just another consideration when you choose a retractable leash.

Posted by: JeaninSarasota | November 11, 2017 7:39 AM

I use one with my cat. But with the dogs? Hell no! Too many things could go wrong. We rarely need or use a leash, but when we do its a regular leash.

Posted by: Susan Harrington | November 11, 2017 7:09 AM

15 years ago, I was attending an All-Breed Dog Show, I have been showing, training, grooming dogs on a Professional level, for over 30 yrs. I was done showing my dog, walking back to the vehicle, watching someone with a little Schipperke, running around, out at the end of a Flexi Leash, obnoxiously barking at other dogs walking by. I checked my GSD in close to me, on my six ft. leash, but the little dog decided to charge up to the Irish wolf hound instead! You got it, one chomp, no more little Schipperke! So yes, what this article states is true, and no, "You have No Control" of a dog on one of these! I see dailey at my Grooming, all sorts of mishaps, dog fights, twisted up lines, dogs out at the end pissing all over everything, through the store, not to mention the dog, who got so tangled in one, and started to panic, and was biting, and thrashing, to where no one could help him. If any Professional People in the industry of Grooming, Training, have their way, they will be Banned!

Posted by: gsdwindborne | November 10, 2017 7:44 PM

If you know how to use them, they are fine – if you don't, they are quite hazardous. I have used them for 20 years and will continue to use them under certain circumstances. I walk my dogs in a wooded area and they enjoy the extra freedom – I know a deer or other wildlife could run in front of us and am prepared.

Posted by: browndog | November 10, 2017 4:40 PM

My boss gave me one of these retractable leashes when I bought my first dog. I thought it was wonderful. Even though I took my puppy to training, it did not help much when the retractable leash slipped out of my hands when I was walking through a forest park area. Thankfully, he was nuts over dogs and someone caught him and brought him back. The next time the leash let me down was when the "string" disconnected from the holder. He was gone like a flash. Thankfully, again, someone caught him and brought him back. Now I use 15 to 20 foot leashes which I tie around my waste not trusting the strength of my hands. It is wrapped twice around me so it gives me good anchorage and gives the dog enough room to investigate things as well as room for me to haul him in when strange dogs come calling during our walks. The retractable is nice, but not safe for me or my dogs.

Posted by: Deborah B | November 10, 2017 3:37 PM

I trained my dog on a six foot fixed length leash. She doesn't pull on the retractable lead and listens to all my commands like "wait", "leave it". We walk at a nice steady pace so we both get exercise. It's time for the dog community to "let go" of ever using retractable leashes. We meet other dogs all the time and it's never a problem. Let it go.

Posted by: Gregor | November 10, 2017 3:26 PM

All very true. Many times I find myself stepping over leads that have extended too far. Owners are always very apologetic and I don't mind that much, but for an elderly person, the lack of control could trip them up. I guess my message to retractable leash owners is to be more mindful of who is coming your way – inevitably, your dog will decide to walk in the wrong direction and cut them off at the last moment! I have a new group called 'Walkies! Your trials & tips – the pursuit of a better way to walk your dog' on Facebook. I have posted this blog post, but if you have any other valuable advice to share, then we would welcome it :-)

Posted by: MrWoof | November 10, 2017 6:34 AM

The argument here from people who say that they have used 'retractable leashes' with no problem, and that the problem is that people don't use them 'correctly', really do not hold water. It is the same as saying 'guns don't kill, people do.'

Do you want that angry demented man running around with a gun, and shooting up at peaceful gatherings? Do you want that ignorant yobbo walking his tearaway terrier on a retractable leash and not managing to stop it running out in a desperate bid to commit suicide (in heavy traffic, or challenging your well behaved large dog walking beside you)?

Because incorrectly used (aka as used with a dog that is total out of control/carried by a homicidal person with severe psychiatric problems) they do endanger more than just themselves.

It matters not that your dog is perfectly under control and only wearing a leash to comply with by-laws. My dogs (well two of them) are reliable off-lead -- the other is reliable on lead :-)) but I find it easy to walk them on long leads, and simply shorten them by looping the excess in. For the two of them, to stop them tangling the lead, and for the other to bring her close to be when circumstances require it (generally by walking towards her as I shorten the lead, rather than try to call her back).

Posted by: Jenny H | November 9, 2017 11:39 PM

I got terrible leash burns on my legs from someone else's stupid retractable leash when dogs circled me.

My dog got caught up around her leg in someone else's stupid retractable leash and panicked.

I've heard of these stupid leashes being let go by handlers and the heavy leash handle boomeranging back to the dog and breaking his jaw.

They should NOT be sold, not used!

Posted by: Ramona Black | November 9, 2017 7:14 PM

Flexis like many other "modern conveniences" (e.g. detergent pods) can be dangerous when used inappropriately. Most flexis have an adjustable lock position which makes them useful for navigating various situations using a single lead e.g. 2 feet for tight spaces; 6 feet for normal street walking and 15 for when the situation warrants and allows. The flexi isn't the problem, as with most things it's the user.

Posted by: JammieGirl | November 9, 2017 4:32 PM

I am a receptionist at my vet's clinic and I can't tell you how many times someone comes in with their dog at the end of a 16 foot flexi lead and that dog makes it into the dog area a good 30 seconds before his owner does. One puppy ran up into the face of an adult dog, startling it, and the puppy was bitten in the muzzle. My dog and I do an annual walk for charity and it's stated categorically that no flexi leads are allowed – but that is not enforced and I've seen and dealt with more than one dog threatening another while its owner tries to reel it in. Sick of these things, and annoyed that it's just "easier" to walk a dog with it instead of actually walking with the dog.

Posted by: Jani | November 9, 2017 3:20 PM

So many horror stories that could have been avoided. I am surprised these leashes are not pulled from the market. Apart from the lack of control and the serious safety and liability issues, these retractable leashes allow the owners to be lazy. I once saw a toy dog in a dog-friendly retail store (my own large-breed dog on a 5' leash and martingale collar) and saw a woman shopper browsing the merchandise with her dog at least 15 feet away from her on a retractable leash. The woman was too intent on shopping and oblivious to me and my dog, and also the other shoppers, some of whom had small children.

We also use a 30' leash when in parks or on beaches (made from thick nylon strapping you can buy at a rock climbing store or military surplus store), but it's also under circumstances where the dog is supervised and totally under our control.

Posted by: Three Dog Mom | November 9, 2017 3:00 PM

I am a fan of retractable leads used responsibly. We have a heavyweight tape lead, suitable for up to 60kg for our dog of 30kgs. He is an old rescued hunt dog, trained to react to deer in particular. Early on in our life with each other, a deer walked across our path. Had it not been for the leash, I would have lost him. I let it run virtually out to length (10 meters I think) and then locked and stood firm. It held and I stayed upright. I could not have stopped him on a short lead, I would have been pulled over as I would not have had time to react. On a day to day basis, our dog is blind in one eye and hears very badly. Our retractable lead allows him some freedom while I can rein him back if he starts to wander into the road from a field, for example .

Posted by: Tanglegarden | November 9, 2017 2:47 PM

Like many things – a time and a place. I walk two 80 lb. dogs with the "tape" type flexi. We have a fast pace and they get to go off the paved trail to enjoy smells in the park. If we see another dog(s), there is recall, then "wait" or "leave it" if the other dog is reactive.

Responsible use

Posted by: Robin A | November 9, 2017 2:15 PM

I try to be generous and understanding when people don't know any better, and I feel guilty for saying this since it seems some informed and careful people are using them safely, but I so wish they would be banned at least in my county. I have a soft dog that was attacked on lead, and spent a great deal of time counter conditioning so that my dog is no longer afraid in most situations. He is, however, likely to be a bit nervous so we keep working at it. I have been followed on sidewalks by people with their lead all the way out, and their dog trying desperately to get to mine. No, I don't care if your dog is friendly; my dog has rights too. I have had a dog go for mine halfway down the aisle of a pet store with their owner halfway down another aisle. We have many reactive dogs in our neighborhood and at least half are under poor control on retractable leads. Yes, the problem is lack of knowledge, but I fear it includes a good dose of "I don't care"

in many cases so I'd just like to see the retractable leashes gone. I use a 30 ft lead in fields and such, and it works fine. Possibly better because I have to pay attention.

Posted by: Alice R. | November 9, 2017 1:55 PM

Food for thought. Most leash laws specify a maximum length of 6'. Never known anyone using a flexilead getting busted for violating the leash law, but in fact, most are.

Posted by: troutlily | November 9, 2017 1:12 PM

I'm currently using one in formal obedience training for a recall. My dog is a northern breed teenage male who is very distracted around other dogs and is not food motivated. We've been working in his recall for the past year and a half with various obedience instructors. I've been using a Flexi lately on the instructor's suggestion to get him to come in close to me, instead of taking off when he's about 10 feet away. Prior to that we used a regular long line and it seemed like I could never reel it in well and end up getting rope burns from both webbing and parachute cord long lines. So far he has improved and is now doing a nice recall off lead in class. I've owned Flexis ever since they were introduced and hardly ever use one for walk a dog, but it did prove useful in teaching a recall in an otherwise recalcitrant dog.

Posted by: Skinord | November 9, 2017 1:08 PM

My daughters lab was on a retractable leash and went after a squirrel. Somehow the leash got twisted around her and pulled her down in some bushes. She sprained her ankle and the leash cut deeply into the back of her legs. 20 years later she still has huge scars:-(Lesson learned the hard way!

Posted by: Critter | November 9, 2017 12:30 PM

I have serious arthritis pain in my thumb now, as a result of an injury by retractable lead being suddenly yanked as it reached its full length. That was 11 years ago. I haven't used one since!

Posted by: LesleyJ | November 9, 2017 12:10 PM

My first encounter with a flex lead was when family gathered on the deck visiting each other. 80 lb dog (of relative) was on his flex lead so he could explore around the large deck. 80 lb dog decides he want to "explore" under the table, where we are visiting, wrapping the leash around many feet and legs to the point the owner had to let go of the handle and try to unwind the leash before anyone can move. We now have an 80 lb female who has been leash trained and we DO NOT use a flex lead. We learned the lesson from this prior experience.

Posted by: LovemyGD | November 9, 2017 11:16 AM

I don't know the type of leash my Lab was trained on, but we use a flexi with a harness (it's tape, not cord), and I have never had a problem controlling him. In fact, it's other dogs on regular leashes that cause a problem (when one occurs, which is rare). It helps that my boy is uber-mellow, and is friendly with everyone and everything. Squirrels? Ignores them. Rabbits? Same thing. Little dogs who run at him, barking like mad and jumping all over him? He stands and allows it. (I bless whoever had him before us and trained him so well.)

I'm very observent of both him, and things around me. When I see other dogs, I take the leash all the way down and lock it. I also hold on to the harness, as he will get excited when meeting dogs his size.

If the leash happens to drop out of my hands (only happened once), he's been trained to stop.

I've been training dogs for 55 years and have gotten injured with regular leads (I've had my shoulder dislocated from a dog running out to the end of the length right after I clipped the lead to his collar, as well as "lead burns".)

Posted by: DreamWeaver | November 9, 2017 11:07 AM

I agree that retractable leashes have no place in training, in dog parks, or on neighborhood walks or other places where we are likely to

encounter dogs and other animals. However, I do think there are times when they can be useful. At night I often turn on the backyard lights and take my dog out for her last potty break on a flexi so that if there are skunks around I can keep her from chasing one down. Currently she is recovering from surgery and I take her out in the backyard to potty using a flexi leash. Yes, we could manage that on a regular leash but she is more comfortable getting to roam around a bit. There have been times when we have been out somewhere in an isolated area where I want to give her more freedom but not let her run free and the Flexi has been the solution.

Posted by: Holly's Den | November 9, 2017 11:05 AM

I use a flexi leash in competitive obedience dog training to teach and reinforce both retrieve and recall exercises. However, it is interesting to note that the use of flexi's at AKC sanctioned competitive events outside the ring is usually banned to prevent unintended dog to dog interaction. In its proper place the flexi can be a valuable training aid with the caveat that its use does require the undivided attention of the handler.

Posted by: David M. | November 9, 2017 10:57 AM

I've found that with enough time spent with my 100# lab, he doesn't even need a leash. The only problem we've had is when small dogs go postal at the site of a large dog, probably in protection mode. I really believe dog's need more training walks than just pee walks, and behavior modification works miracles.

Posted by: Sneaker | November 9, 2017 10:47 AM

I totally agree that all dogs should be trained to a fixed length leash. That being said, I now have a Dal rescue who hates grass. She is leash trained but acts miserable on leash walks. We fortunately live in a community with a 12' wide walking/biking path. There are no houses on the path and there are good sight lines. I never walk with earphones in or while on the phone. I am constantly on the lookout for possible problems. When we enter or leave our neighborhood the flexi is locked to a fixed length. On the path she has the ability to trot ahead or hang back a bit and gets much more exercise. She doesn't pull or lunge. We have encountered just as many "problems" with other dogs on a standard leash as a flexi leash. Did ownership is a big responsibility, and some people just aren't responsible .

Posted by: DalMom | November 9, 2017 10:44 AM

Kudos to Nancy Kerns for telling it like it is on flexis. I agree that as with any tool, the owner should be knowledgeable in its use, and use it only when it's the best tool for the job. I use them occasionally, but the good ol' 6-foot leash is by far my favorite tool of choice. Twenty years ago I was one of those ignorant owners who wanted to give my willful puppy more freedom on our walks. It successfully taught her the rewards of pulling. I did suffer a few leash burns and dropped leashes, and walking with her sadly became a chore. Thankfully, with time and patience, she/we learned that walking nicely on a 6-foot leash was a good thing, and we enjoyed it to the end of her days. I am not against flexis; I just want people to use them responsibly.

Posted by: kathy p | November 9, 2017 10:37 AM

I've used a flexi for nearly 20 years. Early on, I learned the hard way not to grab the cord and got a rope burn when my previous dog took off like a shot. Otherwise, I have not had any issues. I enjoy the freedom it gives my dog to sniff and explore a bit while keeping him close by. I remain vigilant while walking, keeping my thumb on the brake and locking the leash short when near traffic or other dogs. My dog has always been mellow, and I agree that these leashes are not for every dog and certainly not for every owner. I see clueless people using these leashes on a regular basis.

Posted by: Panwoman62 | November 9, 2017 10:34 AM

I do daily walks, or actually, any walks that are not in the park, with a leather 6-foot leash. I trained both of my dogs with a good, solid leather lead. In parks (where many dogs are off leash, which is a whole other story), because I will never let me dog off leash (my current girl is a rescue, anxious and a bolter when frightened), yet I want her to be able to gallop about a bit, we use a flexi with the nylon tape, never the cord. I agree with the commenter above who wondered about people using Retractable Leashes RESPONSIBLY. Using them is not an excuse to zone out. Because my parks often have dogs off leash, I am especially vigilant in watching to see that she isn't rushed, or if she is, I reign her in and keep her near me. With my other dog, I would throw her ball, she would charge after it (on the Flexi) with me running too. If my dog spots a squirrel, I dash (or stalk) too. I live in a huge city and currently, don't have a yard, so this is the best I can offer my dogs for exercise and play. That's not going to happen in a park on a 6-foot lead. So, I use one, responsibly, and only in a

park and have for nearly 20 years.

Posted by: ClscFlm7 | November 9, 2017 10:27 AM

I have been using flex leashes thru three goldens and now my fourth. They are dangerous. Using them teaches you to always look ahead and around you to anticipate where they need to be reeled in. I use it as a reward for one of the three walks per day when I am walking my golden, in a safe environment, with no one or other dogs around and not on a busy street. I reel my pooch in whenever I see someone or something I consider them a threat to or from them. My rule is never have the leash extended around someone else or another dog. Using a Flexi lease is like driving a car and the same care and consideration goes into it. You are correct the leash is not a good training tool but used properly provides the owner and dog some pleasures they would not have on a shorter leash. I do prefer the flexi3 corded leash you cannot find new because of its safety issues. My goldens have all loved the tape at the end as a security blanket when walking. It works well but keeps you on your toes when using it.

Posted by: leedy | November 9, 2017 10:18 AM

I have a very well-made one (from Dog Expertise Products) and only use it on hikes or trails where people are few and far between. It's strong enough for my 70 lb Am Staff Terrier and he has a decent recall. But I like that I can give him a little more freedom to explore. These should not be used in the city or anywhere near traffic.

Posted by: Jayni | November 9, 2017 10:12 AM

I got a blackeye from one. Was leaning over and unleashing from my dog's collar and upon straightening up I pushed the retrack button and the metal clip flew up into air and hit me right in the face as it was rerolling. Yeah, pretty stupid I know. Had the blackeye for 2 weeks and people thought it was domestic violence.

Posted by: Leslie L. | November 9, 2017 10:12 AM

One more point against them –how very easily they snap. Then you're left holding a silly looking, useless handle while your dog takes off like a bat out of hell!

This post is well timed, I've been trying to think of a way to tell my brother and his wife who just got their first family dog, an awesome Aussie pup, that they really should use another kind of leash. I've had dogs for 30 years and this is their first. They asked for my help when they were looking. I feel like I've overloaded them with info, to the point I don't want to be that "know it all asshole"! They've done great their first month so I'm trying to back off on my "help", but I just noticed that they'd gotten a retractable leash. Don't want to tell them it was a bad purchase, yet I'd like to save them the aggravation and bad habits that come with them

Posted by: Raji | November 9, 2017 10:03 AM

I used to use them but saw how awful they are for controlling a dog and dangerous to your fingers as they could be sliced off. I cringe when I see so many people using them.

Posted by: pap luv | November 9, 2017 10:00 AM

I am a temperament evaluator for therapy dogs and hate nothing more than people who show up to a testing with a flexi lead. Can you guys imagine what kind of damage that rope can cause in a nursing home? Some people just don't use common sense. There are situations, where those leashes are dangerous, useless and should be banned. Having said that, I have to admit that I do own a flexi lead for my working dachshund. However, I only put it on in combination with a tracking harness and in unpopulated areas to allow him a bit more freedom. Due to his breeding he can not be off leash because of his enormous prey drive and blood tracking skills. (Yes, he is trained, but the hunting instinct is so great, that I don't want to take my chances. His impulse control is extremely low and it's a work in progress.....) I do use a flexi lead with belt, not nylon. When we attend social functions or for walks in town the flexi lead stays in the car and he's on a six foot leather lead.

Posted by: Sabine | November 9, 2017 9:42 AM

I've used flexi-leashes for daily walks over 20 years. As with so many things, the criticisms I read of them always make me think this is what happens when they are used IRRESPONSIBLY. If you're using a flexible leash so you don't really have to pay attention to your dog

stopping, lagging behind or running ahead – and if you're not going to take time to get the right leash and practice how to use it – you're potentially in for trouble. When I walk my dogs my eyes are on them and my thumb is on the lock button AT ALL TIMES. If the unexpected occurs, I can reel my dog in MUCH faster with a flexi than with a conventional leash. To prevent problems with the springs, I use one size higher than recommended for my dog's weight. I use flexis in bright colors with tape lead rather than cord, which increases visibility and helps minimize burns if the leash is accidentally grabbed. In 20 years I've NEVER had a "deep slashing cut" and I've never inflicted one on anyone else. And when I start with a new dog I train them not to "spook" at a dropped leash by dropping the leash intentionally followed quickly by a "sit/stay" and a reward. Why use them? I don't have a yard and I have to walk my dogs in mixed terrain; using a flexi allows me to give them more lead where appropriate so they can roam and sniff a bit and pull them up short when we're in traffic or approaching people. Would I use them for training? Probably not in some cases. But used properly they make our daily walks much more pleasant for me and my dogs.

Posted by: ScotnDox | November 9, 2017 9:39 AM

Flexi does retractable that is woven nylon instead of the cord and I have found those useful to introduce new dogs to my farm home and my pack. No one gets hurt if the leash does tangle and I have enough distance to not influence behavior that might cause problems in the future were it not foreseen and corrected. Yes, I introduce at a distance first and individually but when "Pack Mentality" kicks in the whole dynamic changes and I don't want to have someone stitched up as a result. Living on the farm it isn't often people are a concern, but I don't want to have a 4-legged amputee due to the thin cord line!

Posted by: All Around Dog | November 9, 2017 9:28 AM

I got both my knees sliced open by a dog – perfectly friendly – who whipped by me on a 26' foot retractable lead. Owner had no idea how to reel it in, and I yelled at her to not grab it with her hands. I had felt a burning sensation, but the stupid woman started screaming and freaking out. Looking down, I saw blood sluicing down both my shins. Cut to the bones, even into the ligaments. And of course I had to grab the retractable lead and reel in her dog for her! I use these leads myself for convenience at dog shows. Locking it short, I walk them to clear areas and stand in the middle to let them run around and relieve themselves. I'm expert at reeling them in should someone else approach, but at dog shows, it's rare to encounter a clueless handler. As for my own encounter, surgery and physical therapy was my reward for attempting to train a dog in a public park.

Posted by: errigal | November 9, 2017 9:25 AM

I've used 2 different Flexi. The springs got loose that I lost my dog for 3 times. 2 times with the first Flexi and 1 time with the second one; then I finally realized that I needed to stop using retractable leash. There's nothing wrong with Flexi for they're good products. It is just something wrong with retractable leashes in general.

Posted by: Selenazhang27 | November 9, 2017 9:08 AM

I was tangled up in a retractable lead because Great Dane owner didn't have control. It wasn't the first time she lost control. One time the dog ran out in the street when she lost control. Another time she tied the dog up in her front yard with the retractable lead so the dog could roam onto the sidewalk and walk in others yards .
Some people should NEVER have a dog!

Posted by: Mindy%26Max | November 9, 2017 9:04 AM

Call me OCD but I've never liked them simply for the way they work and that ultra thin line. I understand all the concerns you have mentioned and agree trainers do not like them but I just find them a nuisance to hold and use.

Posted by: StarryNight | November 9, 2017 8:56 AM

Scary thing happened recently. Got my dog on a 6' leash, walking nicely on my left side. Opposite side of the residential street, heavy older man with a medium-sized dog on a flexi. He's got his back to the road, talking to another guy. His dog barks madly, lunges at mine, shooting across the road. Owner goes down like Humpty Dumpty. Car coming the opposite direction around a hairpin turn, fortunately hits the brakes in time to avoid the man, now on his back in the street. The dog which is nearly on us. Somehow the dog hits the end of the flexi in time -- the man managed to hold on -- and doesn't reach us. It takes 2 people to haul the fallen and very shaken man to his feet. I asked whether he was ok and apologized -- but asked myself, for what? We're minding our own business, 6' leash,

opposite side of the road, my small dog isn't making any effort to interact in any way with this. He says he is okay. Terrifying and upsetting event to all concerned.

Posted by: Carolyn M | November 9, 2017 8:49 AM

A neighbor's dog wrapped its retractable leash around my ankle, slicing my skin nearly to the bone. I had a line of stitches circling my ankle! And that neighbor still uses that stupid retractable leash.

Posted by: riley0003 | November 9, 2017 8:45 AM