



Long-Line Skills

Using a long-line in scentwork is a skill that you must practice to be good at. It is preferred over using a 6-foot leash because it puts you far enough behind your dog so that you are not putting pressure on them, especially in tighter spaces.

For scentwork, a ten to fifteen foot line is usually adequate for the search areas you will encounter.

Long-line options

Material	Pros	Cons
biothane	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • does not tangle • pliable • does not get wet/heavy • has no odor • does not stretch • Easy to store 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • slippery when wet
leather	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • durable • can endure pressure • minimal tangling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • stretches • will dry rot • can break with no warning when old/stretched • can smell • gets wet/heavy
nylon webbing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • economical • durable • easy to store 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • frays and breaks • tangles • gets wet/heavy/dirty • holds odor • stretches
rope	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • economical • easy to store 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • stretches • will dry rot • frays and breaks • can smell • gets wet/heavy • can burn hands
plastic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • economical • easy to store 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • stretches • will dry rot • can break with no warning when old/stretched • can smell • gets wet/heavy • cold weather makes it stiff and hard to handle • can burn hands

NOTE: all of these options can be chewed so you must supervise your dog when in use and do not place the dog in a crate with the line attached.

Using a long-line

When using a long-line there are a few things to keep in mind so that you are working efficiently and safely.

- All long lines can be a trip hazard if not paying attention to where your feet are
- Long-lines with handles can become caught on objects on the ground/floor
- Too much slack can result in a tangle or trip hazard
- NEVER wrap the line tightly around your hand; if your dog takes off or you trip you could damage your hand

Line tension

- Keep the line as slack as possible so your dog doesn't feel tension
- A tight line can prevent your dog from searching an area, let the line slide through your hand and gently increase pressure to slow them down when needed

Line length

- Adjust the length of the line as your dog moves and the space allows
- Try to maintain a minimum of six feet from your dog to allow them space to work with no pressure

Line grip

- Hold the line with a light grip, imagine you are holding an egg and you don't want to crush it
- Allow the line to slide through your hand closest to the dog
- Only grip the line tightly when you need to stop your dog and gradually increase the line pressure to slow them gently, otherwise they will jerk to stop and could interpret that jerk as a correction

Line handling

- Use a two-handed method to hold the line. Your first hand can let the line slide through, while your second hand can pull the line in
- Throw it out with the hand farthest away from the dog and reel it in with the hand closest to the dog
- Keep it out from between and around your feet

Line material

- Consider the material of the line
- See the above chart for pros and cons
- Check your lines regularly for signs of wear and tear

Tips

- Gradually increase the length of your line as you practice
- Work with the leash tethered to a stationary object before working with the dog
- Using a human "dog" to practice on will help you become more fluid with your line handling
- If you or your dog get caught in the line, stop, have them sit or down, or drop a small handful of treats to let them eat while you untangle yourself
- Practice making turns, changing directions, navigating obstacles, and calling the dog back to you as you reel line in