

HOW TO USE A MUZZLE



WHAT'S A MUZZLE?

A muzzle is a piece of equipment worn over a dog's snout to prevent them from biting or scavenging food or other objects from the ground.

WHY USE A MUZZLE?

Muzzles are useful tools to keep humans, other animals and your dog safe in the community. In the past, dogs wearing muzzles were often labeled as 'bad' or 'aggressive' and were scary for some people. Today, we know that pet guardians muzzle their dogs for a variety of reasons intended to keep their animals safe and happy.

You should use a muzzle if:

- Your dog is at the groomer or veterinarian and may bite because they're frightened.
- Your dog is at risk of biting someone or another animal.
- An animal control bylaw mandates your dog or their breed must wear a muzzle.
- Your dog continuously scavenges objects from the ground.
- You're working on training and need to keep everyone safe.



DO DOGS MIND WEARING MUZZLES?

No, muzzles aren't painful, although they can limit mobility of the mouth and feel strange on a dog's face at first. Some dogs may have a negative emotional response to them if they've been used to restrain them in the past for a procedure (e.g., grooming or nail trims), but all dogs can be trained to love wearing a muzzle.

RECOMMENDED MUZZLES

Choose a muzzle that's designed for the specific purpose you need. Make sure the muzzle is suited for your dog's breed and size.



FOR TRAINING & WALKING

Basket muzzles (rubber, plastic or metal) allow your dog to drink water and pant to cool down. While they may look scary, they're the most humane choice.

FOR VETERINARY USE

Soft, flat muzzles made of mesh, nylon, fabric or leather prevent a dog from panting. Panting is the way dogs cool down (a dog's way of sweating). These muzzles should only be used for short-term procedures like exams and grooming.



Dogs can't cool off by panting when wearing soft muzzles.



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FITTING YOUR DOG FOR A MUZZLE

The muzzle should be:

- Snug, but not tight
- Allow your dog to open their mouth, but not all the way
- Adjustable

Muzzle companies have guidelines for sizing muzzles based on the breed and size of the dog. Visit your local pet store and ask for assistance in finding the right fit for your dog.



DO'S

Do look for an **AnimalKind.ca** accredited trainer to help you with training issues. The program provides BC SPCA-developed standards for positive, humane training.

Do stay aware of triggers that frighten your dog, even when they're comfortable wearing a muzzle. Having a muzzle doesn't mean people, places or other dogs aren't still scary. It's better to avoid the situations altogether even with the safety of a muzzle.



DON'TS

Don't leave the muzzle on all day.

Don't use a muzzle as the only way to deal with unwanted behaviours. You'll still want to use reward-based training and seek help from an **AnimalKind.ca** accredited trainer when needed.

Don't use a muzzle to stop your dog from barking.



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MUZZLE TRAINING

1 Teach your dog that the muzzle = yummy treat

Show your dog the muzzle, say “yes,” and give them a treat. Every time you show them the muzzle, give them a treat.

If your dog is uncomfortable or afraid of the muzzle:

- Put it on a table away from them and feed them on the other side of room.
- Keep it at a distance where they'll eat treats when it's in sight.
- Practice this and move the muzzle closer without causing them to leave the room.

The goal: Your dog will look at the muzzle and then to you for a treat.



2 Teach your dog to wear the muzzle

Follow the training plan below to teach your dog to enjoy wearing a muzzle when they go out on walks and when visitors come to your home.

Work in three-minute sessions. Don't move on to the next step until your dog shows a happy response to the previous one.



STEP 1: Show your dog the muzzle. Then give them high-value treats or play a game of fetch.

STEP 2: Clip the muzzle around your dog's neck without putting it on their nose. Then give them high-value treats in playful manner (like tossing them from side to side).

STEP 3: Put some food into the muzzle (cup your hand so it doesn't fall out). Gently move the muzzle away from your dog's nose as they're eating from it. Allow your dog to put their nose into the muzzle. Don't put the muzzle onto your dog.

STEP 4: Increase the length of time your dog has their nose in the muzzle. Use squeeze cheese or Cheese Whiz.

STEP 5: Begin to lay the straps around your dog's neck while they have their nose in the muzzle. Don't attach them at this stage.

STEP 6: Loosely attach the straps around your dog's neck. Use squeeze cheese or a special treat.



! If your dog tries to paw at the muzzle to remove it, DON'T take it off at this time. Distract them by asking for some behaviours that they enjoy doing (like 'sit' or 'down'). Take the muzzle off when they're no longer trying to remove it. If your dog constantly tries to remove the muzzle, repeat some earlier steps to ensure they enjoy the muzzle before moving on.

LEARN MORE! Find videos and more information at spca.bc.ca/muzzles.

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