



How to Muzzle Train your Dog



Muzzles are an important tool to prevent dog bites. Training your dog to wear a muzzle can increase their safety, as well as the safety of the humans and animals around them. Read more to learn how to muzzle train your dog in a low-stress and fun way!



Why train your dog to wear a muzzle?



All dogs have the potential to bite, no matter how friendly they are. As such, all dogs should be acclimated to wear a muzzle in case they need to wear one during veterinary procedures, grooming, or social interactions.

Wearing a muzzle should not be a punishment for your dog (or you!), it should be viewed as a tool that helps dogs interact with their environment safely.

Creating a positive association with the muzzle can make wearing it fun for your dog.

Decreasing the risk of a bite can **make people around your dog more relaxed**, in turn **reducing your dog's stress** level and ensuring a positive experience for all.



Supplies needed

A well-fitting muzzle: "basket"-style muzzles are recommended as they allow dogs to eat, drink, and pant while wearing.

Positive reinforcers: positive reinforcement helps dogs learn by providing a reward when they perform a desired behaviour. Positive reinforcers can vary between dogs, but may include food rewards, verbal praise, and play. Try a few to see which your dog best responds to!

Time: set aside regular training periods, no more than 5 minutes at the beginning, to work on muzzle training. The environment should be quiet and comfortable for your dog.

Your dog should not show signs of fear, anxiety, or stress during training sessions. If present, take a break and revisit the training session later.



How to get started

1. **Start with 1-2 minute sessions** and lots of positive reinforcement.
2. Hold a treat in the muzzle to encourage your dog to put their nose inside.
3. You may choose to **add a cue word** to this action such as "muzzle".
4. **Use positive reinforcement** to teach your dog that "nose in muzzle = treat".
5. Once your dog comfortably puts their nose in the muzzle, you may fasten the muzzle and continue rewarding before taking it off after a few seconds.
6. Gradually extend the time or change the location of your training sessions as your dog becomes more comfortable.
7. These steps should be completed over several training sessions. **Remember to take breaks** to avoid overstimulation and/or frustration for you and your dog.

