

One Tail at a Time.

Muzzle Guide

Why use a muzzle?

There are plenty of reasons to train your dog to happily wear a muzzle! Taking proactive measures to keep you, your dog, other dogs, or other people safe is key. Here are just a few reasons we might recommend muzzle training/wearing:

- Fearful or nervous of dogs or people, and the muzzle keeps everyone safer.
- Dog eats non-food items that could cause life-threatening concerns.
- The muzzle acts as a cue for other people to give your dog space.
- Practicing skills for next vet visit or emergency situation.
- Give everyone piece of mind so you can focus on training and reinforcing behavior that you like.

What a muzzle DOESN'T mean:

- Your dog is mean, vicious, untrained or needs a heavy hand.
- They can safely meet any dogs or people if muzzled.
- The dog is less anxious or afraid when wearing the muzzle.
- The muzzle replaces training.

Don't be afraid of what other people might think! The important thing to remember is that you're advocating for safety for your dog and others and doing what you can to prevent incident or injury.

Types of Muzzles

There are *many* types of muzzles available, and depending on the size/shape of your dog, as well as the context in which a muzzle is needed, a specific type may work better than others. Here are a few of the most common and preferred muzzles that we use:



1. Baskerville Ultra

This is our go-to, most commonly used muzzles! It's versatile, lightweight, affordable, and easy to train and use treats. The dog can easily pant, drink and eat.

The downside to a [Baskerville](#) is they typically fit a wider shaped snout -- so thin/long nosed breeds may have a

harder time fitting well. However, you can boil and mold the rubber to better fit your dog's shape - check out [this video!](#)



2. Jafco

This is another versatile, high quality brand! Slightly more customizable, and slightly pricier than the Baskerville, the Jafco is also versatile and gives the dog full ability to eat, drink, and pant, while also providing more protection than the Baskerville. [Jafco](#) is usually a better fit for longer snout dogs.



3. Mesh/Nylon

[These](#) are commonly used in grooming or veterinary procedures. It keeps the jaw shut so the dog is not able to pant, eat, or bite, and thus should only be used for short periods. However, if your dog needs to be muzzled for a veterinary procedure, getting them comfortable with this ahead of time can be helpful. There is also a [short-snout version!](#)



4. Bumaz (custom)

Completely customizable muzzles such as [Bumaz](#) are a great investment for adopters or anyone that will be using a muzzle on a daily basis. It is made based on measurements specific to your dog, and made of durable biothane material. On the comfort scale, this is one of the best! On the downside, they are pricey. As a bonus, there are tons of color choices to make it look super adorable!

There are lots of other styles, brands, and off-brands of muzzles that can be explored based on what works best for you and your dog! If you need help finding a better fit or option, let us know!

How To Measure and Fit a Muzzle

The most important part about fitting the most commonly used muzzles is making sure the dog has full ability to breathe, eat, drink, and pant. That means there should be open space in between the dog's chin and the bottom of the muzzle to open their mouth, but it should not be loose enough that the dog can easily swipe it off with their paw. It should also sit comfortably under the dog's eyes and not ride up into their eyes.

Use the measurement guide depending on the brand of muzzle you're using to determine which size is right for your dog.

Muzzle Training and Conditioning

There are LOTS of different methods you can use to condition your dog to wear a muzzle, but they all aim to accomplish the same goal - to make muzzle wearing fun and enjoyable in or outside your home. We don't want a muzzle to become aversive or a predictor of bad things (like grooming or vet visits). We can determine how the dog feels based on their body language; what we're looking for is loose, wiggly bodies, relaxed muscles and a loose, wagging tail.

**** Note:** If you don't have a real muzzle, you can still start these steps with simple household items, like a large plastic cup. This still gives practice of something surrounding the dog's snout until you get a real muzzle.

Step 1: Positive Associations

Put the muzzle in front of your dog and immediately start dropping treats (in quick succession) near the muzzle and happily talk to/praise your dog. Pick up the muzzle, put it out of sight, and stop treats. Repeat this step several times. You should start to see the dog visibly get more excited when the muzzle comes out.

Step 2: Food in muzzle

Prep the muzzle by spreading food (peanut butter, cream cheese, any other spreadable food) around the front of the muzzle. Put the muzzle on the ground and allow the dog to lick it up. When the food is gone, the muzzle goes away.

Step 3: Lure in muzzle

Hold the muzzle in your hand with the opening facing your dog. Either with spreadable food inside the muzzle, or using pieces of high value food with your other hand, lure your dog towards the muzzle in your hand and allow them to lick out the food while putting their nose in the muzzle. Keep the muzzle stationary -- do not move it towards the dog. Repeat this several times until the dog is comfortable putting their snout in the muzzle for food.

Step 4: Muzzle + Straps

With the same technique as step 4, allow your dog to put his snout in the muzzle for food and practice clipping and unclipping the muzzle around the dog's neck. You may also practice clipping and unclipping the muzzle *without* the dog's snout in the muzzle. Continue to give treats for clipping/unclipping. Do not keep the muzzle on long enough for the dog to paw or rub at the muzzle.

Step 5: Wear muzzle w/ indoor activity

Put the muzzle on your dog and give them an activity or puzzle that they can easily do with a muzzle on. Examples may include simple cues or tricks (sit, down, touch, etc) or an enrichment toy like a Lickimat -- something lickable is preferred so they don't get too frustrated!

Step 6: Walk with muzzle!

Equip your dog with any regular walking gear, like their harness and leash, then use the same luring technique as earlier to get their muzzle on. After it is on and clipped, get moving and go for a walk! Remember to reinforce them with food FREQUENTLY with something they can access easily - spray cheese or wet food in a food tube are great options. If the dog tries to paw at the muzzle or rub at it, encourage them to keep moving with high pitch praise and movement. If they continue focusing on it, go back to the previous step for more practice. An occasional swipe at the muzzle isn't a dealbreaker - just pick up your movement and help them focus on something else. A goal may be to have a muzzle just as exciting as another piece of walking equipment, like a harness.

Additional Muzzle Training Videos:

[Chirag Patel - Teaching a Dog to Wear a Muzzle](#)

[Michael Shikashio - Baskerville Muzzle Acclimation](#)

[Muzzle Up Training Video Series](#)

Comfort and Fashion!



For dogs that wear muzzles on a consistent basis, we want to make sure that it's comfortable! Sometimes, extended use of a muzzle can create raw spots where the muzzle sits or rubs. First, make sure the muzzle fits well and if another size or brand would be a better option. If it does fit well, then let's make it more comfortable! The most common spot where rubbing/raw spots occur is on the bridge of the nose, where the middle strap attaches. You can hot glue or tie soft material like fleece, moleskin, or memory foam to the bridge to protect the nose.

To the average person, a muzzle can make a dog look intimidating or scary. That's why we love "blinging" a muzzle to better fit the dog's personality! Using colored or patterned duct tape, you can wrap sections of the muzzle to create a more approachable, colorful, "cuter" muzzle. Make sure not to cover any gaps or air holes. Also, keep in mind that

decoration may make the muzzle more difficult to clean and will need to be regularly rewrapped.



Additional Muzzle Resources:

- [The Muzzle Up! Project](#)
- [AggressiveDog.com – Dog Owners](#)
- [Best Friends Animal Society - Muzzles](#)