

KEEP CALM AND MUZZLE ON:



FEAR FREE
HAPPY
HOMES

Helping pets live happy, healthy, full lives

Why Muzzle Training?

- Calmly and cooperatively wearing a muzzle is an important life skill for dogs.
- Training dogs to wear a muzzle is important so they become accustomed to it and will accept it readily when needed or advised for a specific purpose.
- A basket muzzle is an important safety tool that reduces the risk of an injurious bite during veterinary and home care.

Muzzle Type Matters:

- Basket muzzles, typically made from hard or semi-flexible material, have multiple openings on the front and side that allow dogs to eat, drink, and pant.
- Flatter faced dogs such as Pugs and Bulldogs require specially designed muzzles. Air muzzles or Elizabethan collars are alternatives.

Step 1: Start by Creating a Happy Response to the Muzzle

- Present the muzzle at a distance that sparks curious interest, without startling the dog (2 to 8 feet away).
- Hold the muzzle stationary in the hand rather than moving it toward the dog.
- Create a happy expectation that when the muzzle is out, good things happen! Pair the muzzle's presence with plentiful treats and other enjoyable consequences such as play.
- During training, take short, 30- to 60-second breaks to pause and move the muzzle out of sight (behind your back, for instance) to teach your dog that the muzzle itself predicts positive outcomes. When the muzzle goes away, treats stop or play ends.
- Place the muzzle out of sight after training.

Step 2: Encourage Muzzle Approach

- Spread a soft treat on the outside of the muzzle edge, where the dog's nose and mouth will rest. Loose treats can also be threaded through the muzzle or kept cupped in the hand supporting the underside of the muzzle.
- Hold the muzzle stationary in your hand or place it between your knees to encourage your dog to approach the muzzle on her own terms (don't move the muzzle toward the dog).
- For dogs wary of a muzzle held in the hand, start with it placed on the ground. Clip a leash to the muzzle and keep it in hand to allow for easy retrieval and replenishing of treats. Treats can be placed in Hansel-and-Gretel-like fashion to encourage approach and investigation. Once the dog is comfortable, move to holding the muzzle.