

When to use a training collar

There are two different aspects to getting your dog to walk politely on leash:

- 1) Train your dog to walk politely on leash;
- 2) Using a training collar as a management technique to allow you to physically walk your dog while you train your dog to walk politely.

If you choose to use a training collar it should ONLY be worn while walking. It should NEVER be on the dog when he or she is unsupervised. This is very dangerous for us dogs.

Different types of training collars: Pros & Cons of each

Head Halter

Pros:

1. Almost impossible for a dog to pull when using this collar.
2. Puts no pressure on throat which can cause tracheal problems in strong pullers.

Cons:

1. Usually takes approximately two weeks for dog to adjust to wearing the collar. In addition handler must play a very active part to get dog adjusted to collar.
2. Many owners do not like the look of this collar although if fitted properly it is completely humane. People often think this collar is a muzzle though again if fitted properly will not inhibit any mouth movement.

Front Hook Body Harness (Easy Walk/SENSE-ation/SENSE-ible)

Pros:

1. Inhibits pulling more than any other collar except head halter.
2. Puts no pressure on throat which can cause tracheal problems in strong pullers.

Cons:

1. More expensive than most collars.

Traditional Body Harness

Pros:

1. Puts no pressure on throat which can cause tracheal problems in strong pullers.

Cons:

1. Does nothing to inhibit pulling. Actually is harnessing the strongest part of your dog so they can get the most muscle behind their pulling.

Premier Collar

Pros:

1. Can put on the dog right away. There is no adjustment period for the dog.

Cons:

1. Does almost nothing to restrict a dog from pulling.

Prong Collar

Pros:

1. Can inhibit dogs from pulling.

Cons:

1. Can escalate or start reactive/aggression issues.
2. Can cause irritation to skin around neck if dog has shorter hair or if improperly fitted.
3. Used in [punishment based training](#) which Collins Canine does not employ.

Choke Collar

Cons:

1. Almost all the time this collar is used, it is being used improperly. The correction from this collar should be in the sound the links make, not in the choking. If used properly, it should not choke the dog.
2. All pressure is on the front of the neck which can cause trachea damage or collapse.
3. Used in [punishment based training](#) which Collins Canine does not employ.

Shock Collar

Cons:

1. Used only in [punishment based training](#) which Collins Canine does not employ.

Anti Pulling Collars

There are four basic collars or harnesses that successfully assist in reducing pulling without causing the dog pain or discomfort.

None of these training collars will **train** your dog to walk nicely simply by using them long enough. They are training tools that can help you manage your dog while you train them to walk nicely, or you can simply continue using the collar indefinitely if you are comfortable with it.

BRAND	How it works	PROS	CONS
Gentle Leader Head collar	This collar fits over the dog's head and nose. Works similar to a horse halter to reduce the leverage the dog can exert forward.	Very effective on pulling dogs, especially large breeds Useful in dealing with dog aggressive dogs since it actually turns the dog's head away from what it's reacting to. Works immediately and humanely.	Not all dogs readily accept the nose loop and may fuss over it for a time. Often mistaken for a muzzle by the general public [although this is becoming increasingly less true] Difficult to fit and use at first.
EZ walk Harness by Gentle Leader	Same premise as the HEAD HALTER, but in a more traditional body harness format except leash attaches on the breast plate area of the harness	Works well to reduce pulling on most dogs. Works immediately. Easy to fit and use. Takes pressure away from neck area for smaller breeds with trachea issues.	Doesn't work as universally on every dog. Sometimes causes leash droop and gets leash tangled.
Sensation anti-pull harness	The first anti-pull harness predates the EZ walk, but works by same mechanism.	Works well on most dogs. Humane to use. Takes pressure away from neck area for smaller breeds with trachea issues. Easy to fit and use.	Not as readily available in marketplace. Lacks additional front adjustment that EZ walk harness has. Leash Droop because of the front attaching mechanism

The following three collars and harnesses will likely reduce pulling, however they use pain as a motivator and are not considered humane.

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BRAND	How it works	PROS	CONS
Sporn anti-pull harness	Body harness that applies discomfort/pressure to under arm area of dogs to reduce pulling.	Works on some dogs. Readily available.	Pain/discomfort as motivation to reduce pulling. Rubbing can irritate skin and cause inflammation. Difficult to put on.

Prong Collars	Metal Spike Collar that applies painful pokes when the dog pulls into it.	Easy to put on Readily available in retail. May work immediately on some dogs.	Pain Motivated; not humane. Believed to be linked to increased propensity for dog aggression. Looks like medieval torture.
Choke Collars	Metal link collar that is used with leash pops and jerks to stop pulling	Won't slip off dogs head during normal use. Readily available.	Works after repeated use. Often dogs just pull and sound like they are choking. Owner's reluctance to apply "pops" reduces effectiveness. Not Humane; pain motivated.

Standard Collar Options

The following two collars are not anti-pull and will not help or hurt your efforts to reduce pulling on walks. Both options are considered humane.

BRAND	How it works	PROS	CONS
STANDARD DOG HARNESS (any brand/style)	Regular body harnesses with a ring on the BACK of the harness between dog's shoulder blades	Easy to use Readily available Many styles available Helps protect the neck area in small breeds.	Provides MORE leverage for a pulling dog.
FLAT BUCKLE STANDARD COLLARS	Plain collar useful for keeping dog ID tags on, or for non pulling dogs	Humane	No effect on pulling. Risk of strangulation if left on dog unattended (a 'break away' safety collar is recommended).

Head-halters and other variations of the tool work on the premise that the dog learns to stop straining on a leash based on the consequences of their own actions. Essentially these tools are fitted to your dog's body (either head or chest or a combination) and a leash is attached to the device. The device is designed to prevent pulling by squeezing or torquing the dog's body parts so as to make it uncomfortable for them to pull on the leash. Some dog trainers used these tools as control devices to help dogs ignore distraction while teaching them desired behaviours with clickers, food or their desired approach.



The biggest challenge with these tools is understanding how to fit them properly to keep them effective and also in being able to phase out the use of the tool and still have the dog understand how to walk properly. This is not a limitation of the tool, but rather a limitation of the individual using the tool. If the halter is used as a control device instead of a training tool, then the dog owner will always be dependent on the tool. This is the same as that old saying: "Give a man a fish and he eats for a day. Teach him to fish and feed him for a lifetime." Many people get spoiled by the quick control that they don't bother to use the tool as part of a training regime.

There area variety of dog training collars available these days which can ultimately be broken down into two categories: static collars and constriction collars. Static collars are collars that stay the same size and do not constrict when a leash is pulled. They come in a variety of materials such as plastic, nylon, metal, leather as well as different designs. These are the most common tools and most every dog owner has one for their dog. They allow for identification tags to be attached and can even be used for training as a general purpose control collar.



Constriction collars do as the name implies: they constrict when pressure is applied with a leash. Choke chains, slip collars, martingale collars and pinch/prong collars all fit into this category as do some halter/harness designs. Perhaps the oldest and most widely used collar in this category is the choke chain.

Choke chains are remnants from the old military style dog training days. Originating around World War I, they have persisted over the years and are still the most commonly used tool by police and military departments in the US today. As with any tool, proper knowledge of how to use the tool properly is of paramount importance. Improper sizing and fit of ANY of these collars can result in damage to your dog. There is a reason that many of these tools have persisted over the years, and that is because with the proper application and knowledge these tools allow dog trainers to train dogs reliably and repeatably. If you are unsure of what can be accomplished using these tools, seek out a professional dog trainer who is successful using these tools to gain an educated opinion. Ask to see their dog as well. This will give you an impression of the results you can expect. A visual picture is worth a lot more than a thousand words.

A final category of dog training collars that is perhaps the most controversial is that of electronic dog training collars. There are different tools within this category that all serve different purposes.

There are electronic bark control devices such as bark-beepers which are designed to discourage nuisance barking by distracting the dog with a high-frequency beep activated by their bark. Bark collars use either a citronella burst or adjustable electric stimulation to deter unwanted barking. Usually a sound/vibration sensor on the collar detects when the dog barks and emits a correction. These devices and their quality vary a lot from manufacturer to manufacturer. There are pros and cons to these devices.

Firstly with citronella collars and bark-beepers these are designed to interrupt behaviour through distraction or in the case of citronella collars a mild aversive. The problem here is every dog is different and what works for one dog won't necessarily work for all dogs. Some dogs are not deterred by citronella spray at all. They simply learn to avoid or ignore it.

With electronic bark collars, it is imperative for the above reason to make sure you purchase a collar that has multiple levels available. Relate bark collars and the stimulation provided to the volume of a stereo. You want adjustability because different situations may require higher or lower levels, and also because some dogs are more or less sensitive than the next. Also keep in mind that bark collars are 100% safe. There is no possible way that your dog can be burnt or hurt by the electrical stimulation they deliver. These devices are designed on the same principles that muscle stimulators are designed on. These devices use very low current stimulation which will not damage human or dog tissue. Some models are waterproof and some even have bark odometers to let you know how many times your dog barked while you were out.

Finally we reach the area of remote controlled electronic dog collars. Again these collars can either utilize a citronella based spray or electric stimulation. The citronella based remote collars are useful but typically are limited for the same reasons mentioned above for bark collars, but also in that they tend to be cheaply built and are really only designed for bad behaviour solving and typically don't work past a 50-100ft in reality.

Remote electric collars are sometimes referred to as "Shock Collars" which really is a bad name for these tools. The term shock is an emotionally charged term that creates an image of pain in people's minds. They relate these tools to cattle-prods and tasers, which couldn't be further from the truth. Modern remote collars utilize medical-grade electric stimulation which is both highly adjustable and 100% safe. Modern advances in technology also allow for some remote collars to utilize vibration features which are also useful in dog training.

Changes in the mindset of some dog trainers has allowed for the application of remote dog collars in a wide variety of applications. Traditionally remote dog collars were used strictly as an aversive impulse to deter unwanted behaviour or to correct undesired response during training in distracting environments or at distance. Recently dog trainers have begun to take advantage of the adjustability of modern day remote collars and have found that remote collars no longer are confined to being used strictly as punitive tools. Many dog trainers are able to use remote collars to actually teach dog new skills as well as break the boundaries implied by traditional dog training tools and approaches.

Remote collars are a controversial topic but as with any dog training tool, it is imperative to educate yourself and view successful remote collar training in action before making an educated opinion. Sit Means Sit has a wide variety of [dog training videos](#) and even offers [free demonstrations](#) of our dog training technique at our [dog training locations](#) as well as our [dog training seminars](#).

The internet is a vast resource for dog training and information on dog training collars and tools. Regardless of how you choose to train your dog and what tool you use, remember to use your common sense.

Determine your goals, educate yourself on the options available to you, seek out assistance or knowledge on how to use a tool successfully, but most importantly do what is going to work best for you and your dog.

Pros And Cons Of Using A Head Halter

The head halter is a [hybrid](#) piece of equipment. It works on the basis that where the dog's head goes, sooner or later the rest of the body has to follow. It is an adaptation from head halters used for horses. Whereas the pinch collar looks downright menacing, the head halter looks more inviting and almost user friendly. Interestingly, your dog's reaction, and he is the one that counts, is likely to be quite the opposite. He will readily accept a pinch collar but vigorously and determinedly object to the halter, at least at first. The following list describes the principal advantages of the halter, once your dog has learned to accept the effect it has on him:

Calming and tranquilizing: A head halter is helpful with nervous, timid, shy, or hyperactive dogs.

Equalizing: It helps smaller handlers with larger dogs as well as senior citizens and handicapped handlers control their dogs

Muzzling: It helps with inappropriate sniffing behavior, whining or barking, some forms of aggression, and play biting or nibbling.

The following provides some additional advantages to the head halter, as well as some disadvantages.

Benefits of the Head Halter: Available in pet stores and online [catalogs](#); not expensive; required minimum strength to use. On the other hand, disadvantages of wearing a head halter are the following: Potential for serious damage to your dog's neck; considered as a transition tool; your dog does not learn to accept responsibility for his behaviors.

The great potential for damage is due to the nature of the halter. Because it controls the head, a strong pull by the dog or the handler can do serious damage to the dog's neck. In this case, it is not quite the same principle as the head halter for horses. Because most people are smaller than horses, the halter is used to control the horse's head from below. In contrast, most people are taller than dogs, and any pull or tug is going to be upward and, at times, simultaneously to the side. Tugging the dog's neck in this way creates great potential for injury.

Finally, the halter is a transition tool at best, because it does not teach the dog to assume the responsibility for his behavior. He is being guided by the muzzle instead of being trained by the Yes and No model. In addition, the dog is not learning through positive/negative reinforcement what is expected from him.