



# MUZZLE TRAINING

YOUR DOG CAN BE THE SAFEST DOG  
ON THE STREET!

There are many different reasons why a dog might need to wear a muzzle. None of these reasons mean that the dog is a "bad" dog - just that he is a dog! Muzzles can set our dogs (and the people involved with our dogs) up for successful, safe interactions in a variety of circumstances.

## MUZZLES HELP EVERYONE WIN BY . . .

- Promoting positive interactions between two (or more) dogs in your household.
- Keeping other dogs and people safe while passing your dog on a walk.
- Teaching your dog positive social skills in closer proximity to other dogs/people/kids/bikes without putting anyone at risk.
- Preventing your dog from eating rocks/sticks/socks/etc while walking or unsupervised in the house.
- Creating safe veterinary visits so that you, your dog, and your veterinary staff can relax.
- Giving everyone peace of mind about the situation (whatever it is!) so you can focus on rewarding the good behaviors you want to happen more often!



12-year-old Willie had scary experiences with dogs in his past, so when his little sister Emmy joined the family, his humans used muzzle training to help everyone feel more comfortable as they learned how to live together peacefully.



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## FAVORITE EQUIPMENT

- We like the Baskerville Muzzle brand. They come in tan and black. Note: If you do purchase t
- The most important feature in a muzzle is that your dog be able to eat, drink, breath, and pant while wearing it. Cloth muzzles are often too restrictive for these functions.
- Muzzle vs. Gentle Leader/Head-Halter: These are two separate tools for two different purposes. A Gentle Leader/Head-Halter is NOT a muzzle and it does not prevent a dog from being able to bite.

## CHECK OUT OUR FAVORITE MUZZLES ONLINE

- Baskerville Muzzle **Tan** **Black**
- **Bumas Muzzle** - Customizable & colorful option for hard-to-fit dogs.

## WAIT! BEFORE YOU STRAP IT ON . . .

- A key part of the usefulness of a muzzle is that your dog is comfortable and relaxed while wearing it.
- Before putting your muzzle on your dog for the first time, we must condition your dog to accept wearing it, through a combination of classical and operant conditioning.





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## MUZZLE CONDITIONING - START WITH CLASSICAL

- **Classical Conditioning:** Simply put for our purposes, this is pairing a neutral stimulus (in this case, the muzzle), with a positive outcome (really yummy treats!), so that the neutral stimulus starts to elicit the same positive feelings that the positive outcome elicits. Think of Pavlov's dogs and how they started salivating when they just heard the bell, even when there was no food present. We want your dog to have those same excited feelings about the muzzle!
- **Muzzle in Your Hand:** Your dog doesn't need to do anything for this game except perceive (watch/notice) the presentation of the muzzle. Set up with your dog in front of you, the muzzle in one hand, and really yummy treats in the other. Move the muzzle out in front of you, and immediately reward your dog. Reset the muzzle and treats back to "neutral" at your body. Repeat. If your dog is moving away from the muzzle or acting nervous/anxious, position the muzzle a little farther away as you present it. Repeat until your dog is anticipating a treat after the presentation of the muzzle.
- **Muzzle as a Food Bowl:** After your dog is comfortable looking at the muzzle, the next step is to



better!). Let your dog eat the kibble out of the muzzle for some of his meals. Peanut butter and yogurt make great extra special additions as well!



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## MUZZLE CONDITIONING - MOVE ON TO OPERANT

- **Operant Conditioning:** Behavior controls consequences! For our purposes here, this is where we start to wait for specific behaviors from our dogs (in regards to the muzzle) for each reward.
- **Shape the Muzzle:** Set up with your dog in front of you, the muzzle in one hand, and really yummy treats in the other. If you use a clicker, put that in your hand with your treats (or place the treats in a bowl nearby). Present the muzzle to your dog, stopping a few inches from his nose. If your dog has been eating out of the muzzle already, he might offer to put his nose inside to check for treats. As soon as you get movement towards the muzzle opening, click (or use a verbal marker) and place your treat in the end of the muzzle. Repeat, increasing your criteria gradually, until your dog is eagerly placing his nose into the muzzle to prompt a click/treat.
- **Add Duration:** Once you are getting a great nose-into-muzzle behavior, you are ready to start adding duration. Instead of clicking/treating as soon as your dog puts his nose inside the muzzle, pause for 1-2 seconds. Click for duration, and again place the treat in the end of the muzzle. Repeat, increasing number of seconds in duration before each click/treat as your dog is ready.
- **Add Fastening:** Once you have a solid foundation of duration (30-60 seconds), you can start adding the "distraction" of messing with the straps of the muzzle while your dog's nose is in it. Don't rush this step. We don't want to frighten your dog by suddenly being trapped, so take it slow! Move the straps around behind your dog's ears, click/treat. Fasten and then immediately unfasten, click treat. It can really help to have the muzzle attached to a crate or gate during this exercise so that your extra hand is free.



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## MUZZLE CONDITIONING - ADD ACTIVITIES & DISTRACTIONS

- Once you have a shaped muzzle behavior with duration and fastening steps, you are ready to take your muzzle skill on the move! These are some examples of Easy, Medium, and Hard levels, but for your dog's unique situations try to identify other ways that you can break down your goal muzzle situation (like a vet visit) into these three levels.
- **Easy:** Start with easy movements and activities. Once the muzzle is on and fastened, ask your dog to follow you two steps away and immediately reward. (If you are using the Baskerville muzzle, the easiest way to reward is to place the treat on your hand and extend under your dog's chin so he can lick it up through the hole.) Continue moving around and engaging your dog's attention in following you, rewarding liberally. Take the muzzle off before your dog gets frustrated with it and tries to remove it himself.
- **Medium:** Once your dog is comfortable moving around in the house while wearing the muzzle,



- **Hard:** Add in exposure to more arousing triggers, like other



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## BEING POSITIVE MUZZLE AWARENESS AMBASSADORS

- When you chose to muzzle your dog, you are taking loving, proactive, and protective action, both for your dog and for other people/dogs around you.
- Unfortunately, not everyone will understand. Some people will question (to themselves or to your face) why your dog is out in public if he is "mean", "aggressive", "untrained" . . .
- It's ok if others don't understand. The most important thing is that your dog is safe! And if your dog can demonstrate being well behaved in public while wearing a muzzle, that could go a long way to positively affecting someone's perception of dogs wearing a muzzle.
- We've created a popular handout (it's been shared thousands of times on social media!) for answering questions from the public about why your dog is wearing a muzzle. We have students who print this out and carry it with them when out with their muzzled dogs. It is included here on the last page of this handout in case this would be helpful to you as well.

## BLING IT!

- This is one popular way to reduce the visual stigma associated with

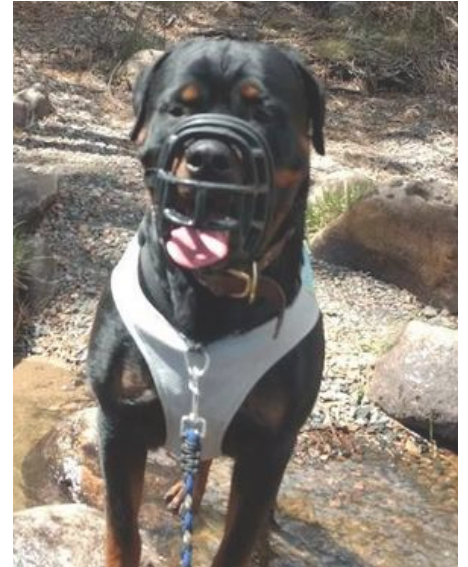


# WHY MY DOG IS WEARING A MUZZLE

(AND HOW YOU SHOULD RESPOND)

MY DOG COULD BE WEARING A MUZZLE FOR ONE OF THESE REASONS:

- He likes to eat stuff from the ground and we are avoiding another foreign body surgery.
- He is working on his anxiety around strangers & dogs & we both feel safer if it is on.
- We are practicing good muzzle skills for our next vet visit
- He prefers a little bit more space, and the muzzle keeps rude humans & dogs away from us.
- I prefer a little bit more space, and the muzzle keeps rude humans away from us.



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JUST BECAUSE HE IS WEARING A MUZZLE DOES **NOT** MEAN:

- He is vicious and will attack you at any moment.
- He should be kept away from the same outdoor adventures that you and your dog can enjoy together.
- It is “ok” for you to come up and try to interact with him without asking permission.

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IF YOU SEE US:

- Please give us space.
- Be kind with a smile as you quickly move on with your dogs and your kids. Recognize that I am doing my best to promote safety and comfort for everyone, including my dog and your family.

