



# SUMMIT POSITION STATEMENT ON USE OF PRONG, CHOKE, AND E-COLLARS

## COLLAR POLICY FOR SUMMIT CLASSES, & FACILITY USE

Please Note: Use of CHOKE CHAIN, PRONG, or ELECTRIC COLLARS on Summit Dog Training premises is PROHIBITED (this includes the parking lot, training room, and yard area). Summit Dog Training is a facility founded on progressive reinforcement principles and motivational training techniques. We promote training tools that allow our dogs to learn without harm or pain, based on current industry standards founded on scientific research. If you have previously used or currently use one of the tools listed above, we would love to help you find an alternative tool suitable for your dog's training needs; please ask one of our trainers what they would recommend for you and your dog - we're here to help!

## WHY DOESN'T SUMMIT USE OR RECOMMEND THESE TOOLS?

### **Great question! We choose not to use them for several reasons:**

- Our understanding of the scientific literature on training methods is that by-and-large, positive, non-aversive methods are the most effective & humane.
- We have worked with many, many dogs over the years who have exhibited serious behavior problems that can be directly correlated to the use of these tools.
- Many behavior problems where the use of these tools may be implemented (such as dog-dog reactivity & aggression) can actually be exacerbated by the use of these aversive tools.
- To use aversive training tools as humanely as possible requires impeccable timing & observation skills. In our experience working with many dog owners over the years, this level of training skill is beyond what the average dog owner wants to invest in - after all, it's not usually your main objective to become a dog trainer, but rather just to be a great dog owner! When we use positive, dog friendly training methods, the consequences of slow timing & novice observation skills are a lot less severe.
- In our training methods, we do our very best to follow the Least Intrusive Minimally Aversive (LIMA) and Humane Hierarchy guidance & the codes of ethics outlined by several top authorities in the animal behavior industry, including the American Veterinary Society of Animal Behavior, Certification Council for Professional Dog Trainers, and Karen Pryor Clicker Training, among others.
- In our decades of dog training experience, we have worked with dogs of all types with a wide range of behavior problems & challenges, and successfully resolved those challenges through the application of positive reinforcement training methods and non-aversive equipment choices.



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LEAST INTRUSIVE MINIMALLY AVERSIVE GUIDANCE

FROM THE CCPDT LIMA STATEMENT:

## What Is LIMA?

LIMA is an acronym for the phrase “Least Intrusive, Minimally Aversive”. LIMA describes a trainer or behavior consultant who uses the least intrusive, minimally aversive strategy out of a set of humane and effective tactics likely to succeed in achieving a training or behavior change objective. LIMA adherence also requires consultants to be adequately educated and skilled in order to ensure that the least intrusive and aversive procedure is used. <sup>[1]</sup>

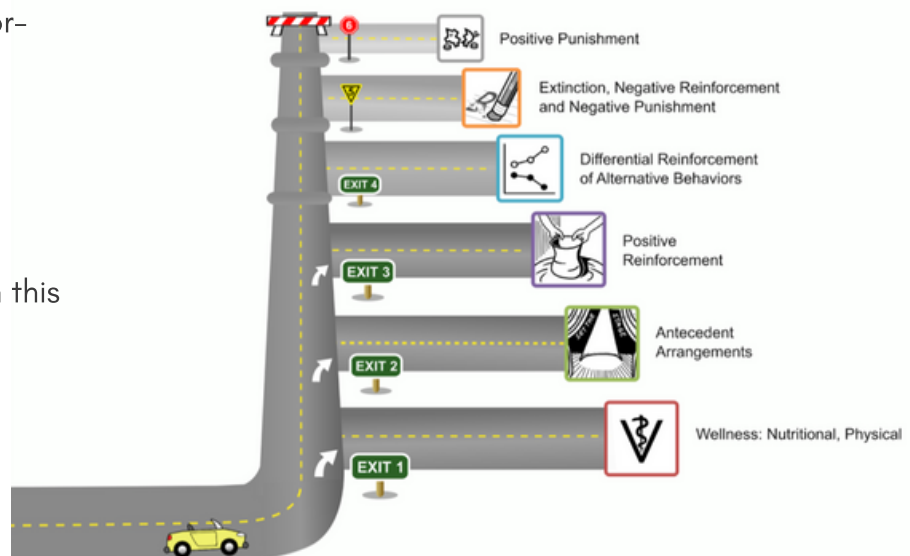
LIMA does not justify the use of punishment in lieu of other effective interventions and strategies. In the vast majority of cases, desired behavior change can be affected by focusing on the animal's environment, physical well-being, and operant and classical interventions such as differential reinforcement of an alternative behavior, desensitization, and counter-conditioning.

Source: <https://www.ccpdt.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/LIMA-Policy-2019.pdf>

## HUMANE HIERARCHY

The Humane Hierarchy of Behavior-Change Procedures outlines the levels of interventions from Least Intrusive to Most. At Summit, we focus the majority on our training strategies on the first four exits in this Hierarchy.

Hierarchy of Behavior-Change Procedures  
Most Positive, Least Intrusive Effective Intervention



Source: [behaviorworks.org](http://behaviorworks.org)

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## BUT DON'T THESE TOOLS WORK? PLENTY OF PEOPLE USE THEM!

Yes, in a way, these tools do “work.” These tools “work” by suppressing unwanted behaviors through discomfort & pain. For example, if your dog starts to look at another dog on a walk and gets a collar correction, they might learn to not look at other dogs on a walk, but they aren’t necessarily going to learn what to do instead (walk happily past distractions looking adoringly at you!). They might also be making some unwanted associations along the way (other dogs = ouch!) that could cause unfortunate side-effects in the long-run.

So while it might seem like the tool “works” very quickly by getting your dog to stop doing the unwanted behavior, this shortcut can have fallout and is not consistent with the relationship-based training that we believe in at Summit.

There are so many positive ways to teach our dogs to ignore other dogs on walks, come back when we call them, and be all-around good citizens.

## NO JUDGEMENT & SAFETY FIRST

If you currently use one or more of these tools, or are considering their use for your dog, no judgement here! We get it - you want to feel safe, capable, and in control of your dog when out adventuring together. If you already use one of these tools, but are looking for other ideas, we will still welcome you and will work with you and your dog!

We have a **Safety First** philosophy, where if you are already using one of these tools in order to feel safe while walking your dog, we are not going to “rip off the bandaid” without first doing extensive work with you to make sure that you have other training & tools in place to feel just as safe. Often this will look like layering in an additional tool, such as a head halter or harness, to be used in conjunction with your prong collar, so that you have that as a safety-net backup if you feel like you need it. This is of course in addition to working on lots of training skills so that you and your dog can rely primarily on those skills, rather than on any tool that your dog is wearing.



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## HOW TO PARTICIPATE IN SUMMIT TRAINING WITH THESE TOOLS

- **In private lessons**, you may have your dog wearing those tools, although we will not incorporate their use into our training plan or allow deliberate use of their function (i.e. prong-collar correction or press of an e-collar button) during our lessons. For any work involving another dog (such as a neutral dog recruited for practicing reactivity behavior modification) we would require the dog to be wearing a harness or head halter in addition to the other tool of your choice.
- **For our group classes**, we ask that you leave those tools at home and participate in class using one of our approved tool options. Ultimately it is your decision what equipment you use when you practice at home!

**If you are seriously considering adding one of these tools to your training plan for your dog**, we would be happy to discuss other options with you for achieving the same training results with different approaches.

However if you approach us asking for specific instruction on properly fitting a prong-collar or implementing e-collar training, we might not be the best fit for your training goals & we will not be able to help you with this. We would be happy to provide you with a referral to another trainer upon your request.

We are firm believers in not trying to convince someone who has already made up their mind to go a different direction. That doesn't help you or us! If you have already decided that one of these tools is what you need, we'll happily share our perspective briefly, but ultimately the decision is up to you! We sincerely wish you all the best success on your training journey.





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## WHAT TOOLS DO WE USE & RECOMMEND AT SUMMIT?

Here are some of the tool options that we will recommend as alternatives to prong, choke, and e-collars. Please note that not every one of these will be suitable for every dog, and we might also recommend using several in conjunction depending on the individual dog's needs. A consultation with one of our trainers would be the best way to brainstorm what tool or combination of tools might work best for your dog's needs & training goals.

- **Front-clip harness**
- **Head halter (with proper training & conditioning)**
- **Martingale (limited slip) collar**
- **Euro-leash (for double-equipment connections)**
- **Long-line (in different lengths, for building off-leash reliability)**



It's important to remember that no tool is a replacement for good training. Finding the proper equipment is a part of the equation, but it is rarely the whole solution.

## STILL HAVE QUESTIONS?

We'd be happy to discuss this with you further! If you have questions specific to training tools for you and your dog's situation, we recommend scheduling a private lesson with one of our trainers!