

# Training Your Dog To Wear a Muzzle

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<http://muzzleupproject.com>

## Goal

Before embarking on any training plan, you need a goal. What do you want to achieve with your training? The goal for muzzle training is for your dog to enjoy wearing a muzzle outside, in the home, or at the vet. Your dog should exhibit happy body language when he sees and wears the muzzle. In technical terms, we call this a positive conditioned emotional response (+CER). Your dog should not exhibit fearful body language in the presence of the muzzle; we call this a negative conditioned

emotional response (-CER), and is what we seek to avoid through training.



## Examples of happy body language

*Any appearance of this body language is a sign you are proceeding with the training correctly and that your dog is comfortable at that point in the training plan.*

Enthusiastic tail wagging, approaching muzzle, salivation and anticipation of food, loose and relaxed body, "play" face/happy expression.



## Examples of fearful body language

*Any appearance of this body language is a sign you should back up in the muzzle training plan because he is not comfortable at that point in the training plan.*

Ears pinned back, avoiding eye contact, backing away, tucked tail, trembling, will not approach, will not take food, lip flicks, tense body.

## *The Training Plan: Phase I*



### **Important Tips**

The goal of Phase I is for your dog to develop a positive emotional response (+CER) to the appearance of the muzzle and the placement of the muzzle strap around his neck.

Do not proceed to next step until you see examples of happy body language as listed on previous page. Back up to an earlier step if you see examples of fearful body language.

Always present the muzzle first, then follow up with treats and happy talk. The muzzle predicts the “good stuff.”

Never present the muzzle without following up with the “good stuff.”

### **Step A**

Place the muzzle in front of your dog. Once the muzzle appears, commence talking in your happy voice and dropping treats by the muzzle. Remove the muzzle from sight and stop the flow of treats and happy talk. Repeat this step (muzzle followed by treats and happy talk) at random times throughout the day until you see a clear +CER when the muzzle appears. Then proceed to Step B.

### **Step B**

Clip muzzle straps loosely around your dog's neck, then commence talking in your happy voice and dispensing treats. Do not put the muzzle on your dog's snout; simply focus on loosely securing the strap. Remove the straps and the muzzle, and stop the flow of treats and happy talk. Repeat this step at random times throughout the day until you see a clear +CER when you clip the strap around his neck. Then proceed to Training Plan: Phase II.



## **Important Tips**

The goal of Phase II is to reward your dog for placing his snout in the muzzle, gradually increasing the amount of time he wears the muzzle, and finally securing the neck strap around his neck.

Continue monitoring body language, backing up in the plan at any sign of discomfort or fear.



### **Step A**

Lure your dog's nose through the muzzle by placing a treat near the end so he has to place his snout in the muzzle to eat the treat. Once his snout is in the muzzle, mark the behavior with a "yes!" and give him the treat. Repeat this step 10 times in a row, then proceed to Step B.

### **Step B**

Present the muzzle. Once your dog places his snout inside, mark the behavior with a "yes!" and give him several treats while his snout is still in the muzzle.

Note: In this step, you are not luring his nose in the muzzle. You are waiting for him to place his nose in the muzzle himself, then rewarding the behavior. Repeat this step 10 times, then proceed to Step C.

### **Step C**

Present the muzzle and, once your dog places his snout inside, wait 1-2 seconds, then mark the behavior with a "yes!" and give him treats. Begin increasing the amount of time your dog needs to keep his nose in the muzzle before receiving treats in 3- to 5-second increments. Repeat each step 5 times before moving to the next time increment. Use your happy voice to encourage him while waiting out the duration. Once you reach 10 seconds, proceed to Step D.



### **Step D**

Present the muzzle and place some peanut butter on the inside of the plastic for him to lick off. While he is eating the peanut butter, secure the straps around his neck. Once the strap is secured, provide another treat. Then proceed as in Step C, working up to 10 seconds of wearing the muzzle, this time with the neck strap in place and secured. Proceed to Step E.

## **Step E**

Present the muzzle and secure the straps. Reward with a treat. Give your dog practice wearing the muzzle for gradually longer periods of time, paying attention to his body language. Make sure your dog is receiving food or playtime while he is wearing the muzzle to maintain the +CER. Examples of activities to do with your dog while he is wearing the muzzle:

- Eating meals
- Training (basic obedience or tricks, anything your dog finds enjoyable)
- Several minutes of muzzle time on a walk
- During playtime