

Muzzle Training in 10 Steps

Dogs can learn to LOVE their muzzles, making it a safe, stress-free experience for them. And you can accomplish this in just 10 steps. View a video demonstration of this training, produced and published by Chirag Patel of Domesticated Manners, at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1FABgZTFvHo>

Before Training:

- Purchase a Basket Muzzle. We love the Baskerville Ultra Muzzle and we carry them for sale.
- Purchase “Easy Cheese” or use a refillable squeeze tube (we also sell them) with peanut butter or baby food.
- Have ready other high value food rewards, as well as some toys your dog loves.

Training Steps:

1. Show your dog the muzzle; CLICK or say “YES!” and treat. Put the muzzle behind your back and briefly ignore your dog. Repeat this process multiple times, alternating the CLICK/treat with playing games with your dog when you show him the muzzle. *Watch for relaxed, even happy, body language from your dog when you show him the muzzle.* Then it is time to move on to Step 2.
2. Clip the neck strap around your dog’s neck, so that it hangs loosely. Feed your dog from your hand and toss treats from side to side on the floor, letting your dog go pick them up. *After 3 minutes,* remove the neck strap, feeding your dog while you take it off so he does not back up from you.
3. Put some food morsels in the nose end of the muzzle and let your dog eat out of the muzzle (you can also use the cheese or peanut butter at this stage instead of food morsels). Let your dog put his head into the muzzle – do NOT push it into his face. Pull the muzzle away before your dog has a chance to pull his head out of it. *The object of this stage is to get your dog enjoying putting his head into the muzzle, but never letting him back out of it.* Repeat this multiple times until your dog is happily putting his head into the muzzle.
4. Present the muzzle to your dog and as he puts his head into it, use the squeeze tube on the outside of the muzzle to put some food into the far nose end of it. Put enough in that your dog holds his head in the muzzle for a bit longer each repetition. Pull the muzzle away before he backs out of it each time.
5. Put some cheese or peanut butter in the end of the muzzle, hold it up so your dog puts his head in, and then play with the straps behind your dog’s head – but do not clip the straps together. Also scratch the back of your dog’s head and ears while he eats. Pull the muzzle away before he backs out of it. Repeat multiple times.
6. Present the muzzle, with cheese or peanut butter in the end, to your dog and while he eats clip the neck strap loosely behind his head. Remove the muzzle after a brief period but before your dog has finished eating. Repeat multiple times.
7. Adjust the neck strap while it is off your dog so it will be a proper snug fit. Follow the Step 6 process with the snugly fitting neck strap. Repeat multiple times.
8. Put the muzzle on your dog as various times and for varying lengths of time. *Don’t just use it in a single situation.* Your dog will come to see the muzzle as a situation-neutral event that he looks forward to. For example, use it at mealtime and feed your dog some of his meal from the muzzle.
9. If your dog starts to paw at the muzzle, distract him by cueing some reliable behaviors, such as Sit, Down, Stay, Come, Look and make it FUN! When your dog is no longer focused on the muzzle, take it off. If need be, back up a step or two and build back up to your dog wearing the muzzle without fuss.
10. Move around with your dog wearing the muzzle. Go for walks together and/or let him run around the yard. Get him used to wearing the muzzle when he is active and having fun with you.