

Muzzles

What is it?

Muzzles prevent a dog's teeth from coming into contact with skin – either a person's or another animal's. The muzzle is worn over the dog's snout, usually held on with a strap behind the ears and another strap attached to the collar.

What is it for?

A muzzle is used to prevent a bite in situations that are stressful to the dog, such as visits to the vet or groomer. In these situations, the dog is not considered aggressive; rather, the muzzle is used to prevent a "fear bite" caused by the environment. The muzzle is usually on for a short period of time and removed immediately once the stressful situation is over.

A muzzle can also be used as part of a behavior modification program to safely get a dog comfortable with some invasive grooming or vet treatments.

With dogs who are considered aggressive because they have bitten people or other animals, a muzzle is used to prevent a reoccurrence of the biting. The dog may have to wear the muzzle for long periods of time and in many situations when he is around other people or animals. If your dog has shown **aggression towards people or other animals**, a muzzle should only be used after consultation with a qualified Behavior Consultant. The consultant will help you implement a behavior modification program to manage your dog's aggression.

How do you use it?

Any type of muzzle should be introduced to your dog slowly and carefully with lots of treats, praise and encouragement. Common uses are:

- Preventing a bite in a fearful situation
- As a tool to safely work on behavior modification issues
- Safety measure / legal requirement for use on a dog inclined to bite

Training:

Have your dog practice with the muzzle at home until he is comfortable in it before you try to use the muzzle in a stressful situation. Please have the following prepared:

- **Treats:** Have lots of high value, delicious treats available for your training sessions. They might even be special treats only used for muzzle training. Plan on being very generous with the treats. You want your dog to associate good things with the muzzle.
- **Short Sessions:** Keep sessions short and always positive. Schedule several short sessions in a day.
- **Expectations:** Don't expect to achieve muzzle acceptance in one day.



Step One: Start by using the muzzle as the container for the treats

1. Put some treats into the muzzle and let your dog put his nose in to get them out.
2. If it is a basket muzzle put the treats in your hand and put the muzzle on top so your dog has to put his nose into the muzzle to get to the treats in your hand.
3. Keep doing this until your dog puts his nose in without hesitation.

Step Two: Hooking the strap

1. The next step is to smear some peanut butter or cream cheese on the inside of the muzzle.
2. As your dog is licking the goodies off, hook up the strap so the muzzle is attached to the dog.
3. Keep giving treats through the muzzle.
4. If your dog tries to paw off the muzzle (most likely) distract him with more treats or attention.

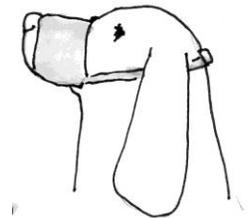
Step Three: Adding movement

1. Lure your dog around with food.
2. Remove the muzzle while your dog is calm and happy.

Types of Muzzles:

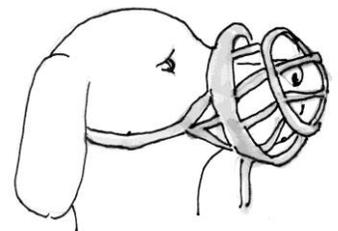
Fabric muzzles:

- This muzzle fits over the dog's snout. The dog's nose is exposed.
- The dog can open his mouth a little bit, so it is possible to feed him treats.
- The handler may get a pinch from the dog's mouth.
- Vets or groomers most often use this muzzle.
- This type is not designed for long-term situations or for walks – because the dog can't pant.



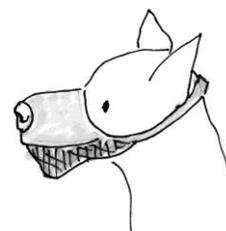
Basket muzzles:

- This type of muzzle is made of wire or rigid, pliable plastic. It fits over the dog's snout and will prevent the dog's teeth from contacting skin or fur.
- The spaces between the wire or plastic ribs allow for excellent airflow.
- The dog can also drink water and be given treats.
- The dog can breathe and, more importantly, pant.
- This is the type of muzzle to use if your dog needs to be walked or exercised while wearing the muzzle.



Fabric with mesh muzzles:

- This type of muzzle has fabric sides with mesh material 1-2 inches wide running down the length of the muzzle. It fits over the dog's snout.
- The mesh material allows the dog to breathe and pant, but he can't take treats or drink water.



Safety Concerns:

- Dogs should not wear a muzzle without supervision. If the dog becomes agitated the muzzle can be destroyed and/or the dog injured trying to get it off.
- Fabric muzzles should not be used when taking a dog on a walk. The fabric muzzles do not allow the dog to breathe and pant properly. Only the basket or fabric/mesh muzzles should be used when the dog needs to be walked or exercised.
- If your dog has aggression towards other animals or people, contact a qualified Behavior Consultant to determine which type of muzzle should be used for your situation.

Training Resources:

Marin Humane's **Behavior & Training Consultants** are available for consultations (on-site or in-home) regarding the behavior modification uses of muzzles at 415.506.6280 or OhBeHAVE@MarinHumane.org.

Muzzles are available for purchase at the Marin Humane **Animal Outfitters Store**. Stop by our store or visit us online at: [Animal Outfitters](#). Please call 415.506.6229 to verify available stock.

Remember to license your dog (It's the LAW)! If your dog gets lost, a license tag on your dog's collar is the fastest way to reunite you and your dog. Even if your dog is microchipped, a license tag is immediately visible and doesn't require a scanning device to read. For more information about licensing, microchipping, and other services provided by **Marin Humane**, visit us at MarinHumane.org or stop by at 171 Bel Marin Keys Blvd, Novato, CA.

