

Walking Equipment

What is it?

Walking equipment consists of tools used to manage your dog on walks. There are three major categories:

- Collars & Halters
- Harnesses
- Leashes

What is it for?

The main reasons for using equipment while walking your dog are for safety, comfort, and to satisfy community legal requirements.

How do you use it?

Collars can provide identification, be visually appealing and some are useful for managing behaviors like pulling on leash. The halter is an effective tool to prevent the dog from pulling. Harnesses provide control, manage leash pulling and can be more comfortable for both handler and dog. Leashes keep both your dog and other animal's safe and are often legally mandated. However, not all of these tools are created equal. Collars should be removed when crating your dog or when playing with other dogs.

Walking Equipment: Collars

Flat Collars

A dog can wear a flat collar all the time, although many dogs “undress” for bedtime.

- Lie flat against the dog's neck and fasten with a buckle or clip. It should be fitted to allow two fingers to slip between the collar and the dog's neck.
- The collar has a D ring to which a dog license and other ID tags can be attached. A leash can be clipped to the ring for walks.

Safety Concerns:

- Some dogs can slip out of a flat collar when it is attached to a leash.
- They don't offer much control for a pulling dog.

Martingale

This collar is effective on many dogs who pull somewhat on the leash and have a desire to please their handler. Good timing (a trained skill) is essential for the collar to be at its most effective.

- A martingale is a limited-slip collar that allows the dog to be comfortable, but gives the handler some control.
- A martingale collar can be used for walks and training, but it should generally be removed when the leash is removed.
- Dogs should still wear a regular collar with identification tags.



- Does not easily come off the dog's neck – even if the dog is pulling backward – making it a good choice for dogs that might slip out of flat collars.
- Looks like a regular flat collar and is comfortable for the dog.

Safety Concerns:

- A martingale should not be worn by the dog when he is unattended or playing with other dogs, as the loop can get caught on objects and put the dog at risk.
- Ineffective on a dog that is a dedicated puller.
- Slip over the head martingales (no buckle or clip) are difficult to remove in an emergency situation.

Pinch or Prong Collar

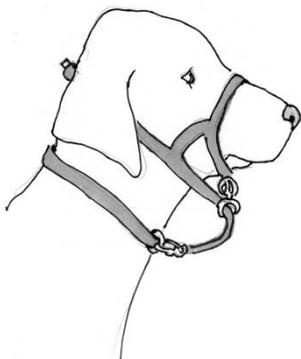
Pinch or prong collars can be useful in controlling/managing thick-necked dogs who cannot be controlled with traditional flat collars or harnesses.

- These are limited-slip collars that allow the dog to be comfortable unless the dog or handler pulls on the leash, at which time prongs pinch the dog's neck. Its effects can be softened by attaching the leash to multiple rings, by covering the prongs with cloth or rubber tips, or by only having a couple of the prongs make contact with the neck. It can be made more painful by using smaller prongs, by tightening the collar, or by sharpening the prongs.
- The dog should not wear the pinch/prong collar all the time, and it should be removed whenever the leash is removed.

Safety Concerns:

- Pinch/prong collars work because they cause pain. These collars should only be used as a last resort, for limited time periods and only after consulting with a Behavior Consultant who will teach the handler how to train using positive reinforcement techniques.
- Can exacerbate behavior issues such as fear and aggression.
- Dogs that are already reactive on leash can become even more reactive due to frustration from collar discomfort.
- The thyroid gland lies at the base of the neck just below the larynx close to where any collar sits. Just one yank can cause injury to a gland that controls many of the body's vital functions.

Walking Equipment: Head Halters



- Canine head halters are similar in design and purpose to horse halters. If a dog wearing a head halter forges ahead of his handler, the tension on the leash causes his head to turn and make him look at his handler. With his head turned, the dog must wait until the handler catches up with him so that the tension is released and he can resume walking. If a dog lags behind his handler, tension occurs on the neck strap and he is compelled to catch up.
- There are many varieties of halters on the market today, including Gentle Leader® (Promise), Halti or Snoot Loop.

- Uses minimal force and minimal pain to move a dog in the direction you wish him to go – **if** used correctly.
- Very comfortable for the handler, and prevents pulling. However, once the halter is removed the dog may go back to pulling unless the handler is very adept.
- Initially uncomfortable for the dog and there can be a long adjustment period compared to the harness.

Safety Concerns:

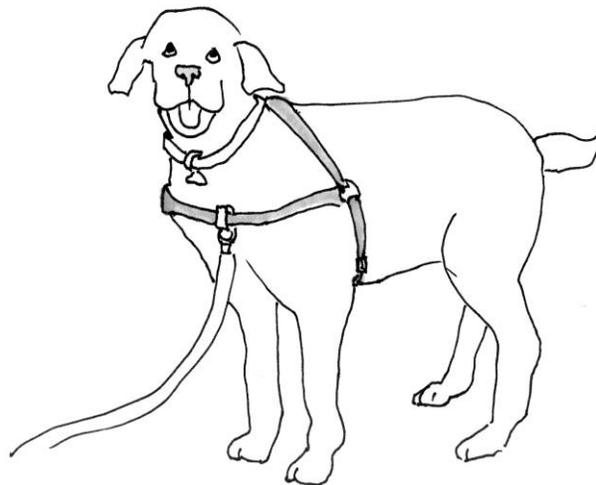
- Can irritate dog's skin if not fitted correctly. Difficult for the average pet owner to fit.
- Is unsafe to use in combination with a retractable leash.
- Should be used only in conjunction with a professional dog trainer's advice.
- Please refer to product literature to properly fit your equipment

Walking Equipment: Harnesses

Front Clip Harness

When the dog pulls, the pressure from the leash is distributed across the body, and the dog is turned towards his handler. The chest strap sits low on the breastbone, so it doesn't put pressure on the trachea. The D or O ring (the metal loop to which the leash attaches) is located at the front of the harness, on the chest. This gives more control over pulling on the leash, jumping up or other poor leash manners.

- Some popular brands are the SENSE-ation® Harness and the Pet Safe Easy Walk® Harness.
- Provides directional steering, allowing for the dog to be turned around when needed.
- May not offer enough control for dogs with serious behavior issues, such as aggression. (See the section on **Halters** for alternative walking tools).
- Comfortable tool for handler and dog.



Safety Concerns:

- Can tangle under the dog's front legs if too much slack is given.
- It is always best to put on a harness while at the side of a dog; bending over or facing frontally can be frightening or threatening to some dogs.
- Some harnesses can cause an irregular gait in the dog (especially for sports activities) and prevent full rotation of their shoulders. An unnatural walking gait can compromise a dog's body over time.

Dual Clip Harness

These harnesses are variations of the front-clip design, as they have an O-ring in the front and another on the back. A special leash with clips on both ends can be used with these harnesses for certain behavior problems; check with a Behavior Consultant.

- Some popular brands are the Freedom Harness, the XtraDog Walking Harness and the Ruffwear Front Range™ Harness.
- Offers more walking options depending on circumstances and dog.
- Precise fit is important for correct harness function.
- Designed to minimize/eliminate pulling without placing pressure on the neck.

Safety Concerns:

- It is always best to put on a harness while at the side of a dog; bending over or facing frontally can be frightening or threatening to some dogs.
- Dog can slip out of the harness if incorrectly fitted.

Back Clip Harness

On the back-clip harness, the D ring is located on the top of the dog's back. Many dogs adjust quite agreeably to wearing back-clip harnesses. The harnesses are especially useful for small dogs with delicate throats easily damaged by collars. Back-clip harnesses are for calm dogs trained not to pull on the leash, as the design does little to discourage pulling. When back-clip harnesses are used with an untrained dog who likes to pull, they elicit the "opposition reflex."

- One popular brand is the Puppia®.
- Easy to put on and comfortable for a dog to wear.
- Leash management is easier than with other collars/harnesses.
- The cute factor! Back-clip harnesses are widely available with decorative patterns and embellishments.
- Offers little control if a dog has behavior issues, such as pulling on the leash, jumping up or displaying aggression.
- Head-shy dogs may resist having it placed over the head.
- Dogs with handling issues may resist being restrained in order to fit and put on the harness.



Safety Concerns:

- It is always best to put on a harness while at the side of a dog; bending over or facing frontally can be frightening or threatening to some dogs.
- Dog can slip out of the harness if incorrectly fitted.

Walking Equipment: Leashes

Leashes are long pieces of material that attach to a dog's collar in order to keep the dog close to the handler. Many places that allow dogs require that they be on leash. Leashes come in a variety of lengths and styles.

Walking Leash:

This leash is four to six feet long and is for general use. Positive reward/reinforcement training should be used in conjunction with a leash so a strong bond can be formed between the owner and dog.

- They keep dogs safe and close to the handler in uncertain, possibly unsafe conditions.
- They aid training because they help keep the dog near the handler.
- Handlers sometimes become overly dependent on using the leash to control the dog.
- Although the dog is connected to the handler, it doesn't require that the dog pay much attention to the person at the other end of the leash.

Safety Concerns:

- Some materials, especially nylon, can cause hand burns if your dog pulls.
- Inappropriate leash use can cause a behavior problem called "leash frustration."

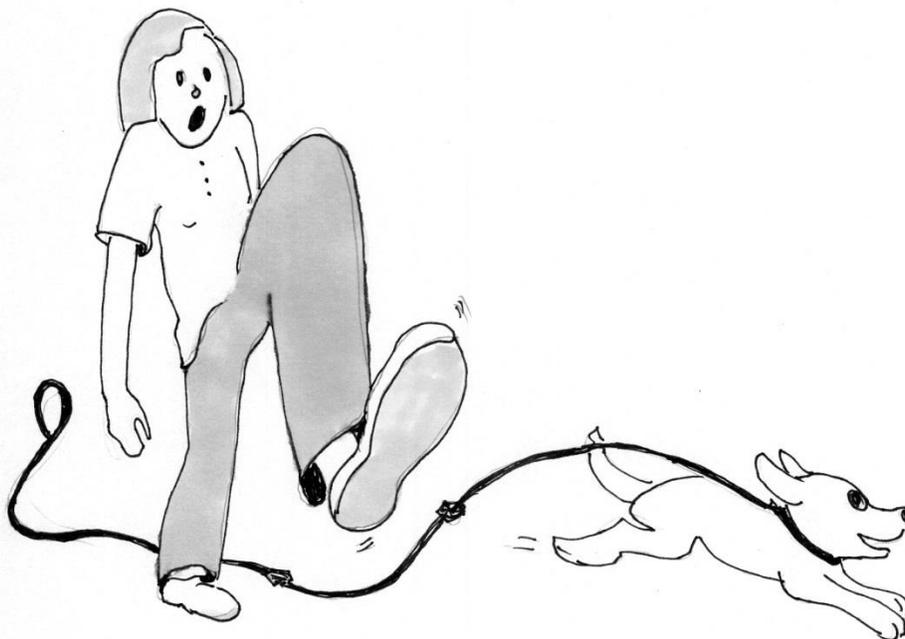
Long Line:

This leash is eight to thirty feet long and is used for training specific behaviors. A long line is used for distance training work, allowing the handler to have control of the dog even though he is farther away than normal. It is particularly useful for building a reliable recall – allowing the dog to be a greater distance from the handler, while still giving the handler control of the dog. (Please review our ***Come When Called*** handout).

- Some behavior modification programs for leash reactive dogs require use of a long line.
- Are often used for tracking and scenting activities where the dog needs room to work.

Safety Concerns:

- Care should be taken when a dog on a long line encounters an off-leash dog where long lines can become tangled in paws, human legs, and other objects on a trail.



Retractable Leash:

A retractable Leash is a long cable-like leash that is housed inside a plastic case. The case includes a sliding switch that allows the handler to set the length of the leash, or release it so the leash extends, allowing the dog to move about.

- Allows the dog to move about while still “connected” to the handler.
- The dog has to pull on the leash in order to get where he wants to go. The dog learns, “If I pull, I get to go wherever I want.”
- Doesn’t satisfy letter of the law for many communities.

Safety Concerns:

- Flexi leads can easily become entangled when one dog encounters another dog.
- Provides owners with a false sense of security and can nullify safety benefits of a leash.
- Dangers include burns when the cord or webbing of the lead gets wrapped around body parts.

Training Resources:

Marin Humane’s **Behavior & Training** Consultants are available for consultations or private training (on-site or in-home) to assist with your equipment needs and to provide training solutions at 415.506.6280 or OhBeHAVE@MarinHumane.org.

Walking Equipment is 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.