

MUZZLE TRAINING YOUR DOG

When muzzle training your dog it's important to make sure you allow enough time for your dog to get used to the muzzle on their own terms before you need them to wear it out and about.

Muzzle training should take place over a series of short sessions, ideally over a period of at least a few days, taking care to make sure your dog associates the muzzle with fun and positive situations.

Head to our Battersea YouTube channel to watch a step by step video on how to muzzle train your dog as well as lots of other dog behaviour advice.

WHAT MUZZLE SHOULD I BUY?

We recommend using a basket type muzzle as these allow you to feed your dog treats while they are wearing it. A basket muzzle will also allow your dog to pant and drink freely. The most important thing is to make sure that any muzzle you buy fits your dog correctly – with a basket muzzle there should be a small space between their nose and the end of the muzzle so it is not uncomfortable to wear.

STEP 1 – INTRODUCING YOUR DOG TO A MUZZLE

Gently hold the muzzle in a cupped hand. You will need to be able to place a treat in the muzzle without it falling through. Take a treat and let your dog see you place it just at the opening of the muzzle. Allow your dog to take the treat from inside the muzzle. Repeat this as many times as required, ideally over a few sessions. Your dog should come to see the muzzle as a treat dispenser and be keen to put their face in it. Once your dog is willingly placing their head into the entrance of the muzzle to retrieve the treat, start putting treats further back into the muzzle, closer to the front, where their nose should eventually be.

TOP TIP:

Allow your dog to take the treat from inside the muzzle. Repeat this as many times as required, ideally over a few sessions. Your dog should come to see the muzzle as a treat dispenser and be keen to put their face in it.

STEP 2 – GETTING YOUR DOG COMFORTABLE WITH THE MUZZLE

Hold the muzzle in your hand and wait for your dog to place their head inside. Once inside, take the treat and feed it to your dog through the side or end of the muzzle. At this point you may find it easier to use a treat in a squeezable tube that will fit in the gaps of the muzzle such as a small amount of pâté or spreadable cheese. Repeat as many times as required until your dog is happy keeping their face in the muzzle. The aim is to get them readily placing their head in the muzzle in anticipation of a treat whenever the muzzle comes out.



STEP 3 – INTRODUCING THE STRAPS BEHIND THE HEAD

Next, instruct your dog to put their head in the muzzle using the treat. Once their head is in the muzzle, lift up the straps behind their ears, without fastening them. This will introduce them to the sensation of the straps. Treat your dog through the muzzle again. Remove the muzzle and repeat this step a few times, still without doing up the straps. This will familiarise your dog with the feeling of the straps around their head without the muzzle being closed.

TOP TIP:

Instruct your dog to put their head in the muzzle using the treat. Once their head is in the muzzle, lift up the straps behind their ears, without fastening them. This will introduce them to the sensation of the straps.

STEP 4 – FASTENING THE MUZZLE

When your dog is happy with the straps being lifted, fasten the muzzle. Reward them immediately and then calmly remove it. If your dog panics or tries to get the muzzle off then you may have moved too fast. If this happens, go back a few steps and try building up to it again. Repeat this step until your dog is relaxed about having the muzzle on and fastened. Once your dog is happy, you can slowly build up the amount of time you leave between fastening the muzzle and giving them a treat.

STEP 5 – WEARING THE MUZZLE REGULARLY

Once your dog is relaxed wearing the muzzle for a short period of time, make sure you continue regular training so that wearing the muzzle is part of their daily routine. You could try putting the muzzle on as you get your dog ready to go for a walk or put it on at home and do some other fun training. This will keep your dog engaged with the muzzle and get them used to associating wearing the muzzle with fun things happening.