

There are many different types of collars, harnesses, and training tools available for dogs. Each piece of equipment has its own purpose, benefits, and limitations. Understanding how these tools work can help you make informed decisions about what is best for your dog and your training goals.

At our organization, we support training methods that focus on positive reinforcement, clear communication, and building trust. While equipment can be a useful management tool, no piece of equipment teaches behaviour on its own. Lasting behaviour change comes from consistent training, management, and meeting a dog's physical and emotional needs.

This guide provides information about commonly used training and management equipment. To help you navigate the options, we have grouped equipment into three categories:

Preferred/Recommended Equipment – Tools that align with our training philosophy and are generally suitable for most dogs when properly fitted and used.

Situational Equipment – Tools that may be appropriate in specific circumstances, depending on the individual dog, handler, and training goals.

Not Recommended Equipment – Tools that rely on pain, discomfort, intimidation, or unnecessary force, or that may pose increased risks to a dog's physical or emotional well-being.

Preferred / Recommended Equipment

These are tools that align well with positive reinforcement-based training and are generally suitable for most dogs. They prioritize comfort, safety, and communication, and are often appropriate for everyday use when properly fitted.

Flat Collars

These collars are suitable for most dogs due to their adjustable design and secure fastening mechanisms, which typically include either a buckle or a clip. Clip style closures are often preferred, as they generally provide a more secure fit and reduce the likelihood of a dog slipping out of the collar.

They are commonly made from durable materials such as nylon, leather, or similar long-lasting fabrics. When selecting a collar, it is important to choose one that is both appropriately sized and sufficiently sturdy for your dog. For example, narrower collars are better suited for smaller breeds, while wider, more robust collars are recommended for larger dogs.



Leashes

Choosing a leash depends on the size and strength of your dog but also comfortability in the handlers hands. Generally, the bigger and or stronger the dog, the greater the width of the leash should be. A 4-6 foot long leash is recommended for every day walks.



Long Lines

These are usually 10-50 feet long and can be helpful when first taking your dog home, especially if they are nervous or have a tendency to escape or bolt out doors. They are also great for recall training or allowing your dog more freedom while still keeping them connected to the handler.



Harnesses

Harnesses are a great option for many dogs, especially those that may be uncomfortable walking with pressure on their neck. They help distribute pressure across the dog's body rather than concentrating it on the neck. Some harnesses have a back attachment point, while others have both front and back attachment points. When using a front-clip harness, attaching the leash to the chest clip can help reduce pulling by gently redirecting the dog's body toward the handler when tension occurs.



Easy Walk Harness

The Easy Walk is a front-clip harness designed specifically to help manage pulling. Unlike many standard harnesses, it has a leash attachment point located on the chest. When the dog pulls, the harness helps redirect their body toward the handler, making it more difficult to continue pulling forward. While equipment can help manage pulling, loose leash walking is still a trained behaviour that requires reinforcement and practice.



Muzzle

A muzzle is a management tool that fits over a dog's nose and mouth to help prevent bites and keep both people and animals safe. When properly fitted and introduced using positive reinforcement, a dog should be able to pant, drink water, and take treats while wearing a muzzle. Muzzles do not address the underlying cause of behaviour and should be used alongside appropriate training, behaviour modification, and management strategies when needed.



Backup Strap

A backup strap is a safety attachment that connects two points of a dog's equipment, such as a muzzle and collar, a harness and collar, or two collars together. Its purpose is to provide an extra layer of security in case a leash clip fails, a collar breaks, or a harness becomes loose or slips off. Backup straps do not replace primary walking equipment or training tools. They are used as a precautionary safety measure to help prevent accidental escapes and improve overall handling security during walks or training sessions.



Situational Equipment

These tools may be helpful in specific situations or for certain dogs, particularly when additional management or control is needed. Their usefulness depends on the individual dog, handler experience, and how they are introduced and used.

Martingale (Limited Slip) Collars

Martingale collars are typically made from nylon webbing or leather, sometimes with a chain in the smaller control loop. They are designed to sit loosely on the neck during normal use and gently tighten if a dog pulls forward or tries to slip out.

When properly fitted, the collar should tighten to a snug position without causing discomfort or digging into the neck, helping reduce the risk of escape while walking or handling.

Although martingale collars are often used for added safety, they can still place pressure on the neck if a dog suddenly lunges or pulls strongly. They should be used as a management tool alongside leash training, rather than as a method for preventing pulling.



Head Collar/ Halti/ Gentle Leader

This type of collar fits around the dog’s muzzle and the back of the neck, with the leash attaching under the chin. It is designed to provide additional control for dogs who are strong pullers, but requires careful introduction to ensure the dog is comfortable wearing it.

Head collars should be introduced gradually using positive reinforcement before being used on walks. The goal is to help the dog feel comfortable wearing the equipment before adding leash pressure or outdoor distractions.

When used correctly, a head collar gently redirects the dog’s head when they pull, which can help reduce pulling and make the dog easier to manage on leash. It is a management tool and should be used alongside leash training and reinforcement of loose-leash walking skills.



Slip Leads

Slip leads are a combined leash and collar made from a single loop of material that tightens when tension is applied. They are commonly used in shelter and veterinary settings as a quick and effective handling tool for moving dogs safely in and out of kennels or during transport.

Slip leads can be useful in situations where quick, temporary control is needed. However, they are not recommended for everyday walking or training, as they provide limited precision control and can tighten around the neck when a dog pulls or suddenly moves forward.

For regular leash walking and training, a properly fitted collar or harness is recommended instead.



Not Recommended Equipment – Tools that rely on pain, discomfort, intimidation, or unnecessary force, or that may pose increased risks to a dog's physical or emotional well-being.

These tools are included for educational purposes so adopters can make informed choices. As an organization, we do not recommend their use as part of our training and handling approach, as they are not aligned with our positive reinforcement-based philosophy. Current evidence-based training guidelines support the use of positive reinforcement as the most effective and least intrusive method of teaching new behaviours.

Approaches that rely on pain, discomfort, or intimidation may suppress behaviour in the short term but do not effectively teach alternative skills and can increase stress or fear in some dogs.

Choke Chains, Prong Collars, and Slip Collars

These collars work by tightening around the dog's neck when tension is applied to the leash, which can create discomfort or pressure intended to discourage pulling.

While they are still seen in some training contexts, they are not aligned with our positive reinforcement-based approach. We believe dogs can learn loose-leash walking effectively without the use of pain or aversive pressure.

Even strong, large dogs are capable of learning not to pull on leash. With appropriate equipment, clear training, and reinforcement, most dogs can develop comfortable and polite leash skills.



Shock or Electronic Collars

These devices deliver an electric stimulation to the dog as a consequence of behaviour. They are considered aversive tools and are not recommended as part of our training approach.

When used without extensive professional guidance, they may contribute to increased stress, fear, or confusion in dogs, and can sometimes worsen behaviour rather than resolve it.

Current evidence-based training approaches prioritize positive reinforcement methods, which focus on teaching dogs what to do rather than relying on discomfort or aversive consequences.



Retractable Leashes

Retractable leashes are not recommended for regular walking or training. They provide a large amount of leash length with limited real-time control, which can make it more difficult to safely guide your dog and respond quickly in unexpected situations.

The thin cord can also increase the risk of tangling, injury, or the leash breaking under pressure, and dogs may learn to move into constant tension rather than walking on a loose leash.

If you would like to give your dog more freedom to explore while still remaining safely connected, we recommend using a long line instead, which provides more control and safety while allowing appropriate distance in open areas.

