

Wilmette Pet Center

"the place for people who love pets"



It may seem overwhelming when someone stops is for something to use to walk their dog; there are so many choices and options, but it isn't as daunting as one might think. We'll break them down for you!

Collars - for the longest time, these were the standards when you took your pooch outside for a walk.

Simple collars - Regular collars are actually our least favorite ways to walk a dog. A lot of dogs have a natural instinct to pull in the opposite direction when pulled from collars. There is some concern that a dog can injure their necks if they suddenly pull hard or lunge quickly when walking. It is also not as secure, as some dogs can wiggle out of them if there is any slack to it - for the best fit, make it snug enough to fit two fingers underneath it. While they can be used with gentle dogs that don't pull or chase, we really like to recommend just using collars for ID tags. Collars can teach your dog that the feel of pressure against its throat is positive reinforcement for going outside.

Choke chains - Really designed to be used for training purposes as they give quick corrections during sessions and should not be used for walks. These work by putting pressure on their necks, correcting bad behavior. Some dogs do respond well to this collar, and some dogs can ignore the signals it sends them. Used for assertive dominant style training.

Martingale collar - a variation on the choke collar, these half check collars are a little gentler on your dog's neck. They should be fit just like a regular collar, with 2 fingers space underneath the main collar. These collars are designed to be worn continuously so you can give quick corrections at any given moment.



Prong collars - Another variation of the choke collar, these use small prongs on each link to put pressure on their neck. Their use is controversial as they are considered to be cruel and yet properly used it can an effective training tool actually less damaging to a pulling dogs throat than a collar or choke chain. It should also only be used for training purposes, it should be fit high on the neck and with the prongs flat against the skin, not loose. Links can be added or removed to ensure a proper fit. It should be removed after training, not used for walks, and should never be left on all the time . Links are known to become bent over time and could pop open when the dog jerks suddenly, a hazard with your dog bolting into traffic. Use a hard to find rope style choke in conjunction as a safety strap.

Head halter style - this ingenious walking system can go around the neck, like a traditional collar, but also has a component that fits around their muzzle. Because the leash attaches here, when they want to pull forward, it turns their head and that turns them from pulling forward. It can be very effective since it gives you control of their head. Some dogs need some training to become accustomed to the muzzle component, making it difficult to put and keep it on.



There is also a risk if your dog pulls quickly, the quick motion could injure their neck. Most effective for crazy pulling dogs. Owners usually don't want to take the time to properly acclimate. Can be confused for a muzzle, although it doesn't limit their mouths in any way.

Harnesses make much more effective walking aids. They are more secure, more effective, and give the dog the feeling that you are more in control. They are also a lot safer, being more gentle on their bodies and putting less stress on their necks.



Step in style - this is either a simple nylon or mesh style harness. It is simple to put on, and has a part that goes round the shoulders and a part that goes around the chest, so it gives some support. It does not have any method for correction and training so it works best for dogs that do not pull.

Freedom harness - This clever harness uses compression help stop your dog from pulling. The loop where the lead attaches is centered on their back and front giving control of the dogs momentum. Used for positive reinforcement. When the dog is pulling, use the leash to turn the dog around so he is facing you. Give the dog praise and treats, and they will forget why they were pulling.. COMING SOON!



Chest harnesses - These harnesses work because the leash attaches to the front of the chest. If your dog wants to pull, they are gently guided back. The harness can be be confusing to put on at first, but by following the instructions, and making sure it fits well, it can be a very effective tool to help stop your dog from pulling. Similar to the freedom but the leash is on one point at the chest. It's good for one handed operation for dogs who aren't as big pullers. Can also take some time for owners to get used to.



No pull harnesses - Harnesses like the Yup! mesh harness use compression to help stop dogs from pulling; the straps fit around the dog's chest, and because the leash attaches to the ends of these padded straps, when they pull it compresses, encouraging them to step back. It's easy to fit, secure, and we have found one of the most effective tools for dogs that like to pull. It even has padded straps to help prevent chaffing on your dog's skin.

Dog trainers always have their favorite harnesses/collars to use. If you're working with one, use what they recommend. After training, you may find that you want to change the style of collar/harness you use daily.

No harness or collar device is perfect for every dog and their owners. Bring your dog in and let us help by learning more about how your dog. Each device can be successful if the owner is willing to spend the time in training. Each device is uniquely appropriate depending how much the dog pulls and the owners knowledge of dog training. Be sure to give boundless and consistent rewarding with praise no matter what leash training device you choose.