

# Walking your dog with a head halter

## The Gentle Leader

**Step One:** Now that you have the Gentle leader (G/L) adjusted to fit your dog properly, its time to hook your leash correctly to the head collar. Clip the leash to the ring of the G/L and the ring of your dog's flat collar. This makes the transition to greater control easier on your dog because he is already used to leash pressure on his neck collar. Also by clipping both together, the first experience of having his nose and mouth controlled by the G/L creates less panic and depression. (If the G/L is directly hooked to the leash by the single ring under the chin when you pull up, the G/L closes the mouth and most dog will panic.) The "collar to G/L hookup" using both rings helps the dog adjust to this new thing on its nose much faster and with less fear. Your dog will still try to paw the noseband off. Don't begin walking right away. Just stand still and help your dog focus on a ball or a piece of food so he can stop focussing on the thing around his nose. Think about how strange the halter feels. Think how trapped the dog must feel and how much his vision is affected - just put a piece of paper under your eye and see how it feels and looks. Your dog will resist - that's ok. If he can't get a ball in his mouth then loosen the plastic stopper on the nose loop under the chin. If the ball in the mouth setting makes the nose band too loose, then tighten it a little and use a piece of garden hose or an old sock to play with instead of the ball. Feed your dog his dinner with the G/L on for the next two weeks. Whenever you take your dog for a walk you must use the G/L and not compromise. If you aren't willing to make this level of commitment to its use, your dog will always hate it! This head halter is not a muzzle. It is only a tool to help teach your dog how to walk without pulling. If you need to lure your dog at first to walk with this on, then do so. Once he can play ball, eat his dinner, walk around the house for 5minutes without trying to get it off, then you are ready for step two.

**Step Two:** After your dog has the G/L on and can focus on you for a few minutes at a time, have treats in hand and attach the leash to your waist. To do this, hook the leash to a belt loop leaving 3-4 feet of leash (more for a little dog) and then start walking. As soon as the leash tightens, stop, wait for dog to look back at you, then say YES (or C/T), and toss a treat to him. I start moving backwards at this time. If the dog follows, I will say YES and toss another treat. Now I will pivot to change direction and start to walk a straight line again. You will repeat the above sequence until you can walk for a distance of forty feet in a straight line without having to back up. You should be marking with YES or C/T any NON-pulling behavior. Don't let your dog drag on the gentle leader otherwise you aren't ever going to teach him to stop pulling. If your dog doesn't like treats then you can use sniffing for reinforcement. Just say "Go Sniff" after you have said YES because he has released the pressure on the leash by looking at you. And then let him sniff. Your dog will learn if he doesn't pull, he will get to go sniff! Sniffing is all most of our dogs want to do anyway - you are just providing them a way to earn a wanted reinforcement. Giving you eye contact as you move, rather than pulling with his head faced away from you is what you training. You will reinforce for eye contact and non-pulling while constantly attempting to vary distance traveled and distractions encountered.

**Step Three:** Now that your dog can walk around the block without you having to back up, its time to slip off the nose loop (just pull it off nose and it will become a part of the collar). Do this once you have started and the walking is going well. Slip off the nosepiece, continue walking, and if your dog doesn't pull then reinforce good behavior. If your dog starts to pull again, then just stop, back up, and when your dog stops pulling then reinforce for good behavior. If you have to do this three times in a short distance then pull nose loop back up onto the dog's nose and try again. Once your dog is walking nicely then again slip off the nose loop and continue walking. Soon your dog will be walking nicely without the nose loop. Now you need to practice in lots of different places and different situations. If you really want to test that your dog is pulling, take a piece of black thread (three feet long) and attach the thread to your dog's collar and your belt loop. Now how are you making out! If the thread doesn't break you are all set. Have a nice walk - you both deserve it!

### Conditioning to the Gentle Leader

How to make the Gentle Leader the key to something good instead of the handcuffs to freedom:

Use meat baby food in the jar or anything really smelly appealing in a small jar. Have a clicker ready or be prepared to use "Yes" as a marker (the clicker would be better).

1. Put the collar part of the GL on, but not the nosepiece.
2. Have the nosepiece preset for very loose so in a little bit you can slip it over his nose without unhooking the collar part.
3. Hook leash to flat collar only.
4. Open the baby food jar and bring it down to the dog's nose. Let the dog sniff and take a lick. Click for licking and remove jar after only a brief lick.
5. The dog will either light right up because it LOVES this food or show moderate interest. Use approach A for strong positive response to food and B for the less enthusiastic response.
  - a. If dog loves what it licked it will pressure you for another taste, encourage with voice "Did you like that? Do you want more? (Be encouraging!!! You need to intrigue the dog with this wonderful smelly food. Some dogs you can be silly and boisterous, others seductive and luring.) Waiting for the dog to show some behavior expressing interest so that you can deliver another lick for "engaging" with you. Again let him brief lick and click. Keep doing this till you can turn and move and the dog will follow trying to pressure you to give him the treat. Deliver the lick and click. You can now begin to move around the room with the dog following, and lick and click for following, small behaviors, etc. When the dog can move around and remain focused on getting access to

the baby food. Move to #6

b. If the dog sniffs but doesn't lick intensely let the jar stay still under their nose till the smell encourages a lick. Let them have a few licks, saying "gooooood" softly while they are learning that what you have tastes good. Now stand up and see if you can encourage an interest in trying for another lick. As they show interest, move to the 5a sequence above. This may take a few days, not a few minutes. Don't worry. Experiment with truly wonderful stuff in the magic jar.

6. Now you should try slipping the nosepiece over the dog's nose before letting him take a lick. As soon as he licks, you click, slip it off and move around letting the dog pressure you for another lick. Again slip the nosepiece on for a lick.

7. Once the nosepiece has become part of getting a lick, leave it on after the lick as you move and let the dog follow and get another lick. If the nosepiece is so loose it slips off, make slipping it back on a way to earn a lick.

8. The dog should now be at a point where you can ask for some simple behaviors to get a chance to lick the food. Nosepiece is loosely on.

Some important points:

\* The baby food jar is a perfect delivery system for our goals. The opening doesn't allow for a lot of food to get licked out, you can screw the top off & on easily. Because it is small and thick it is very difficult to break. \* Meat baby food is generally really appealing, but with a truly shutdown dog you may have to experiment. Try blending canned tuna with a little cottage cheese. Or blend meatballs. Test food from your frig and then blend up a gooey mix. You want something that smells irresistible but is custardy texture & consistency so they can only get a little bit of a taste when they lick it.

\* Most of the time they should only get a lick. A huge reinforcement value is added to what is in the baby food jar by removing from the dog after has taken a quick taste. We are trying to tantalize. For the very shy, shutdown dog in the beginning let them have a few good licks. Be sure with the shy or shutdown dog that you don't scare them by a fast delivery or removal of food jar. \* For the dog that has become engaged with the food treat then you can deliver fast and you want to remove after just a brief chance to get a lick as it makes access more important.

\* Make a fuss about getting to lick the food. You need to make getting the food a wonderful game. Let the dog pressure the handler to get the treat. Let the dog be pushy to get the food at this point. Remember that unless you have a paycheck that is so powerful it overrides the dog's fear and anxiety you can't change behavior. So don't correct for pushiness, just start slipping the noseband on, BUT don't jump to asking for behaviors till the dog is obsessed with the food in the jar.

\* Only when the dog is really focused on getting the food jar reward, should you move to

slipping the nosepiece on as part of getting the food.

\* Go back and reread How to create a Toy Crazy Dog in the manual. This is a variation on Susan Garrett's concept.

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