

# BASKET MUZZLE TRAINING

## NEED MORE HELP?

Find additional resources at  
[pasadenahumane.org/behavior](https://pasadenahumane.org/behavior).

Muzzles are a useful tool for a dog to become comfortable wearing, particularly if that dog struggles with reactivity. Muzzles can be used in multiple situations, such as during vet visits, trips to the groomer, and even daily walks. Wearing a muzzle is perfectly humane if taught properly and can keep your dog and the people around you safe. Follow these guidelines to set your dog up for success! We like basket muzzles because the dog can breathe and drink while wearing the equipment.

**Step 1:** Start by leaving the muzzle on the ground for the dog to approach on their own. Put delicious treats in the basket of the muzzle, such as peanut butter, for them to eat. This will create a positive association with the muzzle and will start to familiarize your dog with having a muzzle on their face.

**Step 2:** Once the dog seems totally comfortable with the first step, move on to holding the muzzle in your hand and letting the dog eat out of it. This will familiarize the dog with being around the muzzle while you are handling it.

**Step 3:** It's time to start getting your dog used to the straps moving around and touching their face. Continue to let the dog feed from the basket, and while doing so, touch the straps and move them around for very brief intervals. This may take some time, so don't rush to the next step until the dog seems totally uninterested in whatever you do with the straps.

**Step 4:** Practice holding the straps tight against the back of the dog's head as if the muzzle were already fastened. Do this for brief periods while there is delicious food in the basket of the muzzle. Let go of the straps and discontinue the session if the dog runs out of food.

**Step 5:** Once the dog is totally comfortable with all the previous steps, you can practice fastening the straps and letting the dog wear the muzzle while continuing to reward generously. Start by fastening the muzzle for very brief periods and slowly increasing the amount of time.

If, at any point during these steps, the dog shows signs of discomfort, such as backing away from the muzzle, refusing food, cowering, tucking their tail, etc., it's time to slow down! Return to the previous step and slowly work back up to where you were.

(over)



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## Safety Reminders

- Never leave a dog with a muzzle on unsupervised! The dog could get caught, remove the muzzle, or otherwise injure themselves.
- Knowing the correct fit of a muzzle is very important. The muzzle straps should be tight enough that the dog can't pull or shake the muzzle off, but the basket should be loose enough that the dog can still breathe, pant, and eat.
- Incidents of reactivity can happen even with a muzzle, so if your dog has a history of reactivity toward people, it is still safer to keep a safe distance from other people. This will also prevent unnecessary anxiety for your dog.
- When removing the muzzle, do so in a quiet place with little to no stress triggers. This will prevent the dog from squirming, escaping, or biting anyone when the muzzle comes off.
- If you have concerns about successfully muzzle training your dog, seek out a positive reinforcement trainer and explain your dog's needs.

**We are always here to help! You can find additional behavior and training resources at [pasadenahumane.org/behavior](https://pasadenahumane.org/behavior).**

*Adapted from Northeast Animal Shelter*



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