



MUZZLE TRAINING

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MUZZLE TRAINING:

a step-by-step guide

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Introduction

Teaching your dog to be comfortable wearing a muzzle is a good idea for many reasons. One of them is safety on a hike: if you don't trust your dog 100% around dogs, critters, people etc., having them wear a muzzle will help you relax. If your dog doesn't like strange dogs invading their personal space, but you would like to take them hiking in places where you will occasionally encounter off-leash dogs, having them in a muzzle keeps everyone safe. (A leash doesn't do that, because strange dogs may still run up to your dog.) A muzzle also signals to other people that your dog may not want to greet their happy-go-lucky pup.

When I have Grit off leash in an area where we might encounter dogs or people, she'll usually wear a muzzle. She is good with dogs who keep out of her way or greet her politely, but she is not the kind of dog who appreciates rambunctious dogs who come barreling up to her. Knowing that on a walk, we will occasionally encounter such dogs - along with owners who won't be able to recall them - Grit wears a muzzle just to be safe. This ensures I won't be stressed out by these encounters - I don't need to worry that my dog could hurt the strange dog. This makes a big difference for my own peace of mind. If Grit didn't wear a muzzle, I'd probably be angry at other owners for letting their dogs run up to her, and the encounter might ruin my enjoyment of our adventure.

Wearing a muzzle doesn't reduce Grit's enjoyment of the walk. She is used to it and forgets she's even wearing it - it's like me wearing my glasses.

Do you worry your dog might hurt another dog (or anyone or anything else)? Or do you worry your dog is going to eat things on a hike that you'd rather they wouldn't? Train them to wear a muzzle and gain some peace of mind!

Step 1

Smear a little bit of peanut butter or cream cheese on the inside of the bottom of the muzzle. Offer it to your dog like a bowl you are holding. Do not move the muzzle towards your dog, but

wait for them to stick their nose in! Let them lick their treat; then remove the muzzle. Refill and repeat. Stay at this step until your dog will immediately and without hesitation put their nose into the muzzle as soon as you present it!

https://youtu.be/ipDV_OcmFY4

Step 2

Again, put peanut butter or cream cheese into the muzzle and offer it to your dog. Move the muzzle away from your dog as they stick their nose in. Keep moving it around your body so they have to make an effort to follow it and keep their nose inside!

<https://youtu.be/vFOfizCncJU>

Step 3

Present the muzzle without peanut butter (or another deliciously sticky substance of your choice.) Wait for your dog to stick their nose in. Feed through the muzzle; then remove it *before* they have a chance to withdraw their nose.



If using a Baskerville Ultra, feed through the opening indicated by the red arrow!

Repeat until your dog looks happy anytime you bring out the muzzle and puts in their nose without hesitation!

<https://youtu.be/zbEn8B1fYFA>

Step 4

Like step 3 - only that now, we are rewarding the dog for keeping their nose in the muzzle!

- Present the muzzle. Wait for your dog to stick their nose in.
- Feed several times in a row while the dog keeps their nose in the muzzle.
- Remove the muzzle before they have a chance to pull back.

<https://youtu.be/x5qfiHHNgf4>

Step 5

Like step 4 - but this time, you'll **put the strap behind the ears and hold it in place** (don't close it just yet) while feeding.

If your dog is uncomfortable with this step, put the strap behind their ears very briefly, remove it immediately, and keep feeding while the dog's nose is still in the muzzle.

<https://youtu.be/nicYAd1i4ng>

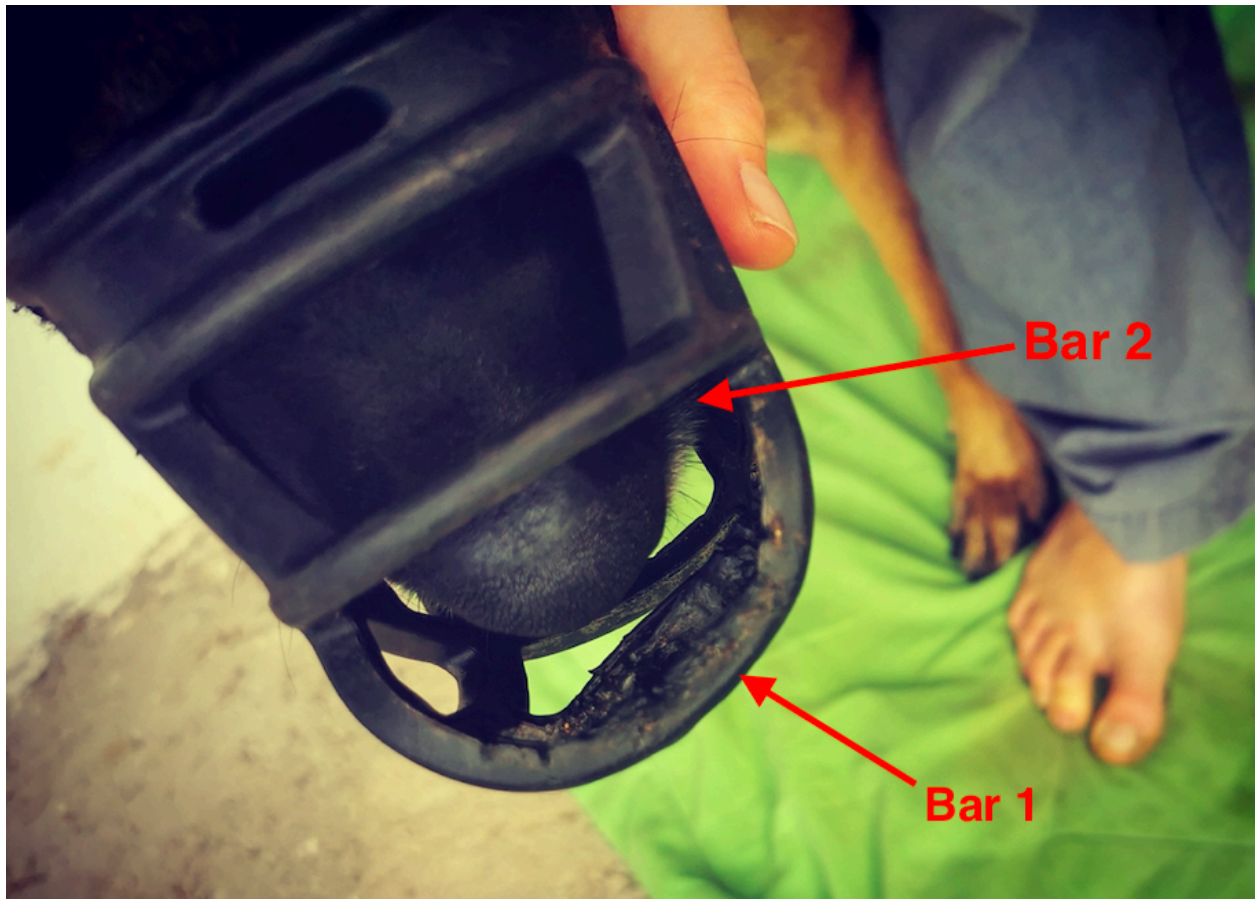
Step 6

Once your dog is comfortable with step 5:

- Close the strap behind their ears,
- feed a few treats in a row,
- open the strap ...
- and remove the muzzle.

How tight should it be?

I go for maximum tightness without touching the nose. Here's an example with the Baskerville Ultra. If bar 1 touches the tip of the nose when the dog is wearing it, it's too tight. If you are able to pull it down over the dog's muzzle past bar 2, it's too loose. This is what it should look like on your dog:



<https://youtu.be/rhWCNk1z4uI>

Step 7

Is step 6 going well? Try offering a treat at a little distance from your dog's nose so they have to take a few steps *while wearing their muzzle!*

https://youtu.be/_dl5-WRgO9I

Step 8

Offer the muzzle right before going on a walk, close the strap, feed a cookie, walk for up to 2 minutes (feeding a cookie every 10-15 seconds), and then remove the muzzle while continuing your walk.

In step 8, **the muzzle predicts going for a walk** - it's what let's your dog know the fun is about to start!

Gradually extend the time your dog is wearing it, and reduce the amount of cookies you feed.

Most dogs will stop thinking about the muzzle once they are out and about, being too busy sniffing and exploring. It's not a big deal if your dog occasionally rubs their nose on the ground when they remember the muzzle and feel itchy. As long as this doesn't last more than a few seconds, it's just like me readjusting my glasses on my nose.

Step 9

Enjoy your walk!



Homework

If you are working with this text during an active class period, start with step 1 and show me a video!