



**UVHS Behavior Tips**  
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## Gentle Leader

Fitting and putting on the Gentle Leader (G/L):

**Look carefully at your G/L. There are two different straps. One strap is wide with a buckle on each end – this is the collar part. The other strap is narrow which forms a loop with a ring at the end – this is the nose strap.**

- 1. Grasp each end of the wide nylon strap and stretch it between both hands. The narrow nylon strap hangs down to form a capital T. The ring of the narrow strap should be at the bottom of the T.**
- 2. Bring the two ends of the wide strap around your dog's neck – high on your dog's neck, just behind his ears. Lengthen or shorten the wide strap so that when it is fastened you can slip two fingers under the wide strap.**
- 3. Now that the collar part of the G/L has been sized properly, once again hold the G/L to form a capital T. Let go of one end of the wide strap to grasp the narrow strap/loop in the metal square in middle of the T. This narrow strap is the nose loop. Pull up on this to make a loop. Let go of the other end of the wide strap and just hold onto to loop.**
- 4. Be sure you have some treats. Hold a treat on the opposite side of the loop so that the dog can put its muzzle comfortably through the loop to get the treats. Just let it sit on the dog's nose while he eats the cookie. He might drop his head (that's OK) and it will fall off. That's ok too. Just pick up the loop and do it all over again. Soon the dog will not drop his nose and the loop piece will stay on.**
- 5. Now you are ready to hook the collar strap. Have your dog put his nose through the nose loop for a treat. While the loop is on his nose and as he is eating the treat, slip your hands down to find the neck straps on each side of his nose and hook them behind the dog's neck.**
- 6. There is one final part to fitting the G/L. You need to slip the plastic guide near the ring of the nose loop up. You want it tight enough so the nose loop won't fall off the dog's nose if he tips his head down; however it should be loose enough for the dog to easily hold a ball in his mouth. To test, try to pull the loop off over the end of your dog's nose. You should be able to slip it off with some effort. Too loose is better than too tight. You can always just tighten it a bit more if it slips off too easily. If the nose loop is too tight it makes the dog unnecessarily worried. Even if the nose loop slips off the collar part it still securely fastened.**

How to use 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 slide 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 is all set. Have a nice walk - you both deserve it!