



Successfully using a Muzzle

& ensuring your dog is happy to wear it





Why use a Muzzle?

What's the need? Under UK law, your dog need only make another person fear your dog may harm them, and you are liable for prosecution. If your dog poses a safety risk to other pets or people, muzzles are an essential part of a training plan. Also, dogs may become injured and need a veterinary examination. Even the friendliest dog can show aggression in the face of extreme pain, requiring a muzzle to be worn.





Types of Muzzle

Basket muzzles are best as they will not hinder your dog's ability to drink or pant. Holes enable giving treats, which makes muzzle-wearing a positive experience.



Baskerville original muzzle. These clip-closed muzzles are less fiddly to do up, and will fit traditionally shaped dog faces. A wide range of sizes are available, also suitable for small dogs.



Baskerville Ultra has an additional front strap. These muzzles give an extra secure fit & can be heated and moulded to your dog's face shape.



Sighthounds require extra-long muzzles to fit their noses. They are often plastic & padded on the nose.



Flat-faced dogs require specialised muzzles. Mesh ones allowing the mouth to open and the dog to pant are best.





A pleasant time

Firstly, the muzzle has to be a non-threatening object with positive connotations for the dog. Initially the dog should be rewarded just for being in the presence of the muzzle, and especially when you're holding it.





Which reward?

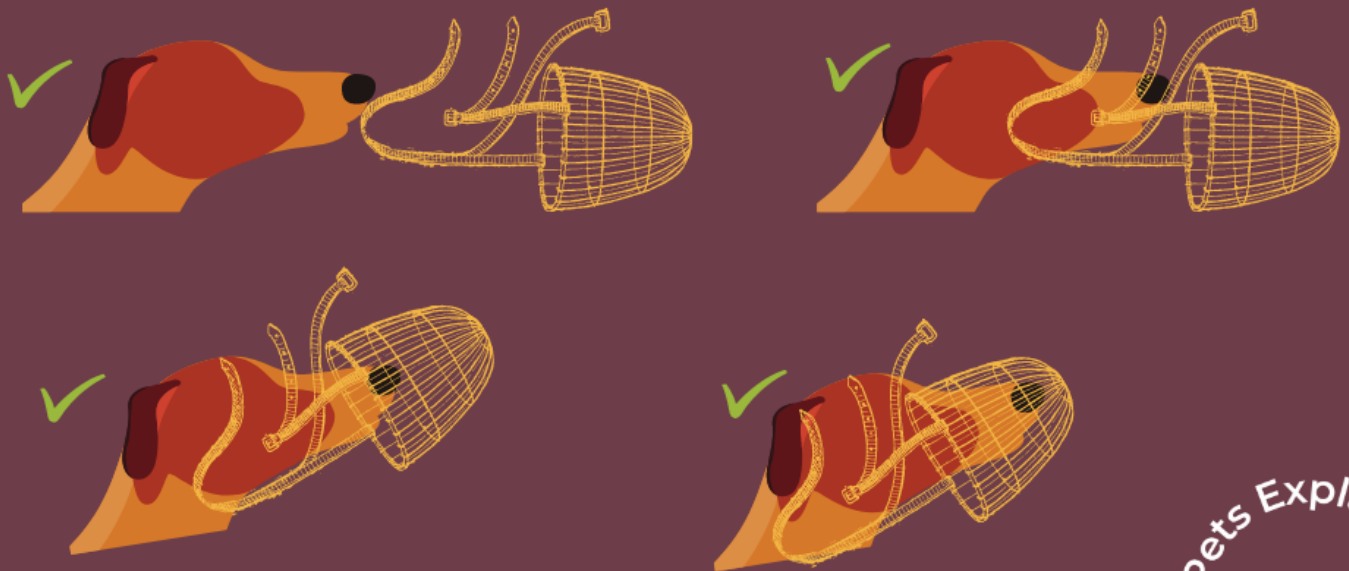
In the main, a food reward works best for the majority of the muzzle association process. This is because it is important to be able to reward whilst the dog's head is inside the muzzle. This can be done easily with food paste through the holes of a basket muzzle. However, for dogs motivated by physical touch, strokes can be very successful a reward here. Toys are not ideal for muzzle training.





Getting the nose in

Your dog should be rewarded for gradually putting their face deeper into the muzzle. Begin by rewarding for sniffing the muzzle, then progressively sniffing deeper into the muzzle area. This can be done by placing high-value food on the muzzle in strategic places. This should be built up slowly over multiple sessions at the dog's pace.





Context

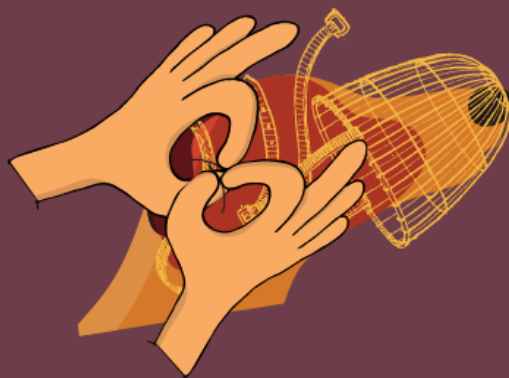
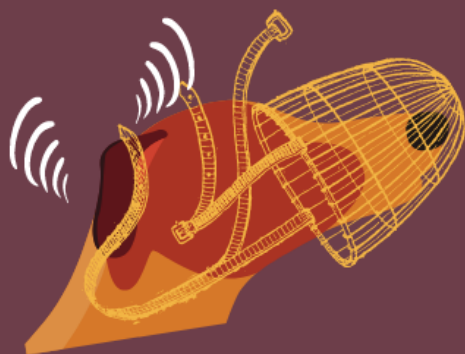
The context of your own body language whilst muzzle associating is imperative. You must be relaxed, and avoid any fast movements. Don't 'shock' the dog by doing the straps up as soon as his face is inside - if he panics, he'll go back many steps. Ensure you are relaxed, the session is no more than 5 minutes long & in a room he is comfortable in. Avoid staring at him, and allow the session to end if he walks away.





Fastening the buckle

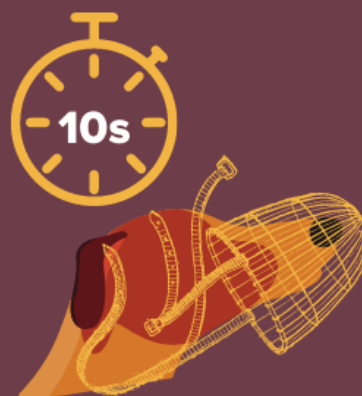
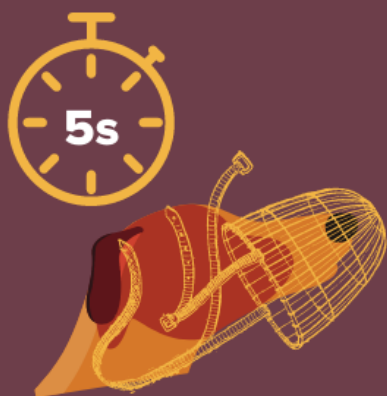
This can be a scary step for your dog. Ensure this is practiced over multiple sessions. First, fiddle with the straps (whilst his head is inside) and reward him after the straps jangle. Moving onwards, do it up loosely, reward, and move on to the appropriate fit slowly. Ensure he is relaxed - go back a step if he panics.





Building duration

The next step is to encourage your dog to keep his face inside the muzzle for longer periods of time. First, once his face is inside, remove immediately and reward. Next, reward him for tolerating the muzzle being done up. Once relaxed, withhold the reward for 1 or 2 seconds. Over multiple sessions, build this up to 5 or 10 seconds.





Becoming normal

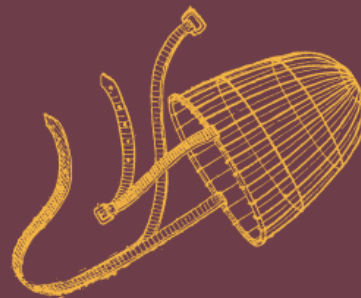
In an ideal world, you could pop your dog's muzzle on and go, wherever you are, whenever the need arises. For this to be comfortable for your dog, he must learn to wear the muzzle in multiple situations.

Continue muzzle training in different rooms, outside, and on short lead-walks in the garden whilst fastened. Continue to reward profusely in each new context.





To be continued



You should continue to muzzle associate your dog sporadically, so he always remains confident with one on. He should enjoy the muzzle as he will know at this point that it brings fun. If you are struggling, contact a qualified trainer or behaviourist for support.