

Dog: Head Halter Exercises



Benefit

Teaching your dog to love his head halter makes your walks much more enjoyable for you and your dog. It's well worth a little work at the outset to avoid having your dog stop many times during a walk to paw at his halter.

What You Need

- High-value treats like chicken or cheese, or a favorite toy.
- A clicker, if you use one. Otherwise, say "yes!" to mark the behavior.
- A quiet area without distractions for practicing.
- Two or three 15-minute sessions for each exercise (1, 2, and 3).

How to Train It

EXERCISE 1

Step 1. Hold the head halter up by the nose loop with one hand so your dog notices it. With a treat in your hand, reach through the nose loop and let your dog take the treat. As soon as your dog eats the treat, put the head halter behind your back (out of sight).

Step 2. Repeat this exercise until your dog anticipates the treat by sticking his nose through the nose loop voluntarily.

Step 3. Next, leave the nose loop on your dog's nose for just a fraction of a second more each time before you present the treat. When your dog eagerly pushes his nose through the loop as soon as you present the treat, leave the loop on while you feed several treats in quick succession. This is easiest if your dog looks at you, because it keeps his nose up.

Step 4. When you can leave the nose loop on for 20–30 seconds while delivering a treat every 2–3 seconds, go back to putting it on for just a second, but taking one neck strap around his neck for a second before treating and removing the head halter. Work up to holding both neck straps around his neck (don't buckle them) for several seconds while you deliver treats.

Tips

- Start at the beginning each time.
- Make sure the treats don't start coming until the head halter is in the picture and that the treats disappear when the head halter does. You can also use a toy instead.

EXERCISE 2

Step 1. Quickly go through the sequence from exercise 1 of treating your dog through the nose loop, with the nose loop on, and with the straps held up.

Step 2. When you can hold the straps together (almost as if they were buckled) and feed for several seconds, try buckling the straps for a second, giving a great treat, then taking the head halter off. Work up to leaving the head halter buckled for several seconds while you feed treats.

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Step 3. Next, let your dog eat the rest of the treats with the head halter on. As soon as he finishes, take the halter off and leave him alone for a few minutes.

Step 4. Feed your dog with the head halter on.

Step 5. Put on the head halter right before you put on your dog's regular collar and leash to go for a walk. Walk him with the head halter on, but don't attach the leash to the halter—use the regular collar.

Tip

- Make sure your head halter fits properly. The head strap should be tight enough that you can only squeeze one finger under it. The nose loop should go down to the edge of the nose leather, but make sure it can't be pushed off, even when pulled hard.

EXERCISE 3

Step 1. Now attach the leash to the head halter. Keep your leash as loose as possible, and don't let the leash snap tight at any point. If necessary, it's better to tighten gradually, i.e. reel in your dog smoothly and gently.

Step 2. At some point your dog may try to rub the halter off on the ground. If so, gently bring his head off the ground, releasing the pressure on the leash as soon as he stops pulling toward the ground. Use treats, praise, and happy talk frequently whenever your dog walks with the leash loose.