

Dog: Keeping Small Dogs Safe in the City



Use Small Dog Equipment:

1. Collar and harness. Small dogs need to wear a properly fitted collar they can't slip out of, such as a martingale-style collar. For dogs that pull on leash, an anti-pull harness is a good option (see *Head Halters & Harnesses*). For dogs with sensitive throats, body harnesses are usually a safe option.

2. Leash. Small dogs are in danger of being stepped on while walking on city sidewalks, so always walk your dog on a 4-foot leash and keep him close to your side. Retracting leashes pose a hazard to pedestrians, other dogs, and potentially your dog, as people might not see your dog or the leash.

3. Custom ID. All dogs should wear an ID tag. If tags are too big for your dog, invest in a custom embroidered collar or a collar with a nameplate. Additionally, make sure your dog has a microchip implanted. That way, if he's ever lost, shelters and veterinarians can scan his chip and get your information.

4. Visibility tools. Small dogs are hard for people to see in the daytime, but at night it's even more difficult. Use special lighted or reflective leashes or collars at night and be sure to keep your dog at your side—not out in front or behind you.

Help Your Small Dog through the Big World:

City life can be overwhelming for small dogs, not to mention dangerous. Drivers and bikers might not see your dog, so it's a good idea to carry him across busy streets. In crowds of people, watch out for your dog so he isn't accidentally stepped on. Also, many small dogs are shy around strangers, so don't force your dog to interact with people if he is uncomfortable. Furthermore, young children can inadvertently handle small dogs too roughly, be extra vigilant and careful when you introduce your dog to children. (Super shy dog? Get help from a professional to build your dog's confidence. Sign up for a shy dog class on our website).

Keep Your Small Dog Healthy and Safe:

Safe places to play. Small dogs need daily physical and mental exercise every bit as much as big dogs. Look for play opportunities with other small dogs in dog parks with special sections for little dogs. Special playgroups and get-togethers for small dogs can be found throughout the Bay Area. Choose playmates carefully and supervise to make sure your dog is comfortable. Don't hesitate to intervene if your dog is overwhelmed.

Size matters. Think twice about letting your dog play with dogs that are significantly larger. Another dog playing too roughly can quickly injure him, and it's not uncommon for quick, little dogs to bring out the prey instinct in other dogs, causing them to grab and shake your dog like a rabbit. The safest option is to avoid playful interactions with bigger dogs.

Not so social? Some dogs (big and little) just don't care for interactions with other dogs. Instead, you can provide fun and exercise with interactive games such as fetch or tug, teaching your dog tricks, or using interactive toys ([see our website for suggestions](#)).

Dog: Keeping Small Dogs Safe in the City *(continued)*

Teach Your Small Dog Big Manners

Some doggie manners are essential for city living and there isn't much a small dog can't be trained to do, assuming of course he is big enough for the task. As easy as it is to pick your dog up if he misbehaves, it's much better for him to learn polite manners. Take a small dog training class and teach your dog the basics (sit, down, stay, come, leave-it, and nice leash manners).

See our website for a current schedule of SPCA classes for small dogs.

Choose Small Dog Know-How

When choosing a daycare, dog walking service, or dog sitter, make sure the service provider has experience with small dogs and their special needs. Many businesses now offer service options customized for small dogs.