



Finding the right walking gear makes walks safe and enjoyable for both you and your dog. This guide provides information on different types of collars, harnesses and leashes, plus things to consider when choosing the right walking gear.

Note: Walking gear alone doesn't teach your dog not to pull on walks. Loose leash walking is a learned skill that we need to teach our dogs. To learn more read our [loose leash walking resource](#).

What to Consider When Choosing Walking Gear

- 🐾 Does your dog have injuries, medical conditions or physical traits that would make certain kinds of walking gear more appropriate for them?
 - Brachycephalic dogs are “flat faced” dogs with shortened snouts and smaller nostrils, making it difficult to breathe normally. Some examples of brachycephalic breeds are pugs, bulldogs, and shih tzus. Brachycephalic dogs are best suited to a harness.
 - A dog's trachea or ‘windpipe’ is $\frac{3}{4}$ cartilage and $\frac{1}{4}$ connective tissue, which means that the dog's windpipe is more sensitive than a humans, whose tracheas are 100% cartilage. To avoid putting undue pressure on your dog's neck, we recommend using a harness.
 - Always ask your vet for advice on walking gear if your dog has any medical conditions or special physical features, as certain gear may be better suited for them.




- 🐾 Is your dog an escape artist?
 - Flat collars and certain harnesses are easier to slip out of, so using a properly fitted martingale or secure harness is advised for canine ‘*Houdinis*’.

- 🐾 Does your dog have handling sensitivities?
 - Some dogs don't like having hands go over their heads or having certain body parts handled, which can make some walking gear unpleasant to put on and take off.



Harnesses

The best way to avoid putting pressure on your dog’s neck while walking, is to use a harness. There are many different types of harnesses. Some harnesses have multiple attachment points for leashes, making it possible to use two leashes at once if you have strong pullers.

<p>Front Clip Harness</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harness has a connection for the leash at the front to better manage leash pulling. • The harness is shaped as a Y or H and does not restrict shoulder movement.
<p>Front Clip Harness – Easy-Walker Model or Other Across the Chest styles</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harness has a connection for the leash at the front to better manage leash pulling. • Harness restricts dog’s shoulder movement. • When using, monitor your dog’s gait. • Once your dog has mastered the skill of loose leash walking, transition them to a harness that does not restrict their movement.
<p><i>Note: While this style of harness can seemingly reduce pulling during walking it is not a substitute for teaching loose leash walking. Remember that this is a strategy to help reduce pulling while we teach our dogs the skills associated with loose leash walking.</i></p>		
<p>Back Clip Harness</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harness connects at the top of the dog’s back. • Will not reduce the effects of pulling, like front clip harnesses. • Leash less likely to become tangled in feet or drag on the ground since it’s attached from the top.



Collars

Tip: Make sure your dog's collar and harness aren't too loose or too tight by using the two-finger rule. Two fingers should be able to slip under the collar or straps.

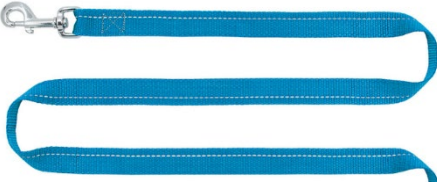


<p>Martingale Collar</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collar with a smaller loop made of fabric or metal where the leash attaches. • Good for dogs with heads narrower than their neck to prevent slipping from their collar. • When properly fitted, does not cause choking.
<p>Flat Collar</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally, where ID, license and rabies tags are kept. • Leashes can be attached to a flat collar. • This may work well for dogs who do not try to escape their collar, pull on leash while walking or have a head that is not narrower than their neck. Otherwise, there is a risk of your dog slipping out of a flat collar or applying pressure to their neck.
<p><i>Tip: We recommend removing collars and harnesses if your dog will be left unsupervised or using a breakaway safety collar. This prevents your dog from being snagged, or if using a breakaway collar, the collar will release and prevent choking.</i></p>		
<p>Head Halter</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The collar goes around the neck, with a loop, which goes over dog's muzzle and has leash attachment under the chin. • Typically used to manage dogs who pull hard or require additional control. <p><i>Note: Head halters should be introduced slowly and preferably with the help of a trainer, to make sure your dog is comfortable with it on.</i></p>

- Note:**
- Head halters require extra care ensure your dog does not injure their head or neck if they sharply turn or apply too much force while wearing it. Only use it if your dog is comfortable wearing it and you exercise extra diligence to ensure they do not injure themselves.
 - It should not be used if your dog is showing signs of avoidance or pain when using it and should not be used to physically discipline your dog.



Leashes

Leashes come in different lengths, widths and materials for different uses. When choosing a leash, we recommend considering features like the handle, material and clasps, and choosing a leash that is durable, secure and easy for you to handle.

Fabric Leash		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Usually made of a fabric like nylon, available in different widths and lengths.• Choose a leash width based on your dog's size and how comfortable it is in your hand. Generally, the bigger your dog the greater the width of the leash should be.• A 4-6 foot leash is recommended for everyday neighbourhood walks.• We recommend using a leash made of a sturdy material with a handle you can safely grip.• Choose a material that can be comfortably held in your hand, should you need to shorten the leash at any point.
Chain Leash		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stronger than fabric and can discourage leash chewing or tugging.
Long Line		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Varying lengths, typically at least 10 feet long.• Used for teaching recall and allowing dogs more space for roaming without being off leash.• Not advised for everyday neighbourhood walks.




Tip: Always replace worn out walking gear! Well used or frayed leashes and harnesses may lead to a dangerous situation, should your dog break during a walk.





Walking Gear We DO NOT Endorse

We do not recommend using walking gear that causes your dog pain to stop or reduce a behaviour. There are a few reasons why these tools aren't recommended:

- These tools may make pulling or reactivity stop in the moment, but don't teach your dog what you want them to do, like to keep a loose leash or divert their attention from something that causes them to bark or lunge.
- There is risk of injury when using tools that pinch or choke your dog.
- The pain or discomfort your dog experiences may create associations between the pain and things in the environment, which can create unintended emotional and behavioural consequences, like increased leash reactivity when seeing other dogs.

<p>Choke Chain</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These are metal collars with two loops at the end, and one loop is threaded through the other. The leash attaches to the loop that has been threaded through and if pulled on, the collar it will tighten. • These collars do not have stop guards on them. • Hard pulling can cause the collar to tighten and choke or injure the neck.
<p>Prong or Pinch Collar</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These are metal collars, which look like martingale collars, however, the collar has metal or plastic links called prongs. When pressure is applied to the leash, the prongs will move and pinch the dog's neck.
<p>Electronic Collar also called e-collars, remote collars or shock collars</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These collars have a transmitter box on the collar, with small metal prongs attached to the box. • The transmitter box is in contact with the dog. • Using radio signals, the dog can receive a vibration, shock or sound that is controlled by a person's handheld remote. • The shock is typically used to deter a dog from doing something, such as walking ahead and pulling on the leash.



Spray or Citronella Collar		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A collar with a cartridge containing a substance with an unpleasant smell for dogs like citronella, which is then released as a spray, using a remote control or detection system, to stop a behaviour.
Slip leads (when used in a way that chokes dog)		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• These are leashes that have a loop at one end of, which goes over the dog's head, acting like a leash and collar in one.• When tension is applied, the slip lead tightens around the neck and can cause a dog to choke.• Slip leads can have stoppers on them that set the "collar" portion to a certain width to prevent choking. However, if a stopper is not used, or is set too tightly, it can cause choking.

Facing Challenges?

If you are having difficulty with your dog [pulling on leash](#) or [leash reactivity](#), we recommend referencing our [resources page](#) for more guidance or contacting our [free behaviour hotline](#) to receive individualised recommendations.

See all resources by visiting us here: <https://www.edmontonhumanesociety.com/what-we-do/education-training/behaviour-resources/>

Did You Know?

You can also ask us behaviour questions by emailing our experts at:
askthespecialist@edmontonhumanesociety.com

It takes approximately \$7 million to keep the Edmonton Humane Society operational for one year and 40% of these funds come from generous donations made by supporters like you. Please consider [donating today](#).