

Correct collars for canines

All dogs need a collar so you can fasten an ID tag, dog license and, of course, your leash. **But they need the right collar.** Here's a look at the good, the bad and the ugly of dog collars:

The GOOD!

FLAT COLLARS

Flat collars are great all-around collars. Pick one that is sturdy and designed for the correct weight of your dog - use wider, thicker collars for larger dogs.

MARTINGALE COLLARS

Martingale collars stay loose around your dog's neck yet tighten if your dog tries to slip out. When adjusted correctly, if your dog tries to pull out, the collar will tighten around his neck preventing escape, but not choking your dog.

DOG HARNESES

Harnesses provide more comfort and security for some dogs - particularly small dogs. Harnesses won't prevent your dog from pulling - in fact, they may make the pulling worse.

The BAD!

CHOKE CHAINS

Choke chains are nasty, old-fashioned training devices. When jerked they snap against the throat of your dog, causing pain and discomfort. They can cause serious injuries to a dog's neck, voice box and back. They should never be used as a regular collar - ever!

PRONG COLLARS

Prong collars have metal spikes that drive into the dog's skin as she pulls. The pressure and pain cause your dog to stop pulling. No wonder - it hurts!

Choke & prong collars outlawed in NY!
Use a choke or prong collar in New York City and you face up to a \$500 fine or up to three months in jail! You also can't tie up a dog for more than three hours within a 12 hour time period.

Pulling in your direction

Got a dog who pulls? There are special collars to help discourage dogs from pulling. Remember, there is no quick fix to stop a dog from pulling. The solution lies in a good training program based on positive reinforcement* and a little help from humane collars.

*Positive reinforcement: a training technique using praise and rewards for desired behaviour and not punishment. Dogs listen better when they expect something good to happen, not because they constantly fear being punished for doing something wrong.

HEAD HALTERS

Head halter-style collars have a strap that goes across your dog's nose. When your dog pulls, the straps tighten. This puts gentle pressure along his head, making him stop pulling. The halter also helps steer the dog in the direction you want him to go.



Head halters must be fitted correctly and used as directed or you could injure your dog. Trained pet supply store staff can help fit your dog with the correct head halter.

OVER-THE-SHOULDER COLLARS

These devices go across the dog's shoulders. When your dog starts to pull, the straps create pressure across your dog's chest and he stops pulling. These collars work best for dogs who aren't really strong pullers. Several styles are available. Look for ones that offer padded straps.

The UGLY!

ELECTRIC SHOCK COLLARS

Shock collars give a dog an electric shock if she misbehaves. There are two types. One has a remote control device used by the "trainer." A button is pushed to shock the dog.

The second type is a **bark shock collar**. It is used to prevent a dog from barking - the natural communication method of dogs. The shock is triggered by vibrations from the dog's throat. If he barks he receives a jolt of electricity. It is painful and, well, cruel. There are other humane ways to deter barking.

There are two safer and humane remote control training alternatives. **Citronella spray collars** spray a blast of non-toxic perfume dogs don't like. Even better are **compressed air collars**, which spray a noisy blast of air to curb undesired behaviour.

Any training collar must be used carefully and under direction of a dog trainer who follows humane, positive reinforcement* training methods.



The rule of thumb is two fingers

Check the tightness of your dog's collar regularly. It must be tight enough it won't slip over his ears, but loose enough it isn't digging into your dog's neck. You should be able to easily slide two fingers under your dog's collar.

Not too tight - puppies and collars

Puppies grow quickly. You must check your puppy's collar weekly to make sure it isn't too tight. Each year the BC SPCA rescues dogs from guardians who have neglected their animals by allowing collars to get so tight they have cut into the dog's neck! Ouch!



Your action!

- Immediately replace your choke or prong collar with a flat collar or Martingale collar.
- Use anti-pull collars to help control a pulling dog.
- Stop using shock collars. When training, use humane spray collars.
- Tell friends and family about the dangers of choke, prong and shock collars.
- Make sure your pets have identification tags on their collars.

