

Why is the right Equipment so important?

- 🐾 It will reduce the amount of time it takes you to train the behaviour
- 🐾 It helps break bad habits
- 🐾 If you are consistent and ensure you never allow your puppy to get reinforced for pulling equipment may not be something you need to consider in your lead training journey
- 🐾 It is safer for the human's health and wellbeing (reducing shoulder or back injuries)
- 🐾 It will stop you being in an unfortunate situation where your dog has the strength to drag you into a dangerous situation for either of you
- 🐾 Using equipment that doesn't make it easier or more reinforcing to pull will reduce the amount of accidental reinforcement produced

What Equipment should I use?

With the amount of equipment on the market it can be a little bit overwhelming and difficult to know what's best for you and your dog. Having the right equipment is an important step in the process towards a lovely loose lead walk as it can help you manage pulling, especially for long-term pullers and those with more strength behind them. It's important to understand that no piece of equipment will be an instant fix for pulling, but the right equipment can give you more control and can speed up the training process. If you allow your dog to pull on equipment and don't follow through with stopping and redirecting to lead behaviour you can reinforce the dog will become desensitized rendering that equipment from now as being ineffective.

Collars

Flat Collars

Many dogs wear flat collars as they are a great place to keep identification and registration details just in case. Walking on just a flat collar can be tricky as it doesn't give you much control over your dog. Since the collar swivels your dog can always look away from you which makes it harder to regain their focus. Dogs can learn to walk loose lead on a flat collar, especially if they start learning early in life before they have had the chance to develop a habit of pulling, it will just take longer for those that already have the behaviour engrained.



Check chains

These collars do have their place in dog training and are commonly found in the show ring as they can be discreet, are easy to slip on and off and work for simple quick corrections. Dog can also learn that the sound of the chain when corrected means that they have shown an inappropriate behaviour. Check chains can become a problem when they are used incorrectly or are used on dogs who have become desensitized to them. A check chain will only loosen properly when pulled the correct way, if pulled on the wrong side the chain cannot loosen properly and will continue to tighten. If a dog has become desensitized, they will pull through the pressure feeling and may start to hurt their neck and find it hard to catch their breath correctly (Excessive pulling can cause fur loss). Just like any other equipment used to correct behaviour, to use it correctly the amount of pressure should be light and there needs to be a consistent pressure and release system, if there is no release then it is being used incorrectly.



Martingale Collars

Martingale collars have a similar function to check chains as they tighten around the neck, but these collars only have a limited slip. They can only tighten so far and whatever way they are pulled they will loosen properly. This makes them safer for dogs that pull on the lead. These are also ideal collars for escape artist dogs as they remain loose most of the time, but if your dog tries to pull backwards and out of the collar, it can tighten so that they have less of a chance of escaping. They are commonly used for Greyhounds, Whippets and Italian Greyhounds as these breeds have necks of similar sizes to their heads and can sometimes slip easily out of conventional collars. If your dog is used to the sound of a check chain, chain martingales offer the same effect, but they can also come in a purely fabric version.





Prong Collars

Prong Collars are an extreme type of collar that are not commonly used. These collars should be reserved for extreme behavioural problems and used as a last resort.

E collars and vibration collars

Vibration collars have a very light vibration to get the dogs attention and the feeling would be similar to your phone vibrating in your hand and are used to get the dogs attention when not looking at you. These can be useful for a dog that is deaf, and we would generally condition the vibration in a positive manner, they feel a vibration and if they look to you for direction are then reinforced. I wouldn't find these as beneficial for lead walking but more for off lead training. E collars are a highly restricted tool in Australia as they can cause a lot of harm if used incorrectly, they have their place in training and can be effective if used correctly. I would not recommend these for lead training and I would not recommend exploring this equipment without engaging a trainer that has a lot of experience with them to guide you through the process.



Harnesses

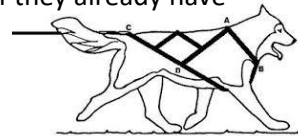
Back Attach Harness

Harnesses with the attachment at the back can equalize a dog's weight and inadvertently promote pulling. It also doesn't give you much control of where your dog is looking so it can lead to disengagement. As mentioned earlier the tight feeling on the chest can increase their frustration, but it can also encourage them to pull harder as they get a lot of power from their upper bodies. Dogs can be taught to walk on a back attach harness, but if they already have this habit this type of harness is not ideal.



Sledding Harness

These types of harnesses are not good for walking as they are designed to increase a dog's pulling power. The attachment sits lower on the back and lower in their center of gravity. This gives them more stability and power. These types of harnesses are great for dog sports like sledding, tracking and weight pull, as it prevents muscle strains when pulling heavy weights but it's best to have them strictly for those sports and use a separate harness for regular walks.



Front Attach Harness

When your dog pulls on a front attach harness it will pull the dog around and catch them off balance, steering them more easily in the direction you would like. This lessens their pulling power giving you more control. It also turns them towards you and away from what they were pulling towards. This can help to increase focus and allows you to better redirect where your dog is focusing.



Other no pull harnesses

There are some other harnesses designed to reduce pulling, but these can be much harder to use effectively. There is one that has two material straps that sit under the armpit of the dog and as you pull upwards, introduce a small amount of discomfort to stop the dog wanting to pull. These can be difficult to use correctly, especially if your dog is not a small dog as you need to be directly pulling upwards for it to be effective and if the dog is already ahead of you when you try to use the harness it will now be working in the same fashion as a back attach harness. There are a few other harnesses advertised as no pull with different ideas behind them but for most dogs the front attach is the most effective option.





Halters

Halters (head collars or halti's)

This piece of equipment goes over your dog's nose and gives you lots of control over where they are focusing. The halti can drastically reduce how hard your dog pulls, unless they have desensitized themselves and choose to pull through it, and can be very beneficial for larger and stronger breeds like German Shepherds, Mastiffs, Rottweilers, Great Danes, etc. they are not exclusive to big dogs though and can be helpful for dogs of any size. This option is harder to implement with brachycephalic (short nosed) breeds like Pugs, English Bulldogs, French Bulldogs, etc. as you need to find one that sits on their short nose without falling off. Halters are very helpful in cases of dog reactivity as they allow for stronger control in stressful situations. It is important only to tighten the lead if the dog makes a choice, they shouldn't to correct them such as pulling ahead or lunging, if you tighten before the dog reacts, they may think the presence of the trigger caused the correction. The idea of the halter comes from the use of two acupressure points that encourage the dog to feel calmer and their nose is also a sensitive part of the body that would only require a small amount of light pressure to get their attention.



Figure of 8 Halters

Figure of 8 design halters wrap around the nose and neck and still have the tightening effect of the halter but mixed with a martingale as well. These usually attach at the back of the neck so they don't give the same control as the front attach halter but they can be effective for corrections. These are the type of halters I would recommend for dogs that may pull a little bit but there are no issues with pulling their attention away from things or stopping them from reactive. These halters are only going to help with lead pulling and not other problematic behaviours.

Leads

Retractable Leads

Retractable leads can encourage your dog to pull on the lead as when they pull forwards, they are typically granted freedom to explore on their own. These leads can be unsafe at times, especially if dogs that are too large are using them. The mechanism inside the lead can break allowing your dog to go to the extent of the lead without your control. No medium or large breed dog should be walked using a retractable lead. This option also doesn't give you much control or communication with your dog as you are walking. These leads also will extend each time the dog pulls encouraging them to believe pulling to the end of the lead gives is highly reinforcing and encouraging them to try this with any lead they wear after this. The material on the lead is thin and can quickly snap back causing some nasty rope burn and other injuries to the humans using them.



Bungee Leads

These leads have a section in them designed to extend and retract when pulled against. This can limit your own correction on the lead and can dampen your communication with your dog. These types of lead encourage pulling as each time the dog pulls forward it has a bit of give encourage them to try pulling more. Bungee leads would be useful for running or dog sports where you would like them to pull ahead a bit and minimize any impact from sudden stops or jolts on the lead. Bungee leads do not allow much control for the owner or discourage pulling in any way.



Double Ended Leads

This type of lead is very versatile and can be used in many situations. You can use multiple pieces of equipment with the one lead (e.g Front attach harness and halter, harness and collar, etc.), you can tie your dog around your waist so that you can train hands free, and you can easily tether your dog and you can adjust the length to suit your needs. These leads are highly recommended if you are using equipment to reduce pulling such as a halter or front attach harness then I highly recommend using it with a double ended lead. The double ended lead allows you to deliver effective correction and release systems ensuring the dog has a chance to learn the difference when they make good decisions compared to bad ones and reinforces the good as well. This will prevent holding constant tension on the equipment and causing the dog to feel unnecessarily uncomfortable in it or adapting and learning to tolerate and



Equipment

ignore the equipment, this will also make it easier if you would like to wean them of the use of equipment later and will stop them slipping out of the harness or halter.

Chain leads

These may be used or recommended by persistent chewers that like to chew through leads and set themselves free. I personally would prefer to try spraying bitter spray onto the lead or another deterrent or use a verbal reprimand to correct the chewing, but the chain lead can also be handy as after several months of their chewing attempts not working, they will generally give up on this habit. The disadvantage of chain leads is they are very uncomfortable to hold and not enjoyable for us to use, you also do not have the advantage of grabbing parts of the lead to shorten it in situations where this would be helpful.



Plain lead

This is just a standard lead with one handle and can come in a range of fabrics including leather, nylon, cotton rope, polyester, biothane, rubber and many others. As far as recommended material for these leads, I would say to choose what is most comfortable for your hands as it won't make much difference to the dogs but will make a big difference to your comfort levels. Plain leads are great and recommended highly if you don't really need to use any equipment for training or if you are using equipment where the dual attachment doesn't make much difference to the process.

