



# start on the right paw

LISA MCCLUSKEY DETAILS THE VARIOUS TRAINING TOOLS NEEDED TO TRAIN YOUR DOG.

**d**og training has advanced by leaps and bounds in the last few years. We now know much more about dog training methods. When you are out with your dog, others may question the unique equipment you may be using on your dog or wonder about a training game you are practising with your pet. Be confident in telling others that you are utilising many new, fun, practical, and kind methods to train your dog to become a wonderful companion.

With that said, let us discuss the supplies that we will be recommending in training. Traditionally, collars have been the main piece of equipment recommended for dog obedience exercises. In the past, choke, pinch, and even electronic collars have been the focal point of a training session. I personally feel that training your dog is about the relationship you build with your companion and equipment should only exist to make that interaction safe.

Some recent findings demonstrate that physical corrections to the neck and spine with collars can lead to possible injuries in our dogs. Since choke, pinch, and electronic collars work on the premise that a correction associated with pain will cause the dog to avoid that circumstance, it's best to avoid using these harmful tools when training a dog. I do not advocate hitting, forcing or harming an animal either. Keeping that in mind, this feature discusses equipment that is safe and humane. I hope

that many of you will be able to purchase the items discussed locally in order to get your pet off to a good start in his or her training.

## GETTING STARTED... TRAINING EQUIPMENT AND SAFETY RECOMMENDATIONS:

### Leash

I find that leashes 4 to 6 feet in length, made of cotton or soft nylon with stitching, or braided leather leads are the most useful. Avoid retractable leads and only use a chain lead if there is a concern with your pup chewing through a softer lead. Never let go of your leash, as you are responsible for restraining your own dog.

### Collar

Premier martingale no-slip collars are recommended. These collars prevent your pet from backing out of his or her collar without needing to be worn tight. This collar is also called a limited slip or greyhound type collar. I do want to insert a word of caution though as dogs are typically not meant to wear collars when unattended, in a crate/cage or when confined. So always

exercise caution when using equipment and if you choose to leave it on your dog when unsupervised.

For permanent identification purposes, contact your veterinarian about a tattoo or microchip that will be able to safely identify your pet. Buckle collars or quick snap collars are also workable, but all connecting hardware on a collar of this type should be metal hardware and stitched or braided. Avoid equipment with plastic pieces or glued materials.

### Headcollars

I recommend the Gentle Leader Headcollar for dogs that may be difficult to control at classes, on walks, and/or around family and friends. This includes dogs that may pull/bite on the leash, excessively bark, strain towards other dogs, or have a difficult time focusing on their owner. If you feel that your dog falls into this category, consider getting a Gentle Leader for your dog. Other brands of headcollars exist, but I do not recommend any of the others because when properly fastened, the Gentle Leader design is practically escape-proof.

### Treats and Toys

Treats and toys are encouraged in training. Keep treats and toys on a table some distance away from your training area. This can prevent your dog from guarding areas around you and remind you to be creative in offering your dog a variety of rewards during your training exercises. Food treats should be high enough in fibre that they are healthy and will not upset your dog's digestive system. They should also be of a similar type of protein that is already in your pet's food.

Various types of treat training pouches are available for sale at dog supply outlets. Pouches can assist you in having a few rewards on your body when needed without using up your hands or messing up your clothes and pockets. Remember though, food should never be used as a bribe in training.



### Thinking Toys

Give some thought to safe toys that promote good mental health for your pet. Food dispensing toys like the Buster Cube, Kongs, Nylabones and Gumabones can be helpful in redirecting your dog's natural drives to a more constructive end.

### Attire

Wear sturdy footwear and practical, comfortable clothes - keep in mind that they will get dirty.

### Toileting Areas for Dogs

Please be considerate of where you choose to allow your dog to relieve himself. During training sessions, it may be necessary allow your dog to urinate and/or defecate a few times. If you are using areas outside of your own personal yard, then I recommend picking up and disposing of your dog's faeces in the proper place as to not infringe on the rights of others using walkways and parks in your city or town.

### Driving in the Car with your Dog

I feel it is important to safely train your dog in multiple areas in order to be thorough. In addition, most pets will enjoy training in different places as dogs tend to be curious by nature. This often will involve transporting your dog in a vehicle, so I recommend utilising a safety restraint harness for your dog or a sturdy pet carrier during car travel.

### Formal Obedience Classes

After reading this article, give consideration to finding a local individual who is well-qualified in running dog obedience classes and has experience with a variety of canine disciples (agility, rally-obedience, tracking, detection, fly ball, search and rescue, water dog trials, etc.) and has trained his or her own personal dogs to an acceptable standard.

### Training Sheets

Keep a practice record sheet, journal or log of your sessions with your dog. Record any training, the duration, and the skill practiced in your paperwork. Daily, you should be practising a total of 15-20 minutes. Keeping track of good milestones and setbacks helps you establish a guideline to measure your general progress over a month of consistent training. Only after looking at patterns and progress can you decide how successful



your efforts have been in teaching your dog to be more obedient. Judging our pet's behaviour moment by moment or day by day forces us into a trap of only remembering difficulties instead of focusing on a general direction of improvement. In general, it takes 100 hours of training to achieve a well-behaved canine companion.

### Homework

I will discuss and assign specific exercises to practice with your pet in future articles such that your pup will be able to be successful and safe in his or her obedience training. If possible, re-read and work on the exercises recommended in the previous issue of Woof! in preparation for our next feature.

Be patient, be kind, and have fun!  
Happy training! 🐾

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