Enjoy a walk with your dog with the help of the Gentle Leader or Snoot Loop head collars.

Desensitizing for Gentle Leaders & Snoop Loops

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*Best Paw Forward Inc. has no financial ties nor stock in either product. We do occasionally buy some to make them easily available to students, and students are also directed to large pet chains and online to make their purchases.*

 Does your dog pull so hard you struggle to stay upright?

 Does he choke himself on a flat buckle or snap collar?

 Is he confused about who the leader is in your household?

 If the answer to any of these is “Yes,” your dog is a good candidate for a Gentle Leader or Snoop Loop head collar. We do not recommend any other brands at this time.

Practice each step below 10-20 times per day for 1-2 days. Some dogs will go through steps more quickly than others (no reflection on intelligence either way). In that case, with luck you might get through more steps in the same day.

Step 1 – Get the dog used to the nose loop. Practice “get dressed” by having your dog put his nose through just the nose loop to get a cookie. Make sure you pull the nose loop up through the fitting on the strap, and say the word “click” before you let him eat the treat. Remove the nose loop and tell your pet to “go play.”

Step 2 – Get him used to the feel of both the nose loop and the loosely held head collar straps. Some dogs can be practicing this on the same days as getting used to the nose loop. Have the dog “get dressed” still using the cookie to get his nose through the nose loop then loosely hold the ends of the collar together. Continue to feed the treats through the nosepiece after saying “click.”

Step 3 – The dog’s nose still goes through the loop as you now buckle or fasten the head collar. Attach one leash to the ring under the chin on the head collar and another leash to the flat collar; both collars are fit very tightly at the top of the dog’s neck. Click then treat. Remove the head collar; tell the dog to go play. If you have a heavily-coated dog and are using a Gentle Leader or Snoop Loop head collar which has a snap, you may place a handkerchief or napkin over the dog’s hair under the hook to more easily fasten the ends.

Step 4 – Still using both leashes, place the head collar firmly fitted around his neck and hold the head collar leash lightly. Pull up only if the dog is dropping his head to the ground or pawing at his face (which is far more likely than not at this stage), while you keep a firm grip on the flat collar. Hold onto the leash which you will attach to the Gentle Leader or Snoop Loop head collar to ensure that your dog does not rub his face on the ground or flooring. Keep the leash short enough to stop him from scratching his face with his nails as he adjusts to the new feeling of the head collar.

Step 5 – Eliminate the leash on the flat collar, using super-yummy new treats right in front of his nose to get him to take his first few steps where you now have more physical control. Your ideal goal at first is to walk him to his filled food dish or his favorite person in the world.

Step 6 – At mealtime, have the dog get dressed and hold on to your leash attached to his head collar; click then treat. Give the dog his food. Take the head collar off immediately when the dog is finished eating. Head collars make expensive chew toys when left on unsupervised dogs. Page 2 of 2

Step 7 – Practice getting the dog to follow your hand with treats in it, in the house at first, so he relaxes with the gentle pressure that is present if he is not pulling very hard. He may stand still or back, and either one still gets a click/treat at first. If he resists the Gentle Leader or Snoop Loop head collar a lot and is thrashing about, go back to the first step and increase the time and the value of the treats at each level.

Step 8. When you take the dog on a walk (short walks at first) have the dog “get dressed” and continue to click then treat. He will want to put his nose to the ground to sniff as usual and will likely be frustrated that you now have power steering. Continue to provide great treats and train him when he is hungry. Train first if you can in the driveway or parking lot, then move to bushes and grass once he understands you can now control his movement. Every bit of cooperation from him, when he stops pulling, holds his head up, walks with you, will all be met with a little bit of loose leash. This is not the time to let the leash out as far as it will go – pulling dogs need far less leash to work on for a long time to come.

Step 9 – When his leash manners have been impeccable for months, you can go back to the double leash system to test him by hooking up a second leash, or the other end of one of our great multi-purpose leather leashes, to the flat collar. If he pulls, you know it was too soon to switch.

The head collar fit is critical. You should keep the collar very snug at the top of the neck so it doesn’t slide around, and the nose loop must be adjusted every time the collar fit is adjusted. The nose loop should be a little looser than the collar.

While training your dog on a head collar, leave the regular collar and tags on the dog.

While the head collar is a great training tool you still have to teach your dog not to pull. It provides power steering so you get lots of chances to reward your dog for putting slackness into the leash, for creating a loose lead.

There is a natural instinct to resist pressure (called opposition reflex) which encourages a dog to pull against a tight lead. The pressure from the head collar comes from behind the head so many dogs tend to slow down, and from gentle pressure against the nose like a halter on a horse. It turns your dog’s head when he starts to pull out in front of you. Where the head goes, the body will follow.

If your dog continues to pull into the head collar, then he should walk at your side or slightly behind you, never in front of you until he accepts your confident control of the walk.

Gradually increase the distance of the dog’s walks. Frequent short walks are better for training purposes than less-frequent long walks. Or you can practice in the house or on the patio first.

Some dogs may learn to like a head collar better if you put it on each time the dog comes out of the crate for a few minutes or if you put it on for a few minutes before every pleasurable activity in which he is allowed to engage. The head collar is only on the dog, though, if it is attached to a leash you are holding, to prevent the dog rubbing its face on the ground or on nearby objects.

You may also wash your head collar to remove the fabric sizing and make it feel softer on your dog’s face.

Even with a head collar, children should not walk dogs alone, for their safety and for their dogs’ safety as well. Let them practice indoors or within a fenced outdoor area. If a young child is participating in the training, he should share the hold on the lead with an adult at all times when outdoors outside of a fence.

Never let your dog wander around the house or yard with a head collar on unless you are training and walking the dog on a leash the whole time