



Pros and Cons of Training Devices for Lead Walking

People often resort to the use of training devices such as those listed below in order to train their dogs not to pull on lead. While some devices can assist in reducing owner fatigue due to pulling it is worth noting that these are training devices, designed for use in the short term – not long term solutions. The dog will still need to undergo training in order to permanently fix this problem. Also, some devices have the potential to cause serious injury, especially when used incorrectly.

Choke Collar or Check Chain (Chain or Nylon)

Effectiveness:

Can be effective

Pros:

None

Cons:

Can restrict breathing
Can cause injury to neck, spine and trachea
Can cause dog to associate pain with presence of other dogs or people, resulting in reactivity or aggression
Some dogs will strain to the point of choking or coughing
Difficult for humans to use correctly



Prong Collar (Pinch Collar) (pictured right)

Effectiveness:

Very effective for pulling on lead, however disadvantages negate this

Pros:

None

Cons:

Can restrict breathing
Can cause injury to neck, spine and trachea
Can damage or puncture skin around dog's neck



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Can cause dog to associate pain with presence of other dogs or people, resulting in reactivity or aggression

Difficult for humans to use correctly

Some dogs can escape this collar by shaking their heads

Martingale or Limited Slip Collar

Effectiveness:

Normally not very effective

Pros:

Good for breeds known to slip collars due to neck size being similar to head size (Greyhounds, Staffys etc).

Safer alternative to choke collars

Cons:

Difficult for humans to use correctly

Head Halters

Chin Attachment (Halti, Gentle Leader, Black Dog Training Halter)

Effectiveness:

Very effective

Pros:

Instant 'Power Steering'

Some designs allow for the dog's mouth to be closed when required (good for aggression cases)

Cons:

Can cause injury to soft tissues, neck and spine

Nose strap annoys some dogs

Not suited to short muzzled breeds (Pugs, Pekinese etc)

Dog's head is directed sideways when pulling

Relies on handler delivering timely 'corrections'

Nose strap can ride up around dog's eyes causing discomfort

Some dogs can set their necks back into the collar and continue pulling

Collar Attachment (Black Dog Infin8 Halter)

Effectiveness:

Very effective



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Pros:

Pressure across dog's nose can be adjusted or faded completely
Combines Head Halter with Martingale Collar
Fits short muzzled breeds
Nose strap does not ride up around dog's eyes
Corrects by directing dog's head downwards rather than sideways
More comfortable for the dog than other head halters

Cons:

Nose strap annoying to some dogs
Cannot be used on short-snouted breeds (Pugs, Pekinese etc)

Body Harness (Car Harness, Ezi Walk Harness etc)

Effectiveness:

Not at all effective

Pros:

Comfort for the dog

Cons:

Body harnesses make pulling on lead more comfortable for the dog. The dog can lean in and get some real power behind pulling.

Anti-Pull Harness (Easy Walk Harness, Harmony Harness)

Rope Harnesses (Sporn Halter, Lupi Harness)

Effectiveness:

Sometimes effective

Pros:

Will not cause choking or breathing difficulties

Cons:

Not effective in 100% of cases
Less effective in large dogs
Can cause rubbing and irritation on dog's skin
Difficult to fit



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Front Attachment Harness (Easy Walk Harness, Harmony Harness)

Effectiveness:

Normally effective

Pros:

Will not cause pain or injury
Comfortable for the dog
Counteract opposition reflex

Cons:

Not effective in 100% of cases
More difficult for humans to manage

Training Belt (Black Dog)

Effectiveness:

Usually Effective

Pros:

Reduces muscle fatigue
Hands-free operation
Comfortable for human to wear

Cons:

Should not be used by humans with back pain

Equipment you throw away immediately:

Retractable Leads

These horrid devices teach your dog to pull on lead. Think about it, if your dog wants more lead what does he need to do? That's right – PULL!

The farther your dog is away from you, the less control you have over his actions. This puts both your dog and the general public in danger. Even though your dog may not be aggressive he may endanger the public by running out in front of a cyclist, roller-bladers or runners on footpaths.

Also, there is a risk associated with the lead itself being difficult to see. People may trip over the lead when trying to negotiate between a loose dog and a human.



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A motivated dog can get to the end of the lead before you are able to lock it. Then there's the risk of accidentally unlocking the lead when you hadn't planned on it.

Retractable leads are normally made from a thin nylon cable which can cause injury to you and/or your dog if it gets wrapped around your hand or your dog's legs. It acts like garrotting wire!

Brisbane City Council stipulates that leads should be no longer than 2 metres in length. By using a 5m retractable lead you are risking a fine.

Retractable leads also teach your dog to focus on the environment rather than you.

Elasticised Leads

People often buy elasticised leads in order to reduce muscle fatigue in their arms and shoulders. Trying to hold back a large dog that is pulling hard can cause pain to arms and shoulders.

Elasticised leads teach dogs to pull. As your dog pulls the elastic stretches and he gets rewarded with a longer lead, very reinforcing indeed. These leads also encourage lunging.



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