

# PET PEEVES PERIODICAL

A newsletter dedicated to preserving the human-animal bond through behavior counseling.

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## Choosing A Collar For Your Dog

So you go to the pet store to pick out a collar for your dog. When you get to the collar aisle you are overwhelmed with all of the choices available. There are regular collars, choke collars, prong collars, head collars, and not to mention harnesses on top of that. Which collar is right for your dog? Hopefully this article will help you make that decision a little bit easier.

If you are looking for just a general collar to abide by leash laws, then your run of the mill flat collar is probably your best option. The regular harnesses will serve this same purpose. Harnesses don't allow any extra control over your dog, but are beneficial in that they don't put any added pressure on the neck or trachea. This is especially important in dogs that have collapsing trachea or are prone to reverse sneezing.

One of my most favorite choices for attaching a leash to your dog is by using a head collar. The most popular brands are the Gentle Leader by Premier or Halti by Coastal. My personal favorite is the Gentle Leader. Their head collar comes with a training DVD and teaches you how to apply the collar correctly. Head collars have a strap that fit over the nose of the dog and another one that fits high up on the neck behind the ears. The leash attaches underneath the chin. Head collars work on the same basis as a horse halter. Wherever the nose goes the body has to follow. This is a must have for anybody who has a dog that likes to pull, lunge, or jump. This is a collar that has an adjustment period to it. Usually you have to have short training sessions to get them used to wearing the collar, but it is well worth it! These collars are very safe to use and spare the larynx and esophagus from any trauma. Your dog should be able to eat, drink, pant, bark, and bite with this

collar on. If they can't, the collar should be refitted. Unruly dogs become much easier to control and walk, and are more likely to get the exercise they need to hopefully become a calmer pet. With these collars, you are able to use positive reinforcement training techniques.

If your dog has a hard time adjusting to a head collar, another good choice is a no pull harness. Premier offers one called the Easy Walk Harness. With these harnesses, the leash attaches in the front and will keep your dog from pulling or lunging. These harnesses do not offer any control over the head.

There are many types of choker collars available. These are usually offered in a chain or braided nylon material. Chokers use negative reinforcement, which rarely gives positive results. Most dogs learn how to override the choker and pull anyway. When this happens your dog can get significant damage to the larynx and esophagus, and even trauma to the eyes.

Another popular collar that I don't like to recommend is the prong or pinch collar. These work very similar to choke collars, but you can get even more trauma with these. The prongs can become imbedded into your dog's neck if not monitored closely. In some cases, these collars can make aggressive dogs worse. There are many other safer and more humane ways to get control of your dog.

Shock collars can be appropriate in some situations, but should only be used when working with a qualified behaviorist. These collars will make aggression and fear worse in most dogs. Many people like to use these, because they are getting a "quick fix". When a shock collar is used appropriately, a dog will usually only need to be shocked one to three times.

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### RESOURCES

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### Choosing A Collar (cont.)

Now that you have a better understanding of what collars and harnesses are offered, you should be able to make a decision of what type would best suit your dog. If you have a dog that is perfect while he walks and has a great mild temperament, a regular flat collar is probably your best choice. If your dog likes to pull or jump, or just needs a little direction, your best bet is to go with a head collar. If you decide to get a head collar and are having trouble getting it to fit appropriately, don't hesitate to call and come in for a fitting!



Examples of a prong  
and choke collar



The Gentle Leader and Easy Walk Harness  
by Premier

### DID YOU KNOW?

- Pet selection consultations are a good way to find out what kind of pet is best suited for you and your lifestyle. Having the right pet for you will increase your bond with it, as well as decrease the chance of an animal being sent to a humane society or rescue. This service should be offered by most veterinarians.
- Many illnesses can be disguised as behavior problems. It is recommended to have a thorough examination to rule out any possible medical conditions that could be causing your pets problematic behavior.

I'm still looking for article suggestions from you!! Is there anything you ever wondered about or anything your own pets have done that might be useful for other people to learn about.. Don't hesitate to let me know!

Amanda