

FLAT BUCKLE COLLAR

These are the most common collars, the flat buckle style allows for the collar to be quickly released in an emergency and these collars can be used for walking a dog that does not pull. You should choose the widest possible width that is comfortable for your dog and ensure it fits properly before using it on a walk. A properly fitted collar will be tight enough to avoid being a safety hazard – i.e., it won't catch on objects or slip off of the dog – and loose enough to still be comfortable. You should be able to just fit two stacked fingers between the collar and your dog's neck. All dogs should wear collars with an identification tag.

TWO-POINT HARNESS / BALANCE HARNESS

These harnesses are a great option for any dog, however they are most suitable for dogs that pull. Harnesses come in a variety of styles; we especially recommend those designed to discourage pulling. Harnesses are one of the safest options available for your dog as the reduction in pulling means less strain on their neck. They have two points of contact for the leash, one on the chest at the front and one on the dog's back. If you are using a balance harness and a leash that only has one buckle, always be sure to attach it to the front (chest) part of the harness instead of the back as this will inhibit pulling by causing the dog to be turned back towards you as soon as the leash goes taut. If attached to the back, this harness can actually encourage pulling as dogs have a natural reflex to lean into pressure. A harness used with the front clip is one of the easiest ways to switch your walk from stressful to enjoyable, regardless of your dog's training or behaviour.

LIMITED-SLIP COLLARS / MARTINGALE COLLARS

Limited-slip collars are the best option if your dog is prone to escaping from their collar or have a head the same width as their neck, such as Greyhounds or Whippets. These collars must be fitted properly to your dog to avoid causing discomfort or damaging the trachea. The small loop, often made of the same material as the collar or chain, should not be choking the dog when it is pulled. When tightest, the big loop of the martingale should be close enough to prevent the collar from slipping over the dog's head but no more. We do not recommend leaving a limited-slip collar on your dog when they are not walking on a leash or supervised. These collars hang loosely around the dog's neck when not attached to the leash and can easily get caught on something or grabbed by another dog during playtime.

If your dog is a Houdini, this type of collar is a good choice as an additional layer of safety with a second leash attached. You can also use a connector strap with clips on each end that can clip a harness and a limited-slip collar together.

HEAD COLLAR / “HALTI” / GENTLE LEADER

Haltis are a helpful and humane management tool for strong or large dogs (e.g., Great Danes, Mastiffs, etc.), especially if the handler is lighter or smaller than the dog. These collars fit loosely around the dog’s muzzle and attach to the leash under the chin. When the leash is taut, the dog’s head is gently turned to the side so that the dog is facing opposite to the direction they are trying to go. This teaches a dog that pulling forward will impede their progress and maintaining a loose leash will allow them to continue moving forward. Head collars are a valuable tool if used correctly as they do not inflict pain on the dog.

Dogs should be slowly desensitized and introduced to a head collar with positive reinforcement before using it on walks.

LEASHES

Calgary Humane Society does not encourage the use of retractable leashes with any of these collars. Retractable leashes encourage a dog to pull, which increases the risk of them going somewhere they shouldn’t and means you have less control over the dog when they’re on a long leash. They allow a dog to run away quickly and then come up short, possibly hurting the dog or you. A dog can become unsafe and uncontrollable on these leashes if the locking mechanism fails, and they can also cause rope burns if you or your dog get tangled up in a retractable leash. We recommend a 6’ nylon or leather leash instead. If you require a double-ended leash for training, you can get these leashes with two clips or points of contact for use with a harness.