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LEASHES, COLLARS and/or HARNESS

There are so many choices to choose from of leashes and collars and harnesses that we can use on our dogs...that the simple chore of purchasing one can become quite frustrating!

The LEASH:

Perhaps the easiest thing is to buy a leash. Rule of thumb would be to remember that you want to make sure your pup is close to you but with enough extension that it can do his business comfortably, and walk with you with ease. I find that a 5' or 6' leash is a sufficient length for this. A good sturdy fabric (nylon, weaved cotton or leather (make sure that the leather one is at least ½ inch wide and thick to avoid tears).

Some of you might still see “retractable leashes” around... Well, I am not too fond of them for many reasons. The most important issues with retractable leashes are that some owners let it run out for many feet (over 6 feet) and the wire/line that clips to your pet’s collar can snap broken, and it can also cause injury if any body part and even in your dog gets entangled in it. It can cause serious cuts and/or serious injury.

I would say purchase a leash that feels sturdy and you feel comfortable holding. If you have the means, buy a couple and take home to try on your pooch. Most pet stores will let you return the one you are not using without problems.

The COLLAR:

Let’s start with the basic collar. Your typical collar is not much to look at really, it has a loop for your pups’ tags, it usually has a buckle that clips together. Make sure you buy the correct size of collar for the size of your dog. It is important to remember that after you buckle it in, the collar should not be able to slip through over the ears of your dog. If it does, it is too loose, and it should be a little tighter. If your dog does not pull when you walk him/her or it is just a mellow fellow, this collar should do just fine.

Now, another very useful collar is what it’s called a “Martingale collar”. It is usually made out of weaved cotton/nylon. A martingale collar is made with two loops. The larger loop is slipped onto the dog’s neck and you clip your leash to the smaller loop. When the dog tries to pull, the tension on the leash pulls the small loop tight, which makes the large loop smaller thus preventing escape. If you have a very “smart” pup that usually gets out of his/her collar, this one may be a good type for you. They are soft, and it can prevent accidents like having your dog run away after slipping off a regular collar. These collars have gained popularity among many different breed owners recently and many trainers now recommend them instead of choke collars or buckle collars.

Other collars are the “prong collar and P-collar (aka choke collar)”. These collars have a little more of a negative connotation to them. These collars are used in more traditional dog obedience training programs My opinion is that they are not bad collars, however you must know how to use them. If your pooch is pulling and tugging to the point that he obviously can’t breath... then this collar is just not working, and it is not doing what it is intended (prevent/deter pulling). In this case you may need to find another way to help your dog learn easy walk and even “heel”. And of course don’t forget treats when training!!! Another result of this collar, based on the fact that it is “metal”, is that it often

irritates the neck area of a dog. Some dogs are quite sensitive to a rubbing motion, so a collar like this will scrape hairs off or simply rub too much on the dog's skin, creating irritation.

HARNESS

There are a few choices, and you have to choose what works best for you and your dog. Some people like a Harness that clips on the top (Back of dog). If your dog is Not a puller and perhaps is a small size dog, He/She might do great with it! There are harnesses, the Easy Walk for example that clips in the front of the dog. These harnesses work better on medium or large dogs, especially if they pull a little. Make sure that whatever you buy it has a good sturdy clip and it fits your dog in a snug way.

All these types of collars are a personal preference. You have to find what works well for you and your dog, so do not feel pressure to use anything until you have done your research and you and your dog feel good about your choice.

Wherever type of collar you choose, it must be one that fits the needs of your dog, and the lifestyle that you and your family live. It must be something that you can hold, and that younger members of the family can also hold during their doggie duties. Make the process fun...There are so many designs, colors, and styles. Make sure you read the labels, and pick when you are ready - Your pooch will thank you for it!