



Peninsula Humane Society & SPCA

# Introducing Collar, Leash & Stairs

## Collar

Young pups are often unsure of themselves and their newly acquired leash and collar. It usually only takes a few hours for a pup or even an adult dog to adjust. Choose a collar that fits comfortably but securely. The collar should be worn at all times -- not just when out on walks -- and should have an ID tag and license attached. The Peninsula Humane Society & SPCA does not recommend choke collars as they are often used improperly and can injure a dog's throat. Instead, we recommend flat collars or martingale collars, which tighten to a certain point, then stop, unlike choke collars which continue to tighten. When first introducing your pup or dog to a collar, put the collar on him and let him jump, squirm and paw at it if he wishes. Don't encourage this behavior by laughing or try soothing him. Don't reprimand him, just ignore him and let him get used to it. Or, provide distraction, such as play or training, to get his mind off the collar. Once he accepts the collar, he won't know it's there.

## Leash

Once the dog accepts the collar, attach a leash and walk away. Let him drag it around and watch to make sure he doesn't hurt himself. Leave it on for a few minutes at first. Later, repeat the exercise for a little longer. Put your dog on his leash during his mealtime for a few days so he associates the leash with pleasant things. If he appears fearful of the leash, put it next to the food bowl for a while before attaching it to his collar. When you're sure he's comfortable walking around with the leash, pick up the other end and let him lead you around. Try not to get into a position that makes him pull or strain on the leash or he will probably become afraid of it again. If he sits down, that's okay. You sit down

too. Try backing up and calling him to come. If he hesitates, don't pull or drag him, but try to lure with food, a toy or treats. When he starts to come, praise him profusely.

Give your dog lots of practice getting used to walking on leash in your home since it's a familiar environment with few distractions. When he is comfortable indoors, venture outside. Again, begin in an area with few distractions such as your yard. When the two of you have mastered this, you are ready for places with more distractions. Always walk your dog on leash, even when your dog knows all his commands. An off-leash dog is always in danger. Your dog's safety, as well as compliance with the San Mateo County leash law, is your responsibility.

## Stairs

If your dog is afraid of stairs, then you must begin slowly to build his confidence. Start at the bottom of a flight of stairs. A wide, shallow stairway will be least frightening. Go up one step, encouraging and luring your dog with your voice, a food treat or toy. When he is successful, give him lots of rewards and praise. Then go back down the same way. Repeat that one step over and over until the dog goes up and down with ease and courage. Wait a while, then try two steps. When the dog feels secure with two, try three steps and so on. Never force him to go up or down, as this will only frighten him and slow the process. Always use praise and lures.

**For more info, call our free Behavior Helpline (650/340-7022 x783 or, for Spanish, x786) or consider a low-cost consultation. To make a consultation appointment, call 650/340-7022 x667. The PHS/SPCA Behavior Department, like many shelter programs, is funded by donations.**