

Training Plan: Harnessing

Time: 3 to 10-minute sessions

Supplies: Sensation or Easy-Walk Harness, treats, treat bag

Goal: To help dogs become comfortable wearing a harness

Instructions:

Level 1:

1. Start with the harness behind your back, out of sight from the dog
2. Hold the harness by the shoulder strap, with the chest strap hanging (creating a “neck loop”). The belly strap will be unbuckled and facing away from your body
 - a. Hold the harness this way for each subsequent level
3. Present the harness to the dog, then take a handful of treats and stick your hand through the “neck loop” towards the dog, offering treats for 2-8 seconds
4. Stop offering treats and hide the harness behind your back
5. Do this until the dog appears comfortable eating treats from your hand through the harness

Level 2:

1. Start with the harness behind your back, out of sight from the dog
2. Present the harness to the dog, then offer treats inside the center of the “neck loop” of the harness, feeding for 2-8 seconds
3. Stop offering treats and hide the harness behind your back
4. Do this until the dog appears comfortable eating treats from your hand in the center of the harness

Level 3:

1. Start with the harness behind your back, out of sight from the dog.
2. Present the harness to the dog, then offer treats on the other side of the “neck loop”, so that the dog has to place their head through the harness with the shoulder strap resting on the top of their back, feed for 2-8 seconds
3. Stop offering treats and hide the harness behind your back
4. Do this until the dog appears comfortable with the harness being placed on their back

Level 4:

1. Present the harness to the dog, then offer treats on the other side of the “neck loop”, so that the dog has to place their head through the harness with the shoulder strap resting on the top of their back, feeding for 2-8 seconds
2. As the dog consumes treats, move your hand off of the shoulder strap to manipulate the belly strap, so that it begins to make contact with the dogs side
3. Stop offering treats and hide the harness behind your back
4. Do this until the dog appears comfortable with the belly strap being manipulated

Level 5:

1. Present the harness to the dog, then offer treats on the other side of the “neck loop”, so that the dog has to place their head through the harness with the shoulder strap resting on the top of their back, feeding for 2-8 seconds
2. As the dog consumes treats, move your hand off of the shoulder strap to clip the belly strap under the dog’s belly
 - a. Continuously offer treats while the harness is on; this can include sprinkling treats onto the ground
3. After the dog finishes the treat, unclip the belly strap and hide the harness behind your back
4. Do this until the dog appears comfortable with the belly strap being clipped

Level 6:

1. Present the harness to the dog, then offer treats on the other side of the “neck loop”, so that the dog has to place their head through the harness with the shoulder strap resting on the top of their back, feeding for 2-8 seconds
2. As the dog consumes treats, move your hand off of the shoulder strap to clip the belly strap under the dog’s belly
 - a. Continuously offer treats while the harness is on, this can include sprinkling treats onto the ground
3. After the dog finishes treats, toss treats in various directions so that the dog begins to move around in the harness
 - a. At this level, other reinforcers can be paired with wearing the harness, like enrichment items, play with people, toys or conspecifics
4. Do this until the dog appears comfortable with wearing the harness