

## Puppy Raising

# Fitting and using a t-touch harness

### Quick links

By clicking on each link below, you will be directed to the area within this guidance to support that area of learning.

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## Knowing your puppy

- Some puppies benefit from wearing a harness, whereas others may benefit from a different approach. Your Puppy Development Advisor (PDA) has assessed your puppy partnership as one that would.
- This is a particularly important piece of equipment to introduce carefully as puppies that are uncomfortable about wearing the harness, often go on to be uncomfortable about wearing the guiding harness too. Your Puppy Development Advisor will generally ask to see your puppy having the harness fitted to check they are comfortable with this.



## Managing for success

- Keep your voice calm as you fit the harness to encourage your puppy to remain calm and still.
- It can be helpful to mark the harness clips with different colour nail varnish so you can easily see where each clip should fasten.
- You can also practice putting the harness on stuffed dog/teddy bear/your arm before trying it on your puppy.

### Looking after the t-touch harness

- To keep the t-touch in good condition and to help us reuse as many t-touch harnesses as possible, it's important to know how to look after this piece of equipment through simple care and maintenance:
  - T-touch harnesses are made of nylon webbing and have metal rings. They should not be worn in salt water as this can cause the harness to rust.
  - A t-touch harness in a good (working) condition should not show any signs of fraying, rips, rust, damaged clips, buckling or loose stitching of or around the metal clips. If any of these signs are spotted, then the harness should no longer be used.

- To keep the t-touch harness looking fresh and extend its shelf life, wash it in hot soapy (washing up liquid) water, wiping over the whole harness particularly any areas of grime or dirt. Rinse the harness under warm water to wash off any soap. Put the harness in clean warm water to soak for a few hours before towel drying the harness (to soak up any excess water) and then hanging the harness to dry naturally.



## Teaching foundations

For information on how to introduce any piece of equipment please read the document **Physical checks, grooming and equipment**.

A t-touch harness (or headcollar) alone will not teach your puppy how to walk on a lead. It is important that alongside this management tool you also work through the **Walking on a lead** guidance.

### Fitting and using the harness

- Please follow the below steps to ensure a correct fitted t-touch harness. These are also demonstrated in this video. [Fitting a T-touch harness](#)
- Unclip the straps that go around the body and one of the front straps that go around the head.
- Lay the harness out flat on the floor.
- Have your puppy in a sit or a stand and reward.
- Fasten the clip around your puppy's neck and reward.
- Fasten the clips around your puppy's torso and reward.
- Give the 'okay' cue to finish.
- Check there is a 1.5 inch gap (around two-finger width gap) between the elbow and the body strap. Adjust the straps as needed.

- Clip one end of the lead onto the back 'D' rings and the other end of the lead onto the front
- Keep both ends of your lead loose and use your lead to guide your puppy.
- Encourage your puppy to move with you.



**Please only use Guide Dogs approved and issued equipment with your puppy.**



## **Being a partnership**

- Please only use Guide Dogs approved and issued equipment with your puppy so that it meets our insurance requirements and our ethics and welfare standards.
- Once you have successfully introduced the harness, it is important to ensure your puppy continues to view this as a positive piece of equipment to have fitted and to wear throughout their time with you. As you are fitting the harness, observe your puppy's body language. Look out for signs that your puppy is unsure as outlined earlier in this document. Signs can be quite subtle but if you notice your puppy is unsure, it is helpful to put in additional support for your puppy straight away before the problem gets worse.
- Your puppy should only wear the t-touch or a puppy jacket at any one time as when wearing the two together they can rub against each other. If you want to make your puppy more identifiable when they are wearing the t-touch harness then you can loop their jacket over your arm or on your bag.
- Unless otherwise advised, the t-touch harness should be removed when your puppy is off lead in case it gets caught on trees or with other dogs when playing.
- It's important to keep checking the size and condition of any piece of equipment that your puppy uses. If you notice any faults or that the harness is no longer in good condition, then please stop using it and let us know. If your puppy outgrows their harness and still needs to use one (your PDA should confirm this) then the next size up can be ordered through Guide Line and the smaller harness returned.

- Once a puppy moves onto another home, into training, or as a buddy dog or future guide dog mum or dad then the t-touch harness should go with them as they will usually continue to wear it.
- If for any reason a harness has been left behind by a previous puppy, this should never automatically be used with your next or current puppy and should be returned when you are next in contact with us.
- If at any time you feel unsafe or at risk from slipping or falling when walking your puppy on the lead it is important that you let us know. We are here to support you.