



# Train-A-Pit Obedience

## *How to be a Responsi-Bull Pit bull Owner*

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### Outfitting your Dog

With all the choices for collars, leashes, harnesses, seat belts, jackets, and more how are you supposed to figure out what is the best for you and your dog. Here we will provide a great basic list of items you should have on hand for outings with your dog.

Let's start with the most basic – a collar! Because pit bulls tend to have strong, muscular necks they also tend to easily give their collars the slip. The times when you need to control your dog the most – when they are excited and pulling on their leash – is also the times when they are most likely to pull backwards and right out of their collar. One of the best ways to prevent this is to always have your dog in a martingale style collar.

There are many names this style of collar is known by; limited slip, training, martingale, limited choke, and many more. Please DO NOT confuse this style of collar with an actual choke collar. The difference is simple. A choke collar is usually (but not always) made of chain and will form a noose around your dogs neck and continue tightening with pressure; a limited slip collar will only tighten to a pre-described circle size and then stop. This not only prevents your dog from backing out of their collar, but because there is no plastic buckle, there is nothing to break. One of our favorite brands is Lupine because they are all nylon, and more importantly guaranteed for life! Even if your dog chews it to bits!

Naturally we should now talk about a leash. A nice nylon six foot leash is a great way to start. There are also leashes that have two lengths you can use them at; one a six foot leash and it can also shorten into a two foot leash for times when you need your dog right next to you. Two leashes in one! We do not recommend chain leashes as they are heavy and a great way for you to get your hand pinched. And for goodness sake, if you have a Flexi-Leash (those plastic handled “leashes” that have 25 feet of cord inside) throw it away! They are not a good idea for so many reasons I can't list them here but the main reason being you have no control of your dog, or what is happening to your dog, or what he/her is doing when they are 25 feet away.

So you own a pit bull and they like to pull. You're nodding your head. A great new tool that has recently come out on the market that we LOVE is the SENSE-ation/SENSE-ible harness. The concept behind the harness is the ring in the middle of the chest. Your dog pulls on the leash, pressure is exerted on the ring, and it pulls the dogs body around. Your dog thinks “Hey! I didn't want to turn around.” And it happens again. Because they are a pit bull and smart, they will soon figure out the only way to stop turning around and actually make some forward progress is to not pull. Genius! There is a similar head harness product on the market called the Gentle Leader or the Head-Halti. They work on the same concept but we do not recommend them for the simple fact that so many people mistake them for a muzzle. The last thing we need people to think is that your pit bull is wearing a muzzle!

While we are on the subject, let's talk about muzzles. Please don't use them. There is no justifiable reason to be muzzling your pit bull. Muzzles only exasperate any behavior problems you are having. It is a copout tool made for people who do not want to spend the time actually training their dog. The only time I recommend a muzzle is when a person is literally endangered by your dog and you cannot

control the situation. A veterinarian's office is the most likely place this will occur. If, for any reason, you feel that your dog is a danger to people and needs a muzzle please seek a professional behaviorist's help.

Another no-no is the spike collar, prong collar or pinch collar is another copout tool used by people who are not spending the time actually training their dogs. The only motivator behind a prong collar is pain. Do you really want your dog working for you because you are hurting them? And please don't be fooled by people who say they don't hurt because they do! Besides, pit bulls really do want to do the right thing and please you so use that motivator instead.

If you don't use a crate or barrier in your car when your dog travels with you, another great piece of gear to have on hand is a doggie seatbelt. Everyone else in your car wears a seatbelt, so why shouldn't your dog? They can just as easily be thrown from a car in an accident. Don't forget that they will also become a projectile in a collision that can seriously hurt you and your family in case of a collision. Because pit bulls have the great big chest you will need a seat belt that will accommodate it. RC Pet Products makes one called the 3-in-1 that has a nice wide chest piece that is very comfortable and safe to wear. VestHarness also makes a similar product.

The last piece of gear to cover is actually clothes. What, clothes for my dog? You probably have noticed that your pit bull doesn't really have a lot of hair. And, most of them also don't have a lot of fat to insulate them either. Those body characteristics all add up to one cold pooch! Two very simple jackets to have on hand are a fleece jacket for warmth and a rain jacket for wet weather. Most pit bulls think they melt in the rain so getting them outside to potty on our Northwest days can be challenging. The jacket really will help!

In today's market these few articles of doggie gear are just a drop in the bucket but a great place to start! Have fun and happy shopping.