



Restraining a Dog

This information is not meant to be a substitute for veterinary care. Always follow the instructions provided by your veterinarian.



**More is NOT better
Variations on these instructions exist.**

Work with the dog in the position that (s)he finds most comfortable yet provides you adequate exposure to do what you need to do. The LEAST amount of restraint that is needed should be applied. Excessive restraint becomes a test of wills and you will find dogs to be stubborn and not give up. The more you attempt to restrain them, the harder they resist and the less pleasant and more dangerous the experience becomes for all.

"Talk to the animals" Many dogs can be comforted by being talked to in a quiet, soothing voice. What you say is not important...the tone of voice is. Even the best behaved dog may bite if frightened. Early application of a muzzle actually reduces the need for additional restraint. Once the muzzle is in place the dog will often "give up" and stop struggling. Several types of muzzles can be used. The end of the muzzle can be closed (basket-style muzzles) (A,C) or open-ended (B).

All the muzzles have a strap that buckles behind the ears, on the top of the head.



They can be made of plastic...

A.



or leather or cloth.

B.



The closed ended basket muzzles allow the animal to open their mouth to pant.

C.



Always use a basket-style muzzle on a dog with a short face such as Boston Terriers or Bulldogs so you do not interfere with their breathing.



This open-ended style of muzzle should fit snugly. The dog should be able to stick its tongue out but should not be able to open the mouth any wider.



If a muzzle is not available a length of roll gauze or ribbon can be used to create a muzzle. The gauze should NOT be stretchy. As the gauze is not very strong it should be doubled to increase strength.

The length must be adequate to wrap around the muzzle at least twice, then tie behind the ears.



A large loop is made in the center of the length of gauze. The loop should be about 3 times the diameter of the dog's muzzle.



The loop is placed around the muzzle and pulled tight on the top of the nose. A single knot is tied.



The ends of the gauze are then tied under the jaw with a single knot.



The long ends of the gauze are brought behind the ears and tied in either a square knot or a easy release bow. I prefer to tie a square knot and have a scissors handy in case the muzzle needs to be quickly removed.

If the animal has a short face this style of muzzle easily slips off. To reduce slippage, after tying the square knot behind the ears, bring the long ends of the gauze forward and loop the ends under the loop of gauze which is around the muzzle, then pull the ends back over the forehead and under the gauze a behind the ears, then tie another square knot.

You can also use a [muzzle made from a paper cup](#) in dogs with short faces.

There are several ways a second person can hold a dog to allow you to concentrate on a specific task such as trimming nails or giving medications.

The holder should only apply light pressure at all restraint points. If the dog struggles, the holder applies greater pressure for additional control. As soon as the animal stops struggling, reduce the amount of pressure applied. Most animals quickly "learn" to lie still if you "reward" them with minimal restraint.



To keep a dog lying on its belly (sternal recumbency), drape your arm and upper body over the dog's shoulders. Use the opposite hand to hold the body part that is being treated. In the position pictured, a second person could apply eye or ear medications.

Stand on the opposite side from the body part being treated. If the right eye is being medicated, the holder should stand on the left side of the dog.



If the feet are being worked with, e.g. front toenails being trimmed, the muzzle should be held by the holder and should be turned away from the face of the person performing the toenail trim. The holder is using her right hand to keep the dog's right front foot still for nail trimming.

If the dog tries to stand, use your upper body to keep the dog laying on the table.



If the dog raises his/her rear end, the holder should position herself over the center of the dog with one arm draped over the dogs hips and the other arm over the dogs shoulders. The holder can use her upper body to keep the dog's middle on the table. The holder can use her right hand to hold the rear paw still or her left hand to keep the front paw still for nail trimming.



Placing the dog on its side usually allows the holder to keep the dog more still compared to a dog lying on it's belly. The holder reaches over the dog and holds the front leg closest to the table, gripping the leg close to the elbow, NOT close to the paw. The other arm is draped over the belly and holds the rear leg which is closest to the table, gripping the leg close to the body, NOT close to the paw.

If the legs are held close to the paws, the dog has more leverage to roll themselves back onto their belly than if the legs are held at points closer to the body.



If the dog tries to lift it's head and neck the holder places her elbow over the neck and gently pushes the head to the table.



Large dogs can be restrained in a sitting position on the floor. The holder should stand with her back against a wall to prevent the dog from scooting backwards across the floor.

The holder can press the dog's sides between her knees to keep the dog from moving side to side or from standing up. The holder restrains the dog's head away from the person doing the procedure and stabilizes the head for procedures such as placement of ear and eye medications.



A sitting position can also be used for trimming toenails.

When the holder bends over the dog's head to hold the paw, she pulls the dog's head to one side to avoid the possibility of getting bitten in the stomach.



Another technique used to restrain large dogs is for the holder to straddle the dog with one knee on either side of the dog, with the dog laying on the floor.

If the dog tries to stand up, the holder lightly sits on the dog's back. The holder can control how much weight to place over the dog's back by shifting her weight to and from her knees.

As soon as the dog stops trying to stand, the holder shifts all her weight back to her knees.



In this position, some procedures can be performed by one person. In this picture the holder is leaning over the dog and trimming the front nails.

In this position you do not have control over the dog's head and do risk getting bitten. You may combine this holding technique with the application of a muzzle.

Photographs by Henry Moore

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