

Program Puppy Gear & Usage

Each program puppy will come with their own set of gear to be used throughout their time in the puppy program. Puppy raisers will receive the program puppy's collar, leash, vest, and gentle leader. As the program puppy continues to grow, the raisers will trade in their gear for a larger size. Never leave the program puppy alone, crated, or while riding loose in the car while they are wearing their gear apart from their collar, otherwise the program puppy may chew on/damage their gear. If the gear becomes damaged, the puppy raiser will be responsible for replacing it.

Leash, Collar, and ID Tag

Puppy raisers will receive a black nylon buckle collar, six (6) foot black leash, and a Dogs for Better Lives ID tag. The collar should fit the program puppy appropriately, with enough room to fit two fingers between the collar and the puppy's neck. Any less room will be too tight, and any additional room will be too loose, and the program puppy could potentially slip out of it. Nylon buckle collars are the only approved type of collars to be used on a Dogs for Better Lives program puppy.

Vest

Each program puppy will also come with a Dogs for Better Lives Future Assistance Dog vest. Similar to the collar, it will need to be sized appropriately with two fingers worth of space between the program puppy and the straps that cross the program puppy's stomach and chest. Vests will have a pocket on each side for raisers to utilize and place DBL information cards in, as well as emergency poop bags.

Gentle Leader

Gentle leaders will be provided to each raiser as a tool to help redirect the program puppy when they start to pull while walking on leash. The loop of the gentle leader will go over the program puppy's nose and mouth, while the straps with buckles click into place right behind the puppy's ears. The strap beneath the loop will connect to both the leash and the puppy's collar. The loop over the nose should be loose enough to move slightly while on the nose and so that the program puppy can both eat and drink. However, it should not be loose enough that it goes completely over the nose at which point it could then be easily removed by the program puppy.

Introducing the Gear

Introducing the gear to the program puppy will be the first step you take when utilizing the gear. The program puppy will already have experience wearing a collar and being on a leash from when they were in their breeder caretaker home but will need to be introduced to both the gentle leader and vest. Raisers will introduce the gear to the puppy by utilizing their mealtimes as a training session. To do this, the raiser will lure the program puppy into either their gentle leader or vest. Once the gear is on, the raiser will immediately feed the program puppy their meal. As soon as the program puppy finishes their meal, the gear comes off. Utilizing their meal as part of introducing the program puppy to their gear will help to create a positive association with their gear. Putting on their gentle leader/vest= mealtime! While the program puppy is being fed three meals a day, each meal should include the program puppy either wearing their vest, gentle leader or being in their crate. When they go down to two feedings a day, raisers need to continue to rotate between their vest and gentle leader for mealtimes. Only use one item per meal.

When to Utilize the Gear

Collar

The program puppy should always keep their collar with the DBL ID tag on unless they are playing with other puppies/dogs in a secured area. Keeping a collar on while the program puppy plays with another dog/puppy could pose as a safety risk resulting in getting their jaws stuck, choking, and worst-case scenario, death. However, any other time their collar should be kept on.

Leash

Program puppies need to be on a leash whenever they are in an unsecured area and anytime when they are in public. The leash does need to be attached to their handler. Do not tie down the program puppy while on leash and leave them unsupervised.

Vest

The vest is to be utilized anytime the program puppy is on a public outing. Also, to help reduce the possibility of gear sensitivity, the program puppy should also have playtime while in the vest. Similar to utilizing mealtimes, a play session while in the vest will also create a positive association with the vest. It is recommended that you use the program puppy's favorite toy or game when they have the vest on. To make it special, you should only use that specific toy or game only when they have the vest on. When the vest comes off, the toy is stored away until it is time for another vest play session.

Note: If you notice any signs of potential vest sensitivity, please contact your coordinator.

Gentle Leader

The gentle leader needs to be utilized anytime the program puppy is on a walk or during a public outing. How the gentle leader works is if the program puppy starts to pull while on leash, the gentle leader will naturally turn the puppy's head away from their desired destination, and back to facing the handler using their own body's momentum.

Note: Never pop/jerk or apply pressure while the program puppy is wearing their gentle leader. We want to create as positive of an association with the gentle leader as possible. Naturally program puppies are going to want to fuss with it, but with some consistency and positive association, they will become more comfortable while wearing it. If you notice the program puppy consistently fussing with their gentle leader, contact your area coordinator for some helpful tips on how to work through the issue at hand.