

# Why Prong Collars can be Useful for Difficult to Train Dogs

[This article has been provided to Boston Terrier Rescue of East Tennessee by Nancy Hook, a professional trainer. The Rescue recommends use of a prong collar only after you have received instruction on how to do so by a professional trainer.]

In my opinion, a prong collar is one of the most effective and safest collars to use. I'm talking about a good quality one, like a Herm Sprenger, not your typical, cheaply made pet store variety, which can have sharp or rough links. I use and recommend prong collars for several reasons.

A dog can't slip out of a prong collar.

The action of a prong collar mimics a dog's mom's mouth when she disciplined her puppy with a squeeze on its neck.

A prong collar distributes pressure evenly around a dog's neck, with no pressure point.

With a prong collar, the handler doesn't have to drag or jerk around a dog—the correction is a short “pop” that immediately puts slack back in the leash. It gets the dog's attention without nagging or fighting. Dogs lean into pressure, so with a flat collar, they feel very comfortable pulling. I don't like anything pulling on a dog's neck, even if they like it. And for a dog who fights a collar, there's always the risk of the dog pulling out of his flat collar.

Harnesses are designed to pull against comfortably. Pulling is not heeling, it's the dog in charge. Choke collars put all the pressure on a dog's throat, often require a hard jerk, and half the folks using them put them on a dog backwards. [...]. They can permanently badly harm your dog.

I've never known a dog who has liked a head halter—they're always too close to the dog's eyes, which causes rubbing. The dog usually looks very uncomfortable, with more thought on the halter than on the handler. The head halter doesn't teach a dog to heel, just teaches the dog you have control of his head. A good quality prong collar makes teaching the dog to heel much easier for most people because the dog responds more quickly, and there isn't a battle for control. It promotes quicker cooperation and more self-control on the dog's part.

Some dogs will need the prong collar forever, because dogs can be very equipment conscious and the prong collar means proper heeling, while the flat collar means “off duty”. Some dogs get into the habit of heeling well without thinking about it, and can go back to a flat collar.

I like to use equipment that puts the least stress on the dog and the handler, promotes early success and cooperation, and doesn't harm the dog—all of which creates a good partnership. A good quality prong collar accomplishes all of this, and so is my collar of choice for training.

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