



Fasten the Straps!

Lesson Instructions & Troubleshooting

Goal: The goal of this module is to introduce your dog to *wearing the muzzle*. After all, the ultimate goal for this course is to have your dog joyously wearing her muzzle for long periods of time.

What You Will Need:

- Your basket muzzle
- A hungry dog
- Delicious, high-value food that is cut in cubes that are large enough that they are easy for you to handle. Examples include:
 - Chicken, hot dogs, cheese, steak, pork chops, homemade liver or fish treats.
 - A release word to indicate to the dog that a repetition is finished. (helpful, not required)

Summary of the Game:

- As with all the other steps, take your time.
- Sit in a chair.
- Brace your left elbow on your left knee (or reverse is if you are left handed).
- Cradle the muzzle in your left hand and hold it securely.
- Have your selected treats ready to go and within easy reach (i.e a table that is right next to you) - **NOT IN YOUR HAND.**
- You will present the muzzle to your dog, as always, it's her choice to place her nose into the basket. – **keep your empty hand quiet and still.**
- As soon as your dog places her snout in the muzzle, fasten the straps gently and loosely behind your dog's ears (don't worry about any other fastening points or additional straps at this stage of the game).

- Once the muzzle straps are fastened, **begin counting. No food in your hand.** Start with a count of one – one thousand then immediately reach for and feed 3 pieces of food.
 - Count another one – one thousand then immediately feed 3 pieces of food.
 - Repeat as needed to keep your dog successful.
- Next count two-one thousand and feed 3 pieces of treat.
- As shown in the video examples, the goal is that your dog remains still while wearing the muzzle as you repeat the counting game as described in the duration module.
- You will begin building duration, just as you did in Module 4, only now your dog is wearing the muzzle and you are not touching it. (See video lessons) gradually increase and vary your counting (i.e. 1, 2, 2, 1, 3, 2, 2, 4, 2, 1, 4, 2, 3). Your goal is to get up to a total of several minutes of “muzzle wearing time” without pawing at the muzzle or fussing with it in any way.
- The process is the same as in the Duration module (Module 4), you will help your dog build this skill most efficiently by keeping the following rules in mind:
 - The higher you count, the more treats she deserves, (meaning your dog is waiting relatively longer for the food), feed **MORE** pieces of food. (Generosity is KEY!) i.e. a count of 3 will get more food than a 1, and a count of 4 gets more than a 2, and 20 seconds deserves more than 10 seconds, etc.
 - Vary the numbers you are counting to up and down a range, and after you count to a relatively higher number, drop back down the scale for an easier length of time.
- Once your dog wears the muzzle for longer than 20 seconds we find using a timer is easier than counting. (See video Lessons where Denise is teaching Gio to wear his muzzle).

Game Guidelines:

- Train in a quiet, familiar environment with minimal distractions.
- Separate from other dogs.
- Keep each training session short, 3-5 minutes is plenty – use a timer!
- Play the game once a day.
- Use high value food - \$100 bills, not quarters.
- Be generous with treats. You’ll get better results, FASTER.
- When not playing Muzzle Games, keep the muzzle out of sight and out of reach.

- Try not to use food that crumbles or easily drops on the floor. You want all the value to happen when your dog has her snout in the muzzle and not to start “shopping” on the floor for food that has dropped

Game Troubleshooting:

- If your dog starts pawing at or otherwise fussing with the muzzle once the straps are fastened;
 - Feed sooner (decrease duration).
 - Use higher value food.
 - Be more generous (i.e. feed more treats per repetition).
 - Check out the Fasten the Straps module video around the 7:30 minute mark where Denise shows other techniques.
- As you are building duration with the straps fastened, if the dog fails at the same number count (i.e. 5 seconds) 3 times in a row, do more work in the 2-4 range before trying the 5 again.

When to Move On:

- Play this game for a number of days, slowly increasing your count up the scale of numbers until you have a 30 second delay, with the straps fastened, before feeding. Some dogs may take longer than others with this skill. Be patient and avoid rushing your dog through the game.