



The LOVE Connection

Lesson Instructions & Troubleshooting

Goal: The Goal of The LOVE Connection is to create a strong positive association with the muzzle by :

- 1) Allowing your dog to make the choice to place her nose in the muzzle
- 2) Feeding her generous amounts of delicious food for making that choice.

What You Will Need:

- A basket muzzle that easily allows for feeding, Baskerville is our favorite.
- A hungry dog
- Delicious, high-value food. Examples include:
 - Hot dogs or string cheese cut in long strips
 - Peanut butter on a wooden spoon
 - Spray cheese on a wooden spoon
 - Chicken, steak, pork chops, etc. cut in cubes that are large enough to easily handle

All of the above examples of food and how to use them are shown in the video lesson.

Summary of the Game:

- You will present the muzzle and the food to your dog at the same time. The food will be available **ONLY** in the muzzle.
- Present the muzzle and the food and then **WAIT** for your dog to make the choice to place her nose in the muzzle to access the food.
- Be careful to hold the muzzle stationary, think of it as a target for your dog. You are **NOT** moving the muzzle to put on your dog, she is moving her nose **INTO** the muzzle by choice and to access the food.
- Once your dog places her nose in the muzzle you let her lick and nibble at the food you have offered until the food is gone.
- When the food is gone, remove the muzzle, reset with more food and play again.

- If your dog pulls her nose out of the muzzle before the food is gone, don't do ANYTHING, just wait for her to place her nose back in the muzzle for more food.
- Avoid the temptation to reprimand or correct your dog for making the choice to remove her nose – just let her do it. It 's important for your dog to learn where she can access the food; ONLY in the muzzle.
- Also avoid the temptation to “help” her make the right choice – it will build her confidence to allow her to make choices and figure out that placing her nose in the muzzle to access your GREAT food is the best choice.

Game Guidelines:

- Train in a quiet, familiar environment with minimal distractions so your dog can focus on the game. (i.e. separate from other dogs)
- Keep each training session short, 2-3 minutes is plenty – use a timer!
- Play the game 1-3 times each day
- When making a LOVE Connection; Quality and Quantity matter. The more valuable the food and the more food the dog gets, the quicker the LOVE Connection happens and the stronger the LOVE Connection will become.
- When you are not playing Muzzle Games with your dog, keep the muzzle out of sight and out of reach. We want the presence of the muzzle to predict GREAT things so we do not want your dog to see it or have access to it unless we are playing the game.
- 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 nose in the muzzle and not to start “shopping” on the floor for food.

Game Troubleshooting:

- If your dog has a negative history or negative experiences with a muzzle be gentle and patient during this step and allow your dog as many sessions as she needs to grow comfortable with placing her nose in the muzzle to access the food.
- If you have a nervous, worried or shy dog be gentle and patient during this step and allow your dog all the time she needs to grow comfortable with placing her nose in the muzzle to access the food.
- If your dog is not willing to place her nose in the muzzle for the food you are offering, try different foods until you find something that will motivate her enough to play the game.

When to Move On:

- As long as your dog is easily and quickly placing her nose in the muzzle when you present the opportunity to her, you can move on to the next module.
- As long as your dog is “happy” to see the muzzle, wagging tail, following you around, maybe even jumping around, you are in a good place to move to the next Module.
- **If your dog is hesitant and nervous about the muzzle STAY with the LOVE Connection. Do NOT move on too quickly.**