Mobility Harness Highlights and Tips

Mobility dogs should always wear an appropriate assistance harness to safely perform tasks including leading/guiding, pulling, counterbalance, or bracing. An appropriate harness is one that is specifically designed to ensure that that weight/pressure is evenly distributed, and the attachment point for handles is safe for both the dog and the person. We do not recommend a dog wear a mobility harness full time, but rather only for active use.

IMPORTANT *– Prior to putting a mobility harness on a dog – the dogs should be fully vetted to ensure they are the correct age and size and health for the work we are asking them to do. See Mobility Dog Resource Group website Guidelines and Best Practices.*

Harness Style and Use Guidelines

- The two basic mobility assistance harness styles are Straight Front and Y front. The best choice depends on the individual dog. ***NOTE: A harness that fits one dog well may not work for a different body type.***

- A good harness distributes weight over rib cage and sternum – this minimizes strain on muscles and joints. *See diagrams above.*
- Mobility harnesses may have a rigid vertical metal handle or a semi-rigid handle or **both.**
    - Rigid vertical metal handles ***should only be used momentarily and only with a few pounds of pressure.***
        - Most people don't need a rigid handle. It is less pressure if you can pull up on a harness rather than push down.
        - ***Note: These harnesses must have appropriate padding to protect the spine***
    - Semi rigid handle – excessive movement can be absorbed through this handle

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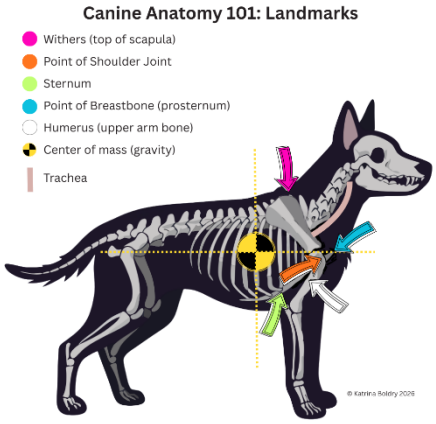
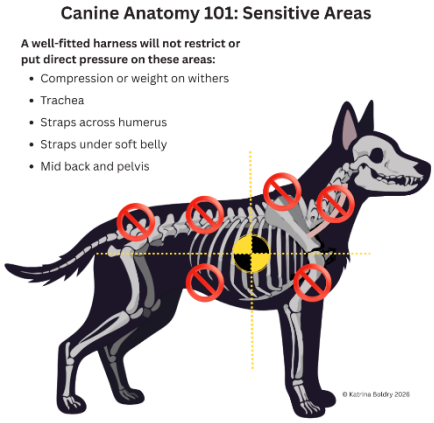
- Choosing the right balance assistance harness and handle configuration will depend on the work the dog is going to do (i.e. leading or pulling or counterbalance).
- Quality materials matter. Be sure to find a harness maker who has really done their research – see Purposeful Harness Design on the MDRG website.

Importance of Harness Fit





- Avoid just a strap under the ribs, it should be wider to distribute pressure. Straps should not be so wide that they cover too much surface area or cross a moving joint.
- A harness saddle (the widest part that goes over the dog's shoulders/back or down the sides) should not be so long that it prevents the dog from bending laterally.
- Handles should not be attached in front of the shoulder – this concentrates pressure on the dog's front end. Rather handle(s) should be attached close to the dog's center of gravity along the girth line.

How to Tell if it's a Good Fit for the Dog

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- Straps on the front of the dog's chest should rest above the point of the shoulder joint, so as to not restrict the shoulder. A Y-shaped harness should sit at the base of the neck. See diagrams.
- Breastplates and chest straps (front of the dog's chest) should make contact with the breastbone (prosternum).
- The girth strap(s) should sit vertically, going around the deepest part of the dog's ribcage, behind the "arm pits" (well behind the elbows). The primary girth strap that goes around the dog's chest should go under the dog's sternum so handle pressure is supported by the dog's bones.

IMPORTANT - *Whether or not the dog is wearing a harness, we do not advocate putting significant pressure (only ~ 5 lb.) on the dog and any bracing /downward force should only be over the withers where they are most stable, ideally where there is a harness to further distribute the load. Handlers should use canes, furniture or other devices to support the majority of their load.*

Harness Recommendations

The harnesses listed below appear to be designed with the dog's safety in mind. Please be aware that the purpose of the harness is to both help the person stabilize but also to spread the load safely for the dog. The fewer materials and lighter the harness, the less support for the dog and more load on the dog. Atlas Assistance Dogs and MDRG accept no liability for injury to dog or handler as a result of the use of any of these harnesses.

Atlas Pet Company • Lifetime Pro Harness™

Dapper Dood Co • Dapper Dood Harnesses

Pupcessories Crafts • Pupcessories Crafts Custom Harnesses

The following are small manufacturers that are on hold for custom orders at that time of this revision. We recommend reaching out to them to determine when they will accept new custom orders:

Bio Dane • Bio Dane Biothane Mobility Harnesses

Czar's Adaptive Dog Gear • Star Harness

Dino Dog Gear • Dino Dog Biothane Mobility Harnesses

Hide N' Guide • Note: orders are currently closed. Last updated July 30, 2025

K9 Blueprint • CMH Alpha harness

Vanguard Leather • Lumen, Motion and Navigator models

For additional information see Guidelines to a Well Fitted Harness on the MDRG website.

For additional information, watch this You Tube video Understanding Service Dog Mobility Harnesses: Safety, Fit, and Function

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