



## Face Masks on Strangers, Oh My!

Many owners have asked, how can I prep my dog for seeing people wearing face masks? Luckily counter-conditioning your furkid to this new fashion accessory can be simple. The following links and article will get you started.

### Teach Your Dog to Accept the Masks We Wear:

This quick video shows how to help a dog adjust to seeing its owner in a mask. Please note, this is an adult dog who has lots of life experience under his collar. His response is minimal, and your dog might respond differently.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gjQ5tkTcFP0>

### Dogs Can Dance: Training with Masks (May 2020 Coaching Tip)

This is must watch video for folks who have trained their dogs and will now be attending classes / activities with their dogs while wearing a mask. This is a great example of how our dogs, who are accustomed to seeing our whole face, might have trouble adjusting to less facial input from us.

<https://youtu.be/eHs7k-UR3dQ>

### Is Your Dog Ready for Face Masks?

APRIL 18, 2020 BY LAURIE ZURBORG  
VIA: WAGS AND WIGGLES, WAGSANDWIGGLES.COM

**Video:** [https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=14&v=1Pa4FCzrGxw&feature=emb\\_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=14&v=1Pa4FCzrGxw&feature=emb_logo)

### Instructions for Counter Conditioning:

In this world of corona virus, there will be a new normal for your dog who will see people everywhere wearing face masks and gloves. Is your dog ready for a world with face masks?

Humans will look dramatically different outside. With this change happening so suddenly it can really spook your dog when they go for walks or when people come over to the house.

Logically, you will understand that a face mask doesn't turn people into monsters. Dogs can be very literal in their understanding of what is good and what is dangerous. So, is your dog ready to interpret this new world of face masks?

Turns out, even dogs who happily wags their tails and love people are starting to react by barking or not wanting to go outside. The reason is people everywhere wearing face masks.

You can make a huge difference to prevent your dog's fearful reaction to the new normal of face masks. You don't have to be an expert trainer to use a very simple technique called counter-conditioning.

### Counter Conditioning Face Masks with Your Dog

To start your training session to get your dog ready for face masks you will need a few simple items.

- At least one type of face mask – having a variety of face masks is even better
- A pair of gloves
- Food rewards
- A bait bag or pocket to keep them in
- A mat or towel

- Leash and collar (or harness)
- A second person

Have your dog stationed in one place. If they have been trained to lay down on a mat or towel, use that cue. If not, you can put them on a leash so they don't wander off during this face mask counter conditioning session.

## **Training Steps To Get Your Dog Ready For Face Masks**

### Step 1

Start by showing your dog the face mask. The dog can look at or sniff it. Give the dog a treat. Put the mask aside. Represent the mask and give your dog a treat. Do it 3 times.

### Step 2

Put the mask on your face. Give your dog a treat. Do it 3 times. Talk to your dog with the face mask on. Give your dog a treat. Do it 3 times.

### Step 3

Get a helper your dog knows well. Your helper should be wearing a mask. Have your helper walk into the room and stop at least 10 feet from your dog. Give your dog a treat **WHEN** they look at the helper. Have the helper leave the room and then reenter. Give your dog a treat. Repeat this 3 times.

It is very important your dog LOOKS at the helper before you give the treat. You want the dog to KNOW the reason the treat is coming is that there is a person wearing a mask.

This is a critical step to make sure your counter conditioning will work towards the new normal of people wearing face masks.

If your dog shows fear during this phase, you can change several things for your next session.

- Let your dog see your helper put on the face mask.
- Position your dog farther away from the helper who is approaching.

### Step 4

Have your helper come closer to your dog. The best practice is to set markers on the floor a foot apart so your helper knows where to stop. You don't want your helper just walking right up to your dog in the first repetition.

## **Move Your Training Setup**

This new game needs to happen in a different location. You can choose to take this whole setup to the area by the front door where people may be walking into your home wearing a face mask.

You definitely want to have some sessions outside of your house where your dog will see neighbors wearing face masks. Make sure your dog is on a leash for these training sessions. Have a mat ready that you can retreat to which will calm your dog.

## **Bonus Lesson: Gloves**

### Step 6

You will want your dog to get used to being touched with gloves. Fortunately, the gloves themselves usually aren't a problem but your dog will definitely be alarmed when touched by gloves. Let your dog watch you put on the gloves. Teach your dog to touch the glove to earn treats using a Nose Touch cue or by having them give their paw.

Now you have a game plan to help counter condition your dog to be ready for face masks. You will help your dog with the new normal of people everywhere looking very different. Be sure to bring treats with you wherever your dog will encounter people wearing face masks.