Remote Training Collar FAQs

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff

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What is a remote trainer?
Remote training collars allow you to reinforce commands and correct your dog's unwanted behaviors from a distance - whether that distance is 20 feet or over a mile for some models

The premise of an electronic collar is that the stimulation serves as a distraction that your dog will find undesirable. By obeying your obedience command or by stopping the undesired behavior, your dog quickly learns to avoid and/or stop the unpleasant stimulus.
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How do remote trainers work?
All remote trainers contain the same basic components:

1. A handheld remote transmitter
2. A collar receiver
3. Collar probes

The remote transmitter sends a radio signal to a receiver on the collar. The collar receiver then delivers the appropriate stimulation to your dog via a set of two stainless steel collar probes. The probes are positioned on your dog's neck and are held securely in place by a snug-fitting collar strap. The probes must have direct contact with your dog's skin in order to function properly.
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Will the stimulation from a remote trainer hurt my dog?
Electrical stimulation from the collar is intended to distract your dog by delivering an unpleasant but harmless electrical sensation. Some people describe this sensation as feeling like the static shock you receive when walking across a carpeted room in your stocking feet and touching a metal cabinet. Is it unpleasant? Yes. Does it cause you harm? No.

Training collars provide you with multiple stimulation levels. As a rule, most handlers find they can achieve their desired results using an extremely low level of stimulation, barely even perceptible to humans. Additionally, some remote training systems allow you to condition your dog to associate a vibration or audible tone with the correction, thus eliminating the need for electrical stimulation altogether. Not all remote trainers include a "vibrate-only" or "tone-only" mode. Review the features of each remote trainer when making your selection.
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How do I know which stimulation level is correct?
Always start with the lowest intensity level and work your way up as needed. You will know when you have found the proper stimulation level when your dog responds to the stimulation with only a mild twitch of the neck, shoulder, head, or perk of the ears. If he yelps upon receiving the stimulation, the intensity level is too high.
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What is the difference between continuous and momentary stimulation?
Electrical stimulation can be delivered to your dog in one of two ways:

- **Continuous stimulation** is a constant period of pulsating stimulation your dog receives until you release the transmitter button. (Most collars feature an automatic shut off, where the continuous stimulation ends after 8 -10 seconds, even if you continue to hold the button down. This prevents you from accidentally over-stimulating your dog.)
- **Momentary stimulation (also called "nick" stimulation)** is a quick "attention getter" that lasts only for a fraction of a second, regardless of how long you press the button. This stimulation has been described as feeling like an insect bite.

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What kind of safety features do these collars have?
Most collars we carry include an automatic shut-off feature, which automatically shuts of the stimulation if the continuous stimulation is being delivered for more than 8 - 10 seconds. There are a few collars that do not offer this feature. Thoroughly review the features of each remote training system before making a decision.
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How do I choose a remote trainer?
Here are some questions to consider when choosing a remote trainer. Your answers to these questions will help you determine which features you need, and which remote trainer is right for you.

Use our Comparison Charts to locate the collar that contains the specific features you need.

Number of collars	• Do you plan to train more than one dog at the same time? (2 dogs at a time? 3 dogs at a time?)
Type of training	• What do you hope to accomplish with a remote training system? (Reinforcement of commands? Correction of unwanted behavior?) • Do you wish to incorporate the use of a positive feedback tone for desired behavior? • Do you wish to use the remote trainer to help you communicate with hearing impaired dogs? • Do you plan to use the collar in wet conditions, or while your dog is swimming?
Range	• At what distance you expect to need control over your dog? In your yard? In the open field?

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Size	• How big is your dog? • How do you wish to carry the transmitter? (Around your neck? In your pocket? In a holster? On a key chain?)
Waterproof or water resistant collar?	• Do you plan to train in or around water? • Do you plan to use the collar in the rain? • Do you plan to use the collar in tall wet grass?
Waterproof or water-resistant transmitter?	• Waterproof transmitters will tolerate being submerged. Will you be using your transmitter while boating or swimming?
Batteries: Replaceable or Rechargeable?	• As a rule, units with rechargeable batteries are usually waterproof, while units with replaceable batteries are water-resistant • Replaceable batteries allow you to bring along spare batteries for back-ups.
Stimulation Modes	• Do you plan to use electrical stimulation? • Do you plan to use continuous stimulation or momentary stimulation? Both? • Do you want tone options? • Do you want vibrate options? • How many intensity levels do you need? • Do you need "no-stimulation" options (tone-only or vibrate-only)? • Do you want to use a good tone (praise) and a bad tone to communicate with your dog?
Other Features	• Do you need multiple-sized electrodes (prongs)? • Do you want an automatic shut-off safety feature? • Do you need integrated bark control? • Do you need an integrated locator beeper? • Do you want to use a single collar for containment AND remote training?

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Are there other options besides electrical stimulation?
Yes. Some manufacturers offer tone options and vibration options. Sometimes the tone or vibration can even be used without any electrical stimulation at all.
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What's the difference between waterproof and water-resistant collar receivers?
A waterproof collar receiver withstands being submerged in water while swimming. It can be reliably used in the rain, or in swamps or marshes. Waterproof receivers usually have rechargeable batteries.

A water-resistant collar receiver tolerates being used in light rain, damp grass, or wet sand. Water-resistant receivers usually have replaceable batteries.

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NOTE: Water intensifies electrical simulation. When using a remote training collar in the water, make sure to turn the intensity level down even lower to avoid over-stimulating your dog.
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What age should my dog be before I can begin using an e-collar on him?
We suggest that your dog be at least 5 - 6 months old before using a remote collar for two reasons.

- First, your dog needs to have a basic understanding of what is expected of him, and know basic commands.
- Secondly, by this age he is probably big enough and heavy enough to comfortably support the weight of the collar.

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What is the correct way to use remote trainer?
Remote training collars can be extremely effective, but ONLY when used properly. If you are a novice dog trainer and/or you are unfamiliar with incorporating a remote trainer into your training program, we strongly recommend you start by researching the subject on the Internet, reading books, and watching training videos. Better yet, seek the help of a professional trainer who is experienced in the use of electronic collars.

All remote trainers are intended for two basic purposes:

1. To reinforce already-learned behaviors, such as obedience commands - Your dog learns to "turn-off" the unpleasant stimulus by performing the command correctly.
2. To correct unwanted behaviors, such as digging, chewing, jumping up, etc. - Your dog learns to associate the unpleasant stimulation with the unwanted behavior.

Here are two very basic samples, which illustrate the main remote-training steps.

Reinforce an Already-Learned Behavior ("Sit")	**Correct Unwanted Behaviors (Digging)**
1. Teach your dog the "sit" command using conventional training methods. (No remote collar.) 2. Once you are absolutely sure your dog understands what "sit" means, start with the collar. Use a pre-selected level of intensity. 3. With your dog on a leash and at your side, walk forward a few steps and come to a stop, giving the "sit" command (with no stimulation). This reminds your dog of the "sit" command. 4. Repeat step 3, but this time when you say "sit," press the continuous stimulation button of your remote trainer, then say "sit" again. 5. Release the button the moment your dog sits, and praise him. 6. If he gets up before you release him, press the button again as you command "sit." Release the button when he sits back down. 7. Release your dog from his sit after a few moments, and walk him to a new place in the training area. Repeat this process a few times.	1. Use a pre-selected level of intensity. 2. Leave your dog in an area where he likes to dig, and watch him without his knowing. 3. Press the stimulation button the moment he starts to dig. 4. If your dog ignores the correction, raise the intensity by one level. 5. Continue the training process until your dog has gone for three days without trying to dig. **IMPORTANT!** During the training period, do not give your dog a chance to dig if you cannot correct him.

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8. End the session on a positive note with some fun playtime.

By the third lesson, your dog should be trying to anticipate the "sit" command. Once he reaches this point, he is ready to move on to distraction training. Some dogs may progress even faster.

Tips for Success:

1. Use conventional training methods to teach your dog basic commands. Wait until he completely understands your commands before introducing the collar as a reinforcement tool.
2. Introduce the collar to your dog gradually. Have him wear the collar for a few hours each day for a week or two before you start using it for training.
3. Ultimately, your dog needs to respond to your verbal commands regardless of whether he is wearing a training collar. Therefore, put the collar on your dog at least 30 minutes before beginning a training session. This can help prevent him from becoming collar-wise (obeying commands only when wearing the training collar).
4. Always make sure the collar is functioning properly BEFORE putting it on your dog.
5. Remove all other metal collars from your dog's neck when using the training collar.
6. Always use the lowest stimulation level when beginning training. Proceed to higher stimulation levels only if necessary.
7. Keep training sessions brief, about 10 minutes. After a 30-minute rest period, repeat the training process. Dogs acquire habits through repetition, not duration.
8. Never continue a session after your dog has lost interest. Take a break to rest or play
9. Once you have started a program with your electronic remote trainer, never start a training session without it.
10. Plan on using the collar for at least four months. A good rule is never take your dog out without the collar on. This will ensure that he is imprinted only with the correct response to your commands, and that you always have complete control.
11. End each session on a positive note. Have your dog repeat a mastered task. This will boost your dog's confidence and keep his interest for the next training session.
12. Praise your dog for good behavior!

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How tight should the remote training collar be around my dog's neck?

All remote trainers should be worn snug on your dog's neck, or the stimulation will not be consistent. If it seems that your dog isn't feeling the stimulation, try tightening the collar strap a notch, and wiggle the contact points firmly against his neck to ensure that they've reached through his undercoat. If your dog's breathing sounds hoarse, loosen the strap.

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My dog has some irritation on his neck from the unit. Did the unit burn my dog?
No. It is more likely skin irritation from the probes rubbing the throat. One of the following has likely happened:

- The collar was on your dog too long. Do not leave the collar on your dog for more than eight hours a day.
- The collar is too loose. Make sure the collar is tight on your dog's neck to prevent rubbing.

NOTE: Take care to inspect your dog's neck every day for signs of irritation or soreness. You can position the collar probes in different locations along your dog's neck to help avoid skin irritation.
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What size is the receiver on the collar? How much does it weigh?
Depending on the manufacturer and model, receivers are normally made out of lightweight plastic. The collar and strap usually weigh less than 8 ounces. Some receivers are heavier, while some models are lighter. The average size of a receiver is 1.5H x 2W x 1D inches. Some models are larger, while some are smaller.
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What are the collar straps made of?
Depending on the manufacturer and model, the collar straps are usually made of durable lightweight nylon webbing or soft flexible plastic. They are normally ¾ or 1 inch wide and can be adjusted to fit neck sizes from 10 to 24 inches. Some models can fit dogs with only a 6 ½ inch neck.
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Can I put the receiver on my dog's own collar, instead of the collar it came with?
No. Remote training systems are engineered for use with the collar supplied by the manufacturer. Modifying or switching any component of this system may result in decreased range, or improper function.
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Can I cut the excess collar strap off after I fit the collar to my dog?
This depends on the manufacturer. Some manufacturers embed the receiver antenna in the receiver, while some antennas are embedded in the collar strap itself. Carefully read your owner's manual to determine if you can cut off the excess collar strap without damaging the receiver antenna.
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How long do rechargeable batteries last?
You can expect to get 48-72 hours of use on a full charge. Rechargeable batteries can be completely recharged in about 12-14 hours, depending on type. Recharging simply entails plugging the unit into a normal household electrical outlet. The average lifetime of a rechargeable battery is about 3 to 5 years.
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What's the difference between NiCad and NiMH rechargeable batteries?
The main difference between these two types of rechargeable batteries is that NiMH battery (the newer technology of the two) offers approximately twice the capacity of its NiCad counterpart. This provides you with increased run-time with no additional bulk or weight.

NiCad batteries tend to suffer from what is called the "memory effect," which is why it is suggested that you run them down before recharging them each time. NiMH batteries are less prone to develop this problem, and don't require you to drain them down before recharging. NiMH batteries are also environmentally friendlier than NiCad batteries since they do not contain heavy metals.

Most manufacturers have begun replacing NiCad batteries with NiMH batteries in their collar receivers.
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What is the warranty on these collars?
Return of electronic products to Drs. Foster & Smith for exchange or refund is limited to 60 days from the date of purchase. Beyond 60 days, please contact the manufacturer for repair or replacement as covered by the manufacturer's warranty. Refer to your product owner's manual for details.
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Can my dog's collar receiver be accidentally activated by a neighbor's remote trainer?
This possibility is extraordinarily slight, thanks to modern computer technology. Remote training systems use unique ID codes that are pre-configured by the manufacturer.
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