



May 3, 2018

Dear Oona:

I'm six months old and my people are shopping for a big-boy leash and collar for me. What would you recommend? I don't think I like this idea.

Ralph

Dear Ralph:

I understand. When I was young, I acted like the leash was poison burning my neck. I flopped around and fell on the

ground and bucked. They waited me out. Then we went walking and I decided, okay, if it's for a good cause... So suck it up. Skip the theatrics. It's your ticket out of the house.

I liked a simple two-inch wide, fabric martingale collar and a simple woven leash. The collar was comfortable and they only put it on me when we went out. Otherwise it'll make the fur around your neck grow weird and you might catch it on something when you get the zoomies and choke. If your folks get a choke chain or prong collar, pack your bags because those things can seriously hurt you.

As far as the leash, I like the flat, woven fiber ones. They're easy to quietly chew through while you're passing the time in the back seat. When then pop the hatch to let you out, you can have yourself a big time leaving them holding the leash while you hop out and sashay

all on your very own. Just don't go too far. They're your ride home and they get tired running, screaming and stomping their feet. Have a little pity on your people. They control the can opener and the crazy things have the *longest* memories.

I got away with it a couple of times until my folks learned to watch me like a hawk in the car. One would drive and the other would sit facing me like a prison guard. Eventually I just gave up on the Great Escape.

Dad and I came to a compromise on leash walking. He doesn't jerk on it and I don't pull him through the bushes. It stays loose and we're both happy. Some people use those retractable things, which sound great because they let you trot off 20 feet or so on your own. But they're never slack. It's our natural instinct to pull when something's pulling on our neck and if the leash is *always* pulling, we learn to lunge ourselves silly. Or the human's arm comes off. Remember, you get to go more places if you cooperate with your human.

When I got grown and my people brought my nephew, Oisin, home, the game changed completely. Dad sometimes likes to walk us both together. This takes some coordination making sure both me and Oisin walk in the same direction at the same time and....keep those leashes loose. This is where I got to have some fun.

While dad was watching Oisin — who's still a young and crazy boy — I discovered one day while we were at a festival that when dad was distracted by the little brat, I could just casually stroll over and help myself to the pies and cakes at a vendor's table. All it took was a little pressure on the leash and I steered us in range of the goods. Then I dove for it. I wear a harness now.

In fact, we *both* wear harnesses, now. They're service dog harnesses made for giant breeds like us. They're simple enough for the old guy

to figure out all the straps and buckles. What dad really likes is they have a handle right over the shoulders for quick control. Like when pies and cakes show up. If I start licking my lips, darned if he doesn't grab that handle and awaaaay we go.

Oisin gets to wear one too because he discovered that while Dad was watching me, he could steer us the *other* way and lunge for the funnel cakes. His harness has a handle, too. And we don't get to go to food festivals much anymore. I blame Oisin.

Ralph, the bottom line apparently is encourage your folks to get something safe and comfortable and then meet them halfway. The more you cooperate, the more fun places you'll get to go.

And if you get in range of pie and cake, naturally all bets are off.

Love, Oona

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Got a question? Send it to bob@thewildstare.com and Oona will get back to you as soon as she gets her nails done or she can prod the old guy to take dictation.