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A brightly colored or cutely patterned dog sweater can be the hit of the holidays at your home. Holiday dog sweaters, available online and in stores, can sport hilarious images of reindeer, penguins, Santa or snowflakes, in color combinations reminiscent of twinkling lights: red, green, blue, orange, pink and fuchsia. Some would call these vivid colors and crazy patterns gaudy or garish, but we think an ugly holiday sweater can help make the season merry and bright! Here's how to keep your dog's comfort and safety in mind when shopping for or making an ugly holiday sweater.

How to Fit Your Dog for an Ugly Holiday Sweater

You should have no problem finding tons of holiday sweater choices for your dog. Sweaters, like coats for dogs, come in two styles: jackets and blankets. Jackets go all the way around your dog's body, while blankets lie on the back and hang down over both sides. Both styles should cover the dog's back from the neck at the collar down to the base of the tail.

Even if you plan to shop online, you can find the right size if you know your dog's length, girth and neck measurements. Use a soft tailor's measuring tape to determine all three:

- Length: Measure from the collar position to the base of the tail.
- Girth: Measure around the widest part of the chest.
- **Neck:** Measure around the neck at the collar position.

With your length, girth and neck measurements in hand, go online or to your favorite shop and browse around. Store products will have size charts on their packaging, and online stores typically include fitting guidelines as well.

More important, of course, is how the blanket or jacket feels on your dog. As long as the sweater doesn't restrict movement, and is snug but not too tight, your dog should be comfortable.

Make a DIY Ugly Christmas Sweater for Your Dog

If you have the time and the creative skill, you can make your own holiday sweater for your dog. Simply searching for "DIY dog sweater" online will deliver a wide range of make-your-own options, from very simple no-sew projects to patterns for expert knitters.

Make sure that any embellishments you include, like bells, pompoms or ribbon, are securely fastened to the sweater so your dog can't accidentally swallow or choke on them.

Train Your Dog to Like Wearing the Sweater

If you're lucky, your dog will take to their sweater the same way they go for treats. Speaking of which, if you have trouble dressing up your dog, you can motivate them to wear it by using a few mouthwatering Cesar treats. Here's how:

- 1. Present your dog with a treat placed on the sweater. Let them enjoy the treat and sniff the sweater.
- 2. Next, use a treat to hold their attention as you gently rub the sweater's fabric on their back and neck. Then do the same as you try to slip the sweater over their head.
- 3. Once you've successfully gotten the sweater on your dog, give one more treat and lots of praise.

Your dog may need a few more gradual introductions, but your patience will win the day.

Keep Safety in Mind

Most animals, including dogs, are built to handle a range of temperatures without clothing. Even when you need to wear a sweater or coat outdoors, your dog may be just fine in the coat nature provided. For this reason, it's important to keep an eye on your dressed-up dog, especially indoors.

Watch for itching, panting and other signs of discomfort or overheating. If your dog begins to paw at the sweater in an attempt to remove it, take it off. Claws can get caught in the weave of the sweater and cause your dog to trip and fall or injure a nail. Dogs that chew on their sweater can ingest pieces of the garment and, in the worst case, develop intestinal blockage.

In short, never leave your sweatered dog unattended.

Happy Holidays!

No matter how cute your four-legged friend happens to be, an ugly holiday sweater will kick up the "awww" factor a few more notches. They'll love the attention and the break in their routine. They might even feel like they're a special part of the festivities going on around them.

Make sure to have your camera ready, and check out how to get the best holiday photos with your dog.

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