

Measuring Instructions

for your custom

Balance Assistance Harness ([BAH](#)) & Mobility Support Harness ([MSH](#))

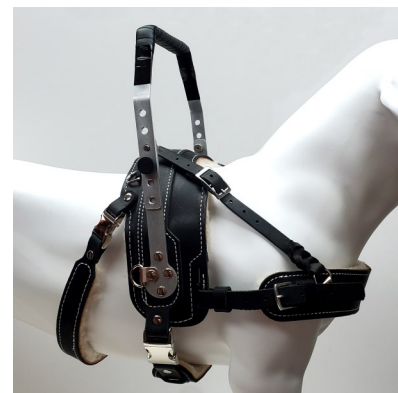
by Bold Lead Designs



We're so glad you've decided a BLD harness is right for you! We require specific measurements to make your harness, along with your dog's weight, breed and age. Your harness maker will use this information to make your harness customized for your dog. The included diagrams, photos, and written descriptions will help you gather accurate information.

A helpful measuring video may be found on our website at:

bld.pet/measuring



Provide all measurements at the time of your order—you can call us, order online, or email us directly. Please note that delays in receiving complete & accurate order information will affect the turnaround time of your harness order, as we cannot start on the harness without these important details.

The harness specialists at BLD will review all of the details and will contact you if we have questions about your order or measurements. We may make recommendations based on the information you provide. Please accept our experience and suggestions for the most functional equipment options.

Don't panic, we're here to help! Really, don't worry—the straps are adjustable and we'll be sure you get a perfect fit.



How to order: You may [order online](#), [call](#), [email](#), or make an appointment to visit our workshop in Aurora, CO. Our friendly team is here to help with any questions you have before, during, and after placing your order. Our harness experts will review all the details and measurements and can offer suggestions to help you get the equipment you need and to ensure the best fit possible.

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Important Notes: please read this before ordering

At Bold Lead Designs, we take the health and safety of your dog seriously. We have created these guidelines based on over 15 years of experience with this specialized equipment.

Dogs must be physically mature and of appropriate size, fitness and soundness for the work you would like them to perform. Mobility, stability, and balance assistance work are physically demanding. A service dog should always be in prime physical condition to remain healthy.

Age, Size and Fitness:

Dogs should be at least 18 months of age before beginning harness work. The dog's growth plates must be closed before starting to train a dog for harness work. This happens for most large breed dogs at 18-24 months of age and giant breeds need even longer to mature. Please allow your dog time to grow and mature as rushing into harness work may cause injury and shorten your dog's working life. Additionally, if the harness is ordered too soon it will cost you significantly more money if your dog outgrows the harness.

Dogs **MUST** be in our recommended weight/measurement range set forth in the sizing guide for the harness to fit and function properly.

We want to see properly exercised, fit, lean, muscular dogs! Overweight dogs should never be expected to perform load bearing tasks; additionally, obesity contributes to serious health risks and can significantly shorten a dog's lifespan. Consider implementing an exercise and fitness routine when the dog is "off duty" to keep him/her in good shape.

Consult the Pros:

Consulting a qualified veterinarian (orthopedic specialist or canine sports medicine physical therapist) is highly recommended for all service/assistance dogs that perform physical tasks. Radiographs (x-rays) or other tests may be recommended by the vet and are required by most service dog training organizations to determine if the dog is suitable for the demands of service dog work.

Harness users should consult a physician and physical therapist to determine what medical equipment is appropriate for their mobility needs. **BLD harnesses are not intended to serve as, or to replace, a durable medical device such as a cane, walker, or crutch.** Please understand that one should never lean on a dog to stay upright. Rigid metal handles must not be pushed or pulled on while the dog is in motion. Such use is not how the harness is intended to be used and could put the dog at risk for injury.

Fit and performance of the equipment can only be assured if the dog meets the minimum recommended standards, the user and trainer have reasonable expectations, and when the equipment is used responsibly for the purpose it was designed.

Our equipment is designed to allow an appropriately selected and trained service dog to reasonably assist a person with a balance, mobility impairment, or other disability that requires specialty service dog gear. BLD cannot assess a dog's suitability or appropriateness. Users assume all responsibility for the safety, health, and care of the animal and human alike.

In your dog's best interest, please understand that BLD may decline an order if we believe a harness could be harmful to the dog because of age, size, or unreasonable expectations.

Getting Started

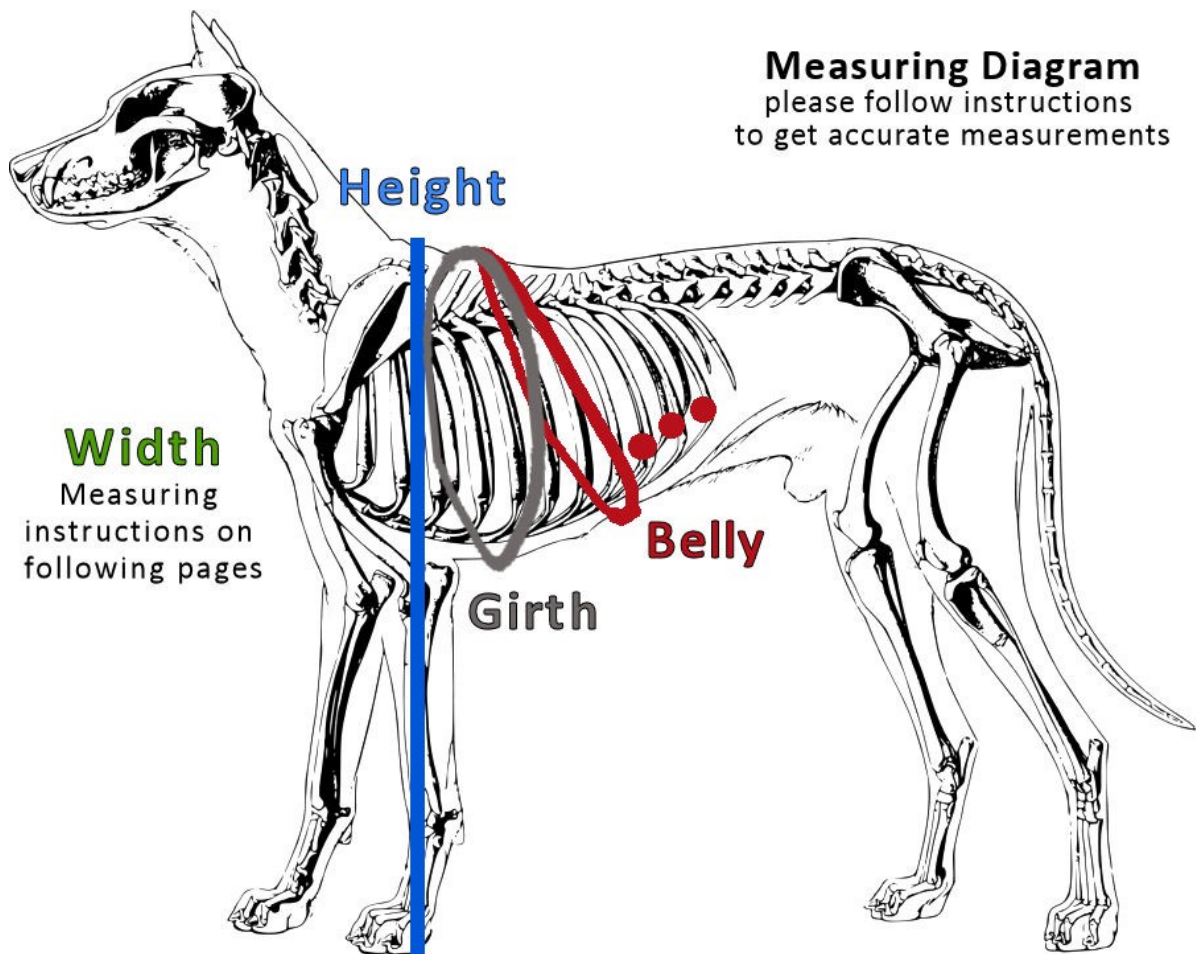
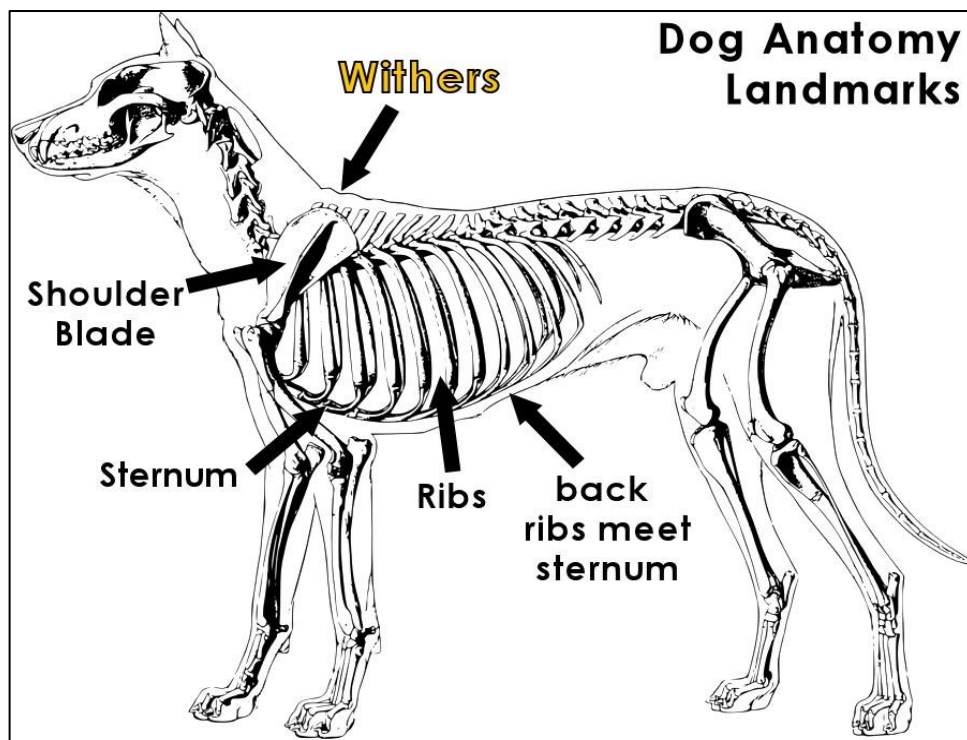
Tips & Hints for Accurate Measurements

- Measure the dog according to the diagrams, photos and directions provided. Also, you can watch our **measuring video at bld.pet/measuring**
- There's a worksheet on the back page to keep track of the measurements and any questions remaining after reading this packet.
- The dog and user do NOT have to be together to measure for these harnesses.
- Measure the harness user to determine the correct handle height. It's very important the handle(s) fit the person; please don't guess the handle height.
- **Take each measurement 2 or 3 times for accuracy.** Each time may give you different results; this is normal, don't panic. Try again and average the numbers.
- **Measuring tools:** A cloth/tailor's measuring tape is ideal because it is flexible. If you don't have one, use a string for measuring around your dog's body and then measure the string against a measuring tape or yard stick. Use a flat ruler for the width.
- If your dog is nervous with a measuring tape, try using a leash around their body, then measure the leash separately.
- **You may want a friend to help you.**
No helper? **Smear something tasty on a paper plate and tape it to the wall** at the dog's eye level to keep him occupied while you measure him.
- For the dog's height and person's wrist/hand measurements, you can **tape a piece of paper to the wall** to mark the height. Then measure from that mark to the ground.



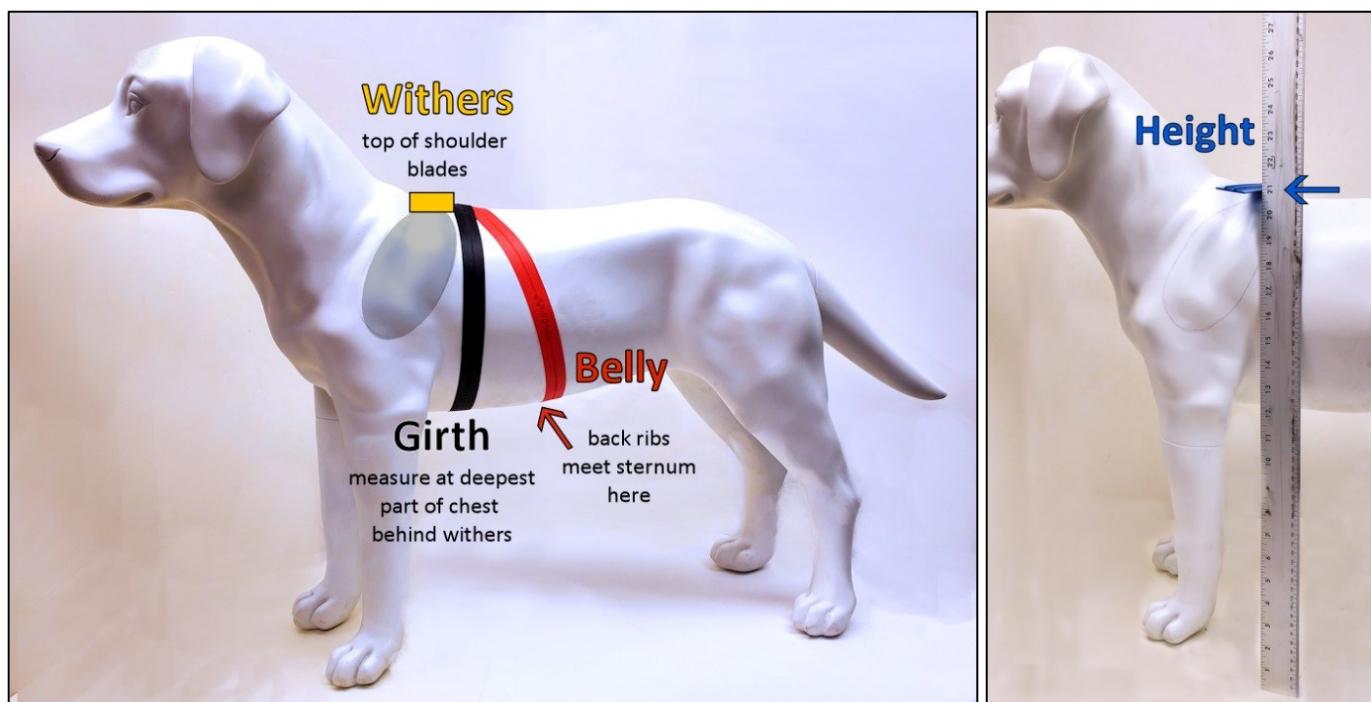
BAH & MSH Measuring: anatomy diagrams

Watch a video: bld.pet/measuring



Instructions to Measure the Dog:

- **First, get out the very best treats** you have, perhaps cheese, ham, or peanut butter! This is a great opportunity to have a helper bait your dog with a fistful of soft treats to keep your dog focused on trying to lick the food.
- **Have the dog stand square and balanced when taking all measurements.** (No sitting or lying down.) Keep the measuring tape snug.
- **Start by finding your dog's withers**, marked in yellow on the photos. The withers are the top of the shoulder blades (indicated with a grey oval). The bones can be felt over the dog's legs and shoulders, just below the dog's neck.
- **Next, locate what we at BLD call the "sweet spot,"** this is where the dog's back begins. It is immediately behind the withers. Feel the withers, and palpate (use your fingers to probe) as you move down the dog's back (just an inch or two) to feel for a bit of a dip in the dog's spine. It is important that the girth and belly measurement are taken at this spot because this is where the harness saddle will sit on your dog.
- In the photo below, the "sweet spot" is where the girth and belly guides meet just behind the withers.



1) Measure **Height** from withers to the floor

- This measurement should be a **straight, vertical line from the top of the shoulders to the ground**. If using a flexible measuring tape, **do not bend** the tape over the dog.
- Place a book or other flat object across the shoulders if you need. We use a blue ruler in the photos. Additionally, you can ask your dog to stand next to a wall and mark his height on the paper taped to the wall (as shown in the photo on p. 27).

2) Measure the Girth

- This measurement goes around your dog's ribs, behind the front legs, at the deepest part of his chest. Start the measuring at the "sweet spot" behind the withers, go down under the deepest part of the dog's chest and back around to the top.
- The measuring tape should be mostly vertical, forming a complete circle around the dog's chest. **Measure snugly** but don't squish your dog. (With long haired dogs, be sure you're measuring the dog's body, not just their floof!)

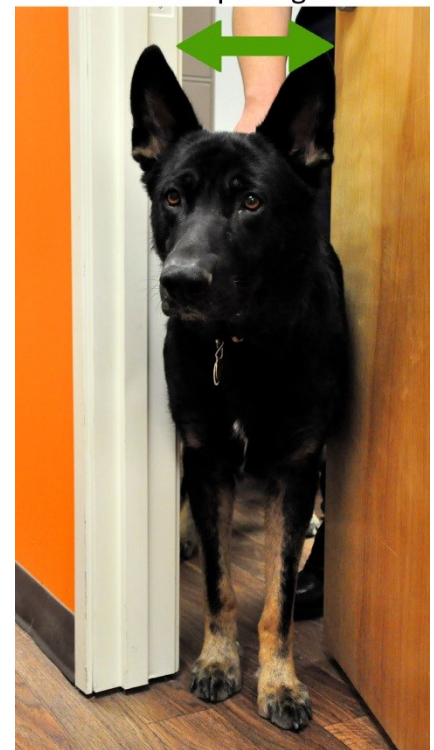
3) Measure the **Belly** (see photo on previous page)

- Similar to the girth, the belly is measured all the way around the dog's ribs/chest, but the bottom of tape measure will be **further back under the dog's ribs**, at a **diagonal** angle.
- First, locate the spot under your dog's belly where his/her ribs come together and join the sternum (indicated in red on the diagram on p. 28, and the photo on p. 29). Feel the dog's side and find the back of his ribcage, then count 3-4 ribs forward. Follow this rib down and palpate to find the notch where the deep part of his chest curves up toward the belly (flanks).
- **Bring the measuring tape under this point of the dog's ribs, and pull the tape up and forward to the "sweet spot."** The measuring tape must be snug. The measure will be at a diagonal angle.
- **Pro Tip:** put the measuring tape under your dog and "see-saw" it back and forth while pulling forward toward the withers—this settles the tape nicely under the belly, and then bring both sides of the tape to the "sweet spot."
- Avoid measuring vertically around the dog's waist, or place the measuring tape so far back it reaches the dog's flanks—both will yield inaccurate measurements. Usually, the belly and girth measurement are within 3 inches of each other. Remember, we will let you know if anything doesn't look right!
- Some boxy and/or long bodied dogs may not have a clearly defined tuck, just try your best!



Pro Tip:

Have dog stand in a doorway, with door and door jam touching his sides. Measure the opening.



4) Measure the dog's **Width**

- There are two ways to measure the dog's width. Both are best with a regular flat ruler.
- This is an important measurement; the handle(s) will be made based on how wide your dog is, so take this measurement multiple times for accuracy
- **Bird's Eye View method:** This method works well with dogs that have heavy muscling in the shoulders and short coats. Stand directly above your dog looking straight down over his body. If you touch one hand to each side of his ribs, how far apart are your hands?
- **Doorway method:** Lure your dog through a partially open door. Have your dog squeeze through the doorway and stop when his shoulders are just past the doorjamb; **measure the width of the door opening at the dog's ribcage**. Be sure the door and doorjamb touch the dog. This works well with a sliding door, and a fistful of tasty treats. (The measuring video has a good demonstration of this method.)

Instructions to Measure for the Handle:

Now it's time to measure the person who will use the harness to determine the handle size. Measure the hand that will primarily be used on the harness (most dogs work on the person's left side, with left hand on the handle). Please take each measurement 2-3 times for accuracy.

Use the harness worksheet on the following page to calculate your handle height.

This is best done with a helper who can assure you're standing naturally and measure for you so you don't have to bend over.

No Helper? No problem! Tape a piece of paper to a wall. Stand with your shoulder touching the wall. Use a pencil to mark the paper at your **hand** and **wrist** heights as described below. Then, measure the wall from the ground to the marks.

A: Wrist to ground: for MSH rigid metal support handle.

Ideally, the top of a rigid handle aligns with your wrist joint when your arm is relaxed at your side—this is similar to how a cane or walking stick is measured.

- 1) **Stand while wearing normal shoes.**
- 2) Be sure you are balanced and comfortable. Are you standing up straight? No slouching! Relax your shoulders. Steady yourself with a cane if you need.
- 3) **Allow arm to hang naturally** at your side. (Don't bend or straighten your arm, just be relaxed.)
- 4) **Measure from the bend in the wrist to the floor.** Shoe check! Be sure to wear everyday shoes.
- 5) Repeat! Move around, shake out your arm. Stand up straight, relax the shoulders, and measure again.

B: Hand to ground: for all leather handle options

Follow steps above for 1 & 2

- 3) Hold a pencil in your hand (or similar object to represent a handle) **clutching it the way you wish to hold the harness handle.**
- 4) **Allow your arm to relax.** Let your elbow relax naturally as you hold the pencil comfortably. (Don't bend or straighten your arm.)
- 5) **Measure from the pencil to the floor.**
- 6) Repeat!

By default, we will use the wrist and/or hand measurements to calculate the handle heights. If hand/wrist are at or lower than the dog's back, we suggest the minimum heights: a 2-4" rigid, or 3" leather handle.

You are welcome to specify specific handle heights! Please tell us if you'd like something else. For example, if you will only use the rigid metal handle for bracing to rise from a chair or transfer to a chair (not when you're standing/ walking), then we suggest a short 2-4" handle for the greatest stability. If you want a secondary handle nice and short for pulling yourself up, or on stairs, just tell us. For Support Pull handles, we suggest 1-2" lower than the rigid metal support handle (so the leather handle tucks under the metal grip.)



MSH or BAH

Custom Service Dog Harness

by Bold Lead Designs, LLC

Call: 303-856-3012 (US Mountain Time zone)

Email: orders@boldleaddesigns.com

Website: www.BoldLeadDesigns.com

[Shop BAH](#) [Shop MSH](#)

My Harness Worksheet

Questions to ask BLD:

Notes on what I'd like to order:



Dog's Measurement worksheet:

Dog's Name _____

Breed _____

Sex _____ Age* _____

Weight _____

1) Height _____

2) Girth _____

3) Belly _____

4) Width _____

Handle Measurement worksheet:

Person's name _____

Child who will grow? Check if yes ☐

Wrist measurement A: _____

Minus dog's height: - _____

Handle height/length A: = _____

*If the dog is taller than the person's wrist,
order a 2-4" handle.*

Hand measurement B: _____

Minus dog's height: - _____

Handle height/length B: = _____

*If the person's palm can touch the dog's
back while standing & relaxed order a 3"*

* Remember dogs must be mature and sound. See important notes on page 2