

# Fear Free Word Choices



## Simple Rephrasings Can Make a Big Difference

**Words matter.** When communicating with clients and colleagues about pets, being thoughtful about your word choices can make a world of difference in how everyone views the pets and the entire process. It shifts any blame or judgment off the pet and instead focuses on providing solutions to help deliver a Fear Free experience for pets, clients, and the veterinary team. Here are some possible rephrasings of common terms.

Commonly used term	Suggested rephrasing
Attitude labels such as “Fractious, aggressive, mean, will bite, dominant, stubborn, fearful, anxious, stressed”	“Dog displays FAS Level X in X scenario” (based on observable behaviors, such as lip licking, paw lift, panting, hiding, freezing, hissing, growling)
Sedate	Reduce his/her anxiety for the procedure
Drugs, sedatives, sedation, anxiolytics	Calming medications, pain medications, or medication to reduce stress/pain
Lethargic	Might make him/her a bit sleepy
“Chill pills”	FAS prevention, PVPs
Administer PVPs pre-op	Step 1 of anesthesia given at home
Cautions	Success notes
Muzzle	Basket
Needs muzzle	Use basket
Needs XYZ (e.g. needs PVPs)	“Provide XYZ” or “XYZ for success”
Cone of Shame	Cone of Fame
Avoid getting too close, avoid rushing, etc.	Provide space, time, etc.
Don’t do XYZ, don’t use XYZ	Do XYZ (it’s always better to phrase things in terms of what TO do vs what NOT to do)

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