

The early years of a guide dog

Guide dogs play an important part in the lives of the visually impaired but many people ignore the rigorous training programme involved in taking a dog from an untrained puppy to a successful guide dog.

Puppies need to come from good parents and be brought up properly. Some of the important skills for a puppy to have to be considered for this line of work include intelligence, confidence and a good nature and they mustn't be scared of sudden noises or by crowds.

The most common breeds for guide dogs are Labradors, Golden Retrievers and a cross of those two because they tend to be calm and clever animals that have a proven track record as guide dogs, but other breeds can make the grade.

Training begins after around six weeks as volunteer puppy walkers take the dogs to experience the outside world and the type of situations they would be likely to find in their line of work. This includes taking the dog on public transport and to busy areas such as high streets and shopping centres.

This time of training is used to teach the puppy many important traits - some which go against the natural instinct of the dog or the history of dog training. Walking in a straight line without sniffing - slightly ahead of the owner, rather than at the heel - is a key point in the training, and the pup must also learn safely cross roads, to lie quietly for long periods of time (for example, in a restaurant) as well as refusing to take orders that will take the owner into trouble (such as being instructed to walk forward into a hole).

Trained dogs are tested to make sure they will be up to the job and, on average, stay with their assigned partner for seven years. Those that don't make the grade work as pets for therapy - becoming companions for the elderly or disabled - or become available for adoption as a regular pet.

Aside from their very important role, guide dogs are very similar to other dogs with commands such as 'sit' and 'stay' as well their regular needs such as high-protein diets, [pet insurance](#) and regular grooming.

After seven years of work, the guide dog is retired and is allowed to relax as a pet for its owner as a younger version - fresh out of training - steps in to take its place.

About the Author

Reagan Blackpool is a dedicated dog lover and writes for a digital marketing company. This article is not written to promote but should be considered professional content.

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