

In an effort to provide raisers and leaders with more knowledge about what the dogs-in-training do after they return to one of our campuses we will provide weekly reports to each puppy raising club. These reports will tell the training phase of each dog. There are ten phases of training.

Attached are descriptions of activities included in each phase. By tracking the dog that you raised by his phase number and by then referring to the matching phase narrative, you can better understand our training process and your individual dog's role in it.

There is no clear defining line between each phase as there is in the case of a grade schooler who "graduates" from grade two to grade three. Guide Dog training is a seamless process in which a dog progresses at its own pace, slowly transitioning from one phase to the other. The work at each phase level builds upon the skills learned in previous ones.

Each phase is generally two to three weeks in lengths. Some dogs may advance through phases more quickly than others, but speed may not be any indicator of likelihood of eventual graduation. It is also true that a dog that seems to spend too much time in a phase may be only working on perfecting a single task before moving forward. Raisers, please do not feel disappointed if progress seems slow. Likewise, do not become too eager if progress seems quick.

Raisers should also be cautioned against plotting out on a calendar an anticipated graduation date. Dogs are usually in training for four to five months, but some dogs may stay in training for nine months or more. If a dog stays a long time in training, don't be disappointed. It may not mean that we do not like the dog; it may mean that we like him very much! In recent years, Guide Dogs has made changes in our training staffing, schedules, and protocols that allow us to spend more time developing each dog. We try our best to give each dog all the love, care, and training that it needs to become a Guide Dog prospect.

As you'll read in the description of Phase Six: The guide dog of today needs to be *Superdog* compared to the guide dog of the past. In the last few decades, since the founding of Guide Dogs for the Blind, the world has become an increasingly confusing environment for guide dogs. They carry the responsibility for the safety not just of themselves but for their blind or visually impaired partner as well. Cars are more dangerous (faster and quieter); noise has increased (construction equipment, concerts, movie theaters); intersections are varied with a thousand different designs of intersecting paths, slopes, and angles. Take a walk on a busy city street and study it from the perspective of a guide dog needing to travel it safely, calmly and confidently. Quite amazing, isn't it?

The instructors work hard to prepare each guide candidate for the challenges of this new world. Unfortunately, dogs that may have been ideal guides in the more slowly paced, less confusing world of not long ago might be career changed today. Guide Dogs believes that we are breeding better dogs than ever, that we are screening them better for health and temperament, and that raisers and staff are working harder...all in an attempt to keep up with a world that seems to be getting more complex.

In the phase descriptions that follow, we have shared information with you that we never have before this project's inception. We talk about many of the training exercises and commands that are not taught in the raiser homes. The success of this new reporting method and of our dogs depends upon all raisers supporting our efforts by **not** teaching these guidework commands or exercises in their homes. Raisers who may attempt to give their dogs "a head start" by teaching the guidework discussed in this package are in fact very negatively impacting the dog's

potential to become a guide. Improperly, inconsistently, or untimely taught guide commands or exercises will damage a dog's chance to become a guide. Please do **not** try to teach your puppy the techniques we discuss in this package, please only teach the ones discussed in your Guide Dog Puppy Manual.

At certain times a dogs' weekly training report may reflect a phase that differs from their previous weeks report. Passing a dog back does not necessarily reflect concerns but always reflects that we continue to see positive traits in the dog. One reason for this occurring is because each string of dogs are in various stages of training, the phase of a dog who is transferred from one string to another, which can occur for several reasons, will change. For example, a dog who is in phase ten, and considered "class ready", is not selected for class. This dog will subsequently be passed back and will be available for placement in the next class. Since the string that this dog has been passed to will be in a different phase, probably a lower phase, the dog will also be formally documented as being in the lower phase, even though they have technically completed phase ten and is considered "class ready".

On weekly Phase Reports you will also see a notation if your dog is on "breeding watch." If the dog is on "breeding watch," we are still considering it as a breeder. If a dog is no longer on "breeding watch," it will be neutered if that procedure has not already been done while in the raiser home.

Some dogs, unfortunately, do not go on to become either guides or breeders. These dogs are what we call career change dogs. Near the end of this package you will see several articles on career change dogs that will help you better understand your possible options on receiving the dog back. You'll also learn how Guide Dogs takes every effort to find loving, caring homes for those dogs we place.

Guide Dogs for the Blind has been very successful for many, many years. Our success is dependent upon all those many successes that you have at home - teaching your puppy to not relieve in the house, to only relieve on command, to respond to every obedience command, to be unafraid of distractions in your community, and to love and trust people.

Dogs can be career changed for many factors not in a raiser's control, including a dog's health, temperament, or guidework skills. A raiser's success should be measured by the amount of love, effort, and time spent with a puppy. If you worked your hardest and did your best, you should be proud of both yourself and your puppy. We are!

Training Phase One:

Phase One of Guide Dog training could be called "A Dog's Introduction to Guide Dogs." It is also our introduction on campus to the dog that you raised. We're glad he's here, and we're thankful of all your hard work. Along with you, we also have high hopes for the dog's future.

Shortly after your dog's arrival on campus, he will receive a thorough physical examination. An instructor assistant (IA) who will first take your dog's temperature and measure the height and weight of your dog usually performs the physical. A complete "head-to-tail" examination will then be given. All the hard work you did on the "stand" exercise as well as the efforts you made in teaching your puppy to be well behaved and confident at the vet will greatly help during this process. The nose, teeth, eyes, ears, coat, skin and feet are checked. Many dogs that come in have minor ear infections. The "flop" ears on three of our breeds can be even more potent breeding grounds for fungus and infections. Ears need to be checked frequently. Raisers should check a puppy's ears often for redness, odor, flaky skin or other abnormalities. Please, always ask a vet to look inside the ears with an otoscope any time a puppy visits them.

We hope that all dogs will come in well groomed and in good condition. All Guide Dog candidates should look the part of an esteemed canine that has experience with being groomed frequently. The more practice a raiser and puppy have in caring for ears, coat, and nails, the more easily a dog will adapt to being groomed by a student or graduate. The IA will handle any minor problems your dog may have, such as long toenails, dirty ears, or matted coat. If your dog has any ailment or unusual condition that causes concern, the IA will bring it to the attention of an instructor or staff veterinarian. The accurate recording of maladies to your advisor through monthly reports, the project record, veterinary statements, and direct communication when needed greatly helps the veterinary clinic understand any health problem that has the potential to affect your dog's success as a guide. Accurate vaccination reporting on your project record is very important, for the staff will bring your dog up-to-date on his vaccines with booster shots for distemper, hepatitis, leptospirosis, parvovirus, parainfluenza, bordatella, and rabies.

Our veterinarians will also x-ray your dog's hips and elbows for orthopedic problems to improve the quality and longevity of the guides we graduate.

Once a month, a veterinary ophthalmologist comes to the campus, and all dogs that have returned for training since the last visit will have their eyes examined for defects that might affect their work as a guide or as a breeder.

A dog that will become a guide must be healthy, well mannered, confident, responsive, and wise. A dog that will become a breeder should exhibit these many traits, and his or her relatives must also be good candidates. If your dog has a condition that would prevent him from becoming a breeder (and your dog is still intact), then he will be altered. Unaltered dogs will continue on the Breeder Watch List until Phase Two or Phase Three. The Breeding and Training Departments will use this time to further evaluate your dog as possible breeding stock. Watch for your dog in that section of the phase reports. If he is no longer on "breeder watch," you'll know that the Vet Department is altering the dog.

Once your dog has finished all of the physical examinations, he is assigned to a "string" of dogs. A string is a group of dogs brought in at approximately the same time (your dog's recall date). A string typically consists of 35 to 55 dogs in San Rafael, and 20 to 25 dogs in Oregon. The number of dogs in a string will vary according to the expected number of students for the class that starts four to five months in the future at each campus. Class size can vary for a variety of reasons, including the season, holidays, or the personal needs and schedules of the

students. The training staff for each string comprises five instructors and three instructor's assistants in San Rafael and three instructors and two instructor's assistants in Oregon. San Rafael has a larger dormitory capacity, which results in the differences in string size and staff assignments.

Dogs may, if their training progresses in the usual pattern, be expected to graduate with the student class six months after their recall in San Rafael, and five months after their recall in Oregon. This time frame, though, can vary according to a dog's development and the availability of students who match well with each dog. A dog can change strings if it is determined that it may benefit from a change in training time or instructor. Formal guide dog training may last anywhere from four months to even a year, depending upon an individual dog's needs. Guide Dogs individually matches all students with the appropriate dog for their needs. Raisers should make all graduation travel plans as tentative as possible even up to the day of graduation in the event a match does not work out.

During the month before your dog arrived on campus, the instructors had been working with the most recent class to graduate by training the blind students to use their new Guide Dogs. After graduation, these instructors travel all across the country on follow-up visits with past graduates and their dogs. During Phase One, the instructor assistant will care for and work with your dog until the instructors return to the campus and continue to assist the instructor upon his or her return. The IA's will take your dog for walks on campus, begin integrating him into the community run, groom your dog on a daily basis, and provide any other care that your dog may need. This period is our chance to learn more about your dog individually, so that we can adapt ourselves to his needs as necessary.

Training Department staff carefully monitors newly arriving dogs to ensure a smooth transition into the kennel. Dogs can be introduced to an agility program, spend nights supervised by instructors in the dormitory, or spend consistent, supervised time in the Training Department office.

Our IA's describe their early time with your dogs this way: "It's a joy to see a dog that has been well-handled in the home..." and "Many of (us) have raised puppies and understand what raisers go through. We know what it's like to give up a pup. We care for each dog as an individual." Their focus is to ensure that your dog makes as easy and smooth a transition to kennel life as possible. As another IA says "We are their buddies and that is an important part of the process, particularly because we are helping relieve any kennel stress. I know that makes a really big difference in their training..." Just as you had a wonderful bond with your dog, IA's and instructors form tremendous bonds with them.

In addition to members of the Training and Veterinary staff, your dog may have another new friend - a kennel mate! Depending upon a dog's temperament, gender, health, and other factors, a dog may be paired up in a kennel run with another dog. Guide Dogs is very selective in this process, making sure that all dogs are properly matched and ensuring that a kennel mate will not adversely affect a dog's chances to develop into a guide.

Most dogs easily make the transition to kennel life. If your dog has difficulty making the adjustment, one or more of the following special care programs may be used: extended or continuous time in community run, frequent walks on campus, extended or continuous time in the Training Department office, special toys and other equipment in his run, and nights with instructors in the dormitory. We always try to adapt our regimens to meet the individual needs of dogs. We realize that the more flexible we can be in our approaches, the more successful we will be.

All of us at Guide Dogs know that Phase One is a time of excitement, challenge, and adaptation for our training staff and the newly arriving dogs as well. We also realize that this is a difficult time for raisers. We know that

you're missing the dog that you cared for and loved for so long. Thank you for making this great gift and please be assured that we are giving the best, personalized care that we can during this and every phase.

If your dog passes all of his medical tests and some preliminary temperament evaluation, it will be on to Phase Two!

Training Phase Two:

If Phase One is called “A Dog’s Introduction To Guide Dogs,” then Phase Two can be called “A Dog’s Introduction to Guide Dog Training.” Phase Two sets the foundation for any guide work training that may follow.

Your dog has now had time to settle into the kennel. The instructors are back from their follow-up visits and for the first time get to meet the dog that you gave so much time, hard work, and love to raise for Guide Dogs for the Blind. All of us here at Guide Dogs are very appreciative of your efforts and share in your dream that your dog will graduate as a guide or a breeder. It’s time to begin formal guidework training using “The Balanced Education System of Training Guide Dogs.”

Each instructor assigned to the string will be responsible for training between six and ten dogs. They will work and become familiar with all of the other dogs in the string as well. A training supervisor will provide support to all of the instructors working with the string. They will also help in evaluating your dog’s work, temperament and overall progress.

The instructors identify or “read” the characteristics of each dog. Since no two dogs are the same, it is important that the instructors learn what motivates each dog and what handling style works best. An example of this is learning the dog’s response to different styles of praise. Will calm and quiet praise best suit your dog’s personality and promote training progress, or will your dog be better motivated by spirited praise?

With the help of your leaders and advisor, you learned these types of characteristics about your puppy long ago. Now it’s the instructor’s turn to personally learn the individual characteristics of your dog. Part of what helps an instructor know your dog is a report that your puppy raising advisor sends to the Training Department about each dog. To compile a report, your advisor uses his or her personal observations of your puppy, your project record, and your monthly reports. The more consistently you turn in informative reports and the more you communicate any of your dog’s behavioral or health concerns with your leader, the better we know your dog and the easier we are able to help him adapt in training.

The first of the two most important parts of teaching a dog to become a guide is obedience. The obedience program consists of a variety of elements. Emphasis is placed on the response to the commands and the dog’s body positioning. During the first sessions of obedience training, the instructors will determine how well your dog responds to the leash and collar and to the commands you taught in your home. “Sit,” “down,” “stay,” and “come” are reinforced. New commands such as “heel” and the formal recall will be introduced. Distractions such as food, toys, and different breeds of dogs, overly friendly people, or different scents are used to determine an initial reading of the overall controllability of your dog.

Martingale collars are used with all dogs starting training. Dogs who require firmer collar corrections when distracted also wear a slip training collar, to be used only when needed.

It’s at this time when all your efforts teaching obedience to your puppy start to really pay off. The time and consistency you devoted to teaching obedience exercise in daily practices and at your meetings helps your dog advance through Phase Two. If instructors must spend time teaching your dog the basics, then they will have less time to reinforce the exercises with distractions. The more time that can be spent reinforcing exercises, the better it will be for a dog’s blind partner. Reinforcement of obedience will continue throughout all ten phases.

The second part of teaching a dog to become a guide is, of course, the guidework. It begins with the introduction of the harness. Your dog will be taught to stand calmly while the harness is gently put into place. Your hard work at teaching your dog to stand on command becomes important beyond just teaching your dog to accept an examination as we discussed in the description of Phase One. Wearing the harness, your dog is then walked around in a calm and relaxed manner to get the "feel" of the harness.

When your dog is comfortable and familiar with the harness, it's time for the first "official" workout! This workout takes place on a treadmill. His instructor during treadmill training identifies each dog's individual gait and speed. These introduction techniques are so successful, that it is common to see a dog trying to get on the treadmill before it is their turn! Dogs receive three to four training sessions on the treadmill before beginning workouts in town with their instructors. Your dog will be taught how to pull into the harness chest piece and to maintain a straight line of travel – all while moving at a consistent pace. New commands related to guidework are introduced – "forward," "hopp-up," "steady," and "halt."

These and other exercises and commands that are taught in training should never be taught in the home by raisers. A dog's blind partner will use these commands to ensure safe travel. If the exercises are incorrectly introduced and/or if there is confusion on the part of a dog as to what the commands mean, the success of the dog as a guide and the safety of the dog and blind handler team may be jeopardized. Puppy raisers also should never put their pups on treadmills for the same reasons. There is also a risk of injury if appropriate safeguards are not in place. We depend upon all our raisers in following the guidelines that are given with the ultimate goal of developing a safe and successful team. Please do not teach any exercises and commands that are not in your Puppy Manual.

Since guide dogs and their partners will encounter many stationary obstacles (light poles, parking meters, parked cars, trees, etc.) and moving objects (pedestrians, etc.) in their work, obstacle courses are valuable tools. Obstacle exercises are a dog's first opportunity to learn how to give their handlers adequate clearance around them. Again, please do not do these exercises at home. Your dog will be introduced to his first obstacle course located on our campuses.

A primary goal in Phase Two is to establish a focused work ethic in your dog. If you have taught your puppy self-control and consistent command response in the home, instructors will have a much easier time continuing to develop a work ethic in the dog. As with your efforts, the result an instructor is seeking is accomplished by a generous amount of support and praise along with leash corrections when necessary.

Your dog will undergo extensive body handling exercises and responses to the handling will be identified. Since a visually impaired handler will hopefully one day care for your dog, it is essential that the dog remain patient and calm while being handled.

The puppy lay-over and calming sit you performed when you first received your pup, as well as the continuing handling and grooming exercises you conducted daily, will make a big difference in how well your dog accepts and tolerates handling and grooming in this phase and later. If a raiser continues throughout the raising period to perform complete body handling and grooming exercises on a regular basis (especially brushing teeth, clipping nails, examining the ears and all four feet), the dog will seldom be resistant, anxious or concerned when these same efforts are done by others.

The handling, guidework and obedience exercises of Phase Two, along with generous doses of love and affection, will work to build the trust and devotion between your dog and his instructor that are necessary for your dog to

become a guide candidate. The quality of your dog's work and the strength of the bond the dog feels with its new handler will hopefully both grow through each successive phase.

In the descriptions of Phases One and Two, you have seen how the fundamentals you established in obedience and handling have been utilized and built upon by the instructors on our campuses. Now, as your dog progresses through the phases of training, the instructors will continue to build on the guidework and other basics established in the earlier phases. It is important to remember that the phases of training are not distinct and separate from each other as are grade levels in school. Training a guide dog is a smooth and seamless process, with each small step and accomplishment built upon another. Phases do, however, help the Training Department and you chart a dog's gradual progress through training. Throughout his development here at Guide Dogs, we want your dog to become increasingly familiar and competent in the tasks and commands to which he's been introduced thus far.

During Phase Three, which begins approximately three to four weeks into training, the dogs really begin to form a "rapport" with their instructors. The time, work, and love that you so graciously gave to your dog while he was a puppy growing up in your home helped the two of you become partners. These same three ingredients help the instructors form a compatible team with your dog. An important part of becoming a team includes an increasing understanding on the part of the instructor, of what motivates each dog to work and perform.

Guidework progresses to the quiet residential neighborhoods of San Rafael, Calif., or Gresham, Ore. Your dog travels to and from town in "first class accommodations" - training vans equipped with individual wire crates. A separate configuration of crates, just like in the vans, is located in the kennel complex. All dogs are introduced to jumping in and out of this "mock" crate set before being put in an actual training van. Dogs then experience loading and unloading from crates in the van, riding comfortably and quietly, and waiting patiently for their turn at the training route. The vans also carry other essential items - fresh water, grooming equipment, harnesses, blindfolds, clean-up supplies, chew toys, first aid kits and other items. Dogs that are already familiar with riding in cars enclosed in crates (as well as loose) adjust more easily on their trips into town. These dogs will be less stressed by this form of transportation over dogs that have only ridden loose in a vehicle. Guide Dogs thanks all the raisers who have so willingly taken their dogs on countless trips, especially those first few carsick rides.

During Phase Three, your dog is continually worked using the guidework commands introduced in Phase Two. We also introduce several new guidework exercises and commands. The first of these are the formal turns and the commands "left" and "right." More precise positioning in obedience responses is strived for. "Come" (informal recall) response is continued and off leash work in enclosed areas is just beginning. More difficult distractions are introduced as well, to prepare your dog for "real-life" situations. Your dog will need to learn more than just what the verbal command means. There are hand signals or gestures, footwork or other "body language" associated with each command. The Instructor will use both verbal commands and body language to communicate to your dog just what needs to be done. Once your dog responds correctly to the command, we make sure that we give plenty of praise! Any type of dog handler - guide dog instructors, raisers, or private trainers are the most successful when they consistently and willingly give lots of praise to the dog. At Guide Dogs, a dog that does obedience exercises properly is a necessity; a dog that does them happily is a delight.

Another new command your dog will learn in Phase Three is "over here." This command prompts your dog to move into a position on the right side of the handler so the handler and dog can safely maneuver through heavy or awkward doors, revolving doors or turnstiles. **Remember as we discussed in Phase Two; please do not teach any guidework commands or exercises at home.**

Additional concepts that are introduced in Phase Three are curb work and street crossings. These concepts are introduced utilizing a method called "pattern training." During pattern training, the instructor causes the correct

guiding behavior by cueing your dog before any mistakes are made. Pattern training introduces your dog to guide work responses in a way that keeps him feeling very confident about the new skills he is learning! Pattern training lasts for about four weeks, with a gradual transition to more “standard” training techniques that places more and more responsibility on your dog. During pattern training, dogs can be worked in a variety of environments, including challenging areas. Your dog has his instructor right there to make things go just right, so he learns exactly what to do.

Each dog is taught to stop at all “down curbs,” which will indicate to a visually impaired handler that there is a change in elevation and that they have arrived at an intersection. Your dog is also taught to stop at all “up curbs,” which will let the handler know that they have arrived at the opposite side of the street and that there is again a change in elevation. At this introductory level of curbs and street crossings, situations are kept simple while the dogs learn the basic concepts. Since street crossings are such an important part of safe travel for a blind handler, lots of time is spent teaching your dog to cross the street consistently and on an appropriate “line” (straight across the intersection to a particular point on the opposite side). The “hopp up”, “forward, and “halt” commands are continued, and the “steady” command, which tells the dog to ease off on the amount of pull into the harness, is introduced.

It is crucial that raisers not try to teach their dogs to stop at curbs or other elevation changes, such as stairs. This should only be done by licensed instructors or by apprentices under their supervision. If taught incorrectly, it can take a great deal of time to undo the mistakes taught by someone with no guidework training experience, could lead to a dog being career changed, and could potentially put someone in a life-threatening situation.

Phase Three is a fun time for the training staff, as the parts of training are starting to gel into a cohesive result. As one instructor assistant put it, “You really start to see them putting the pieces together; they really start looking like guide dogs!” Another said, “It is a great feeling to see them looking good out there – it’s team work.”

During Phase Three, IAs will also begin to take your dog to a local mall or shopping center so they can observe your dog’s reactions to people, noises, odors, other dogs, objects and more. Both positive and negative responses will be noted and relayed to the instructors.

This is where your time spent socializing your puppy will really begin to make a difference. Every socialization outing that a puppy is taken on is a step towards becoming a guide. Guide Dogs depends upon every raiser's efforts on socializing our puppies. Thanks for all your hard work!

During Phase Three, most dogs that have not yet been spayed or neutered will be evaluated for the breeding program. All aspects of your dog will be considered: health, physical soundness, soundness of temperament, willingness to work and please, breed characteristics, usability of bloodlines, and the ability to understand and become proficient at guidework. How well littermates and other closely related dogs have done in the program will also be considered. If your dog is “pulled” for breeding, he will leave the training string and become the responsibility of the Breeding Department.

To be pulled for breeding is really the highest honor we can bestow upon your dog, for it is only “the best of the best” that become breeders. A guide dog can assist one blind person; a breeder has the potential to assist many. If you live within 75 miles of the San Rafael campus (It’s 50 miles for non-raisers); and if you qualify with the standards required by the Breeding Department, you may be offered your dog back and you can become a “Breeder Keeper.” You will be invited to participate in a presentation ceremony of your breeder at a California class graduation regardless of the campus your puppy was recalled to for training.

Dogs that are not selected for the breeding program will be spayed or neutered. To avoid post-surgery complications, females will not be worked for five days and males for three days following their surgery.

If on your weekly "Phase Report," your dog is indicated as being under "breeder watch," you will know that we are still considering your dog as a breeder. Once your dog is no longer on "breeder watch," you will know that he has been altered and is being considered as a guide candidate only.

Now it's time for your dog to meet more new friends! Your dog will begin to participate in social sessions with other dogs. Instructors or instructor assistants closely supervise these sessions. A group of dogs will be allowed to play with each other in an informal setting in an enclosed area. These sessions are similar to the old "community run" with which many long-time raisers are familiar, but the number of dogs and the area of play are both smaller. These sessions will take place throughout the day and provide the dogs with a good opportunity to relax, interact and enjoy the company of their instructors. Since your dog is still relatively new to the kennel and to the other dogs in the string, it does take time, experience and careful monitoring to establish a safe and productive atmosphere in these sessions.

If you visit the kennels, it is likely you will see any number of dogs playing, relaxing, or being groomed in the enclosures at any time during the day. You may also notice new toys or objects of interest to the dogs in the enclosures. These toys and objects are changed from time-to-time so your dog will find new and interesting items to stimulate them in the kennel environment. We are working hard at Guide Dogs to develop ways to keep our kennels both safe and stimulating for all the dogs while they stay with us.

[Due to the high level of professional monitoring needed during community running of dogs, Guide Dogs does not want raisers community running their dogs in their clubs. Please insure your puppy's safety and Guide Dog potential by not participating in any such community running while your dog is in your care. Your advisor and leader can help you with appropriate guidelines for interactions between puppies, or you can refer to the Guide Dog Puppy Raising Manual.]

Keep your fingers crossed! Can we make it to Phase Four? We're hoping right along with you.