

Now that guidework basics have been established, in addition to working in the quieter residential neighborhoods, your dog will begin to work in the somewhat more challenging areas of downtown Gresham or San Rafael. The routes will become longer and change in configuration. Curb approaches will become more difficult. Handicap access curbs that are flat or blended with the street will be included in the route. Street crossings will become wider and slightly more complex.

Your dog will begin to guide his handler through the obstacle course on campus as well as show clearance awareness when working in town. Your dog is taught to move around obstacles and to stop at more congested areas along the course. The course is becoming more difficult, with more angled clearances. Clearances requiring a full stop are also introduced.

At any time in training, if your dog exhibits a need to improve in any area, we work harder at developing that particular area. Some examples would include discomfort displayed when riding in a training van crate. The dog would then receive frequent rides in a variety of vehicles or more exposure to the on campus crate configuration. (See Phase Three). A dog that is uncomfortable on stairs will receive additional exposure to stairs. Dogs that are experiencing stress will be given extra play sessions and relaxing walks on campus and in town. We never "push" a dog through a phase. We take extra time so the dog can develop at its own speed.

Likewise, when raisers work puppies in their communities, they should not rush their puppies' socialization development: They should not introduce their puppies to more than they can handle or force puppies into situations that are uncomfortable. If difficulties occur, they should hold off and let the puppies develop more slowly. You'll find that many of the tips in the Puppy Manual are the same ones that we use ourselves when we are training dogs to be guides.

Pattern training continues, however, instructors are now allowing your dog more freedom to make mistakes so that he may learn from them. When errors occur, instructors will show the dog the correct answer before they get confused. Any advanced responses are still being patterned at this point.

During Phase Four, your dog's instructor will receive the actual copy of your puppy raising advisor's final puppy evaluation. Remember, as we discussed in Phase Two, your monthly reports, project record, and communications with your leader are all crucial in helping your advisor develop this final puppy raising report which assists the Training Department's understanding of your puppy. Up until this time, only the training supervisor had access to this information. The reason that we don't immediately share this information with instructors and IA's is that we do not want your dog's temperament or behaviors to be prejudged by the instructors. We want every dog to start with the same chance! If there is information about your dog that the instructors might need before this time, the supervisors will make the instructors aware of it. The instructors will review the advisor evaluation, and use it to help identify the strengths and needs of your dog. If there are areas of concern, a plan of action will be developed to address them. Your input is very valuable, for there may be behaviors that were present in your home that have not been seen in the kennel, and vice versa. Please make sure that you complete every monthly report and the project record completely and accurately. We appreciate your doing so. As one instructor said, "We really get to know our dogs' idiosyncrasies. What we have learned about the dogs pretty much correlates with the final report from Puppy Raising."

Note: If you are currently raising a puppy and have questions about your monthly report, please check with your leader to make sure that you are completing it in the most useful fashion. All raisers should

submit their monthly reports to their leaders every month. The leaders should read them, add their comments, and forward them to the advisor every month, not just when the dog is about to be returned for training. By reviewing them, an advisor can determine if a raiser may need some extra help.

Here are some tips on completing the project record. A good idea is to read the project record periodically while you are raising to continually familiarize yourself with the type of information we are seeking. When your puppy turns 12 months of age, complete your project record and send it to your advisor. This will give your advisor time to record all behaviors, habits and problems in the final report to the Training Department.

During Phase Four, we formally evaluate your dog's individual progress. The first evaluation is preliminary obedience testing, which may take place on our busy campus. Your dog's responses to formal and informal commands are assessed. These commands include "sit," "down", stay, and "heel;" the formal recall and the informal come. Throughout the testing, a variety of distractions will be presented, including food, dogs and toys. Your dog will also be asked to demonstrate his ability to behave while being extensively handled during a physical body examination. Phase Four is also the time when your dog will be evaluated for their response to a head collar.

Once again, the more time you spent teaching your dog consistent obedience and physically handling your dog, the better the dog should do during this preliminary test. Your hard work does count...thank you very much!

In Phase Five, your dog will spend a lot of time in downtown Gresham or San Rafael. The instructors will be concentrating on improving your dog's guidework on the basis of the information gathered during the previous phases.

Your dog's instructor continues to fine-tune all the new skills your dog is learning. Both formal and informal exercises are executed in a variety of environments to ensure a good response. The level of distractions is also increased so that each dog's individual distractions can be identified and addressed. (i.e. birds for some, squirrels for others.)

During guidework, your dog continues to have the freedom to make mistakes and decisions while working. Instructors will continue to show the dog the correct answer before he becomes confused. Any challenging or advanced guiding decisions will continue to be patterned by the instructor.

Instructors are now practicing short blindfold sessions with your dog while a teammate spots them for safety. This allows the instructor to see where your dog's strengths lie, and what areas need more work. It is at this time that preliminary blindfold testing occurs. The route for testing is usually an urban or suburban area of about a 14-block distance. During this test, the instructor wears a blindfold and is "spotted" by his supervisor. Passing requirements are for a dog to display an understanding of safe guidework skills and keeping focused. These skills include good responses to commands, adherence to line of travel, consistent pace of travel and clearance awareness. Obedience exercises are also done on the route, with a distraction present. In the event a dog does not pass preliminary guidework testing, he will receive the extra training he needs, and have an opportunity to work the route again when he is ready. Each dog progresses at a different pace, and not passing this test does not mean he will not become a guide, he simply needs more work in one or more areas. We also use this opportunity to evaluate dogs and improve our training techniques.

Here is what an instructor said about the preliminary guidework test: "After working with the dogs while under blindfold, we realize just how much we have been inadvertently cueing them. So we work on those areas of the dog's training that are weak. This test helps us fine tune the dog's skills."

During these tests, both for guidework and obedience (see Phase 4), your dog will not be expected to perform perfectly. The dogs are expected to show they are beginning to understand guidework concepts. His skills are still just developing, and this is only the preliminary test. If your dog does not yet meet the necessary skill standards during preliminary testing, he can be passed back one or two strings. If this happens, it does not mean your dog will not become a guide. It simply means he needs more time to learn the challenging concepts of guidework. Dogs that are passed back regularly go on to graduate.

Ever since your dog first arrived on campus for training, the instructors, instructor assistants and staff veterinarians have been closely monitoring your dog's health. During Phase Five, the instructors and veterinarians will review your dog's medical history. Since it is very important for a working guide to remain healthy, any ailments that occur during your dog's stay on campus are carefully recorded in your puppy's medical history

Any health information that you have given Guide Dogs through your leader or through your monthly reports or project record may help us evaluate a veterinary concern that becomes evident while the dog is in training. Also, all raisers should remember to turn in accurately completed veterinary billing and diagnostic forms that are provided in the puppy packets. We record and track all the information on each

of those forms to keep an accurate in-house record of your dog's health history. The accurate reporting of your puppy's ailments while in your home is essential.

While at Guide Dogs, dogs may acquire minor medical problems; such as ear infections, loose stools, conjunctivitis (oozing, irritated eyes), or lick sores. To reduce any ailments that can be induced by stress or boredom, the extra play sessions, relaxing walks or other activities developed for individual dogs help keep the dogs happy and well adjusted. In both the puppy and the training kennels, we are continually evaluating new ways to keep the dogs stimulated. Puppies in the home benefit from the extra time you have taken to give your love and care.

Whenever possible, a treatment schedule and appropriate timeline for improvement in an existing medical problem will be developed so that the dog remains in training. We want to give every dog a chance to become a successful guide. Unfortunately, chronic ailments or their potential reoccurrence later in a graduate's home may lead to your dog being career changed from the program.

Please always remember that a dog graduating as a guide or breeder does not gauge a raiser's success, nor does where a dog advances in training. Dogs can be career changed for many reasons not within the raiser's control, such as health issues, inherent temperament, or guidework. A raiser's success is measured only by the amount of love, effort and time that is spent with a puppy. No matter what happens in training, if you did your best, be proud! Always remember that we are proud of each and every one of you and can never say Thank You! enough.

Phase Six begins in approximately the seventh and eighth weeks of training. Some dogs may move more quickly through the phases than others. Their speed is not necessarily a reflection on their chances to graduate, only of their rate of learning. In fact, a dog that seems to be stuck in a particular phase may only be slowed down by a single exercise that it finds challenging; everything else may be going great. What you perceive as slow progress may be quite normal. We spend a lot of time with our dogs, helping them through these challenges.

By this point, your dog has shown, through its individual character and temperament, what kind of guide dog he may become. Some of the telling signs are your dog's energy level, sensitivity, initiative and level of distractibility.

Obedience continues to be a very important part of your dog's training. Unlike guidework, where a dog is taught to think and make decisions, obedience responses should be prompt and precise. Dogs performing obedience exercises should exhibit complete attention to their handler, (raiser, instructor, blind partner). Your dog is continuing obedience training with instructors other than his primary instructor to make it clear to your dog that consistent responses are expected.

You can help develop positive characteristics in a puppy that you raise. Handling techniques that help teach positive behaviors include:

- being a positive role model by maintaining a calm energy level
- being consistent in your expectations of calm behavior
- learning to read and anticipate the actions of your puppy
- being consistent in your expectations of compliance to every command even in the presence of distractions
- by consistent practice, mold the actions that you desire
- learning how to most effectively use the collar type that has been assigned to you by Guide Dogs
- willingly and effectively praising every success

These are the exact same fundamentals that Guide Dog instructors use when they train a dog to be a guide. If you're raising a puppy for Guide Dogs and you want to learn more about handling techniques, read the section about training principles in the Puppy Manual, talk to your leader or ask your advisor.

Guidework training continues in downtown Gresham and San Rafael, where the routes become longer and more complex - up to 45 minutes long. New concepts in guidework are added. Your dog will be taught how to inform the handler when a barricade completely blocks the path and how to safely work around it. Many graduates live in rural areas with no sidewalks. Your dog will be taught to work in sidewalkless areas. Many residential areas have curbs that are widely rounded. The different curb and corner situations your dog will encounter make street crossings much more challenging.

Work continues in malls and buildings as well. Stairs, crowded aisles, supermarkets, different scents and a variety of surfaces will be encountered. It sounds much the same as when you were socializing your puppy many months ago, but it is just as important now as it was then. Your dog must continue to see all sorts of situations, both new and familiar, especially now that your dog has the responsibility of guiding a handler through them.

The help that you give us by frequently socializing your puppy in both new and familiar situations while he is with you is crucial to this work in training. Believe us... the instructors personally thank you for every trip to the store, mall, or park that your puppy took with you.

Your dog will be taught to make “moving turns,” rather than stopping to make the “formal turn.” Crowded buildings, stores and malls provide a challenge for the team of guide and handler to negotiate. While working through buildings, your dog will be taught to slow down.

Dogs receive their first exposure to traffic in Phase Six. “Pre-traffic conditioning” teaches your dog to stop, hold a line, or back up on line when a vehicle is too close. This is a notable accomplishment for your dog! Traffic is serious business and the safety problems that your dog is being exposed to at this phase will carry over to the high level of responsibility required to become a guide.

Your dog is also learning another entirely new concept: “intelligent disobedience.” This requires your dog to actually disobey his instructor when a situation is unsafe. For example, if the handler gives the command for the dog to go forward across a busy intersection but there is a car moving towards the intersection, the dog will disobey. This concept is first taught on the obstacle course with a variety of tight clearances, but carries over directly to traffic conditioning and training

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 America 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 is getting more complex. Guide Dogs thanks every raiser and leader who have so dedicatedly joined us in our goal of providing safe, dependable guides and partners for the blind and visually impaired.

Guidework training moves from the “merely” challenging areas of San Rafael or Gresham to the big cities of San Francisco or Portland. These urban environments present a wide variety of demands such as wide, complex intersections and street crossings (some with pedestrian islands), more pedestrian and vehicular traffic, louder noises, and the generally more chaotic life common in the city. Dogs that had good socialization experiences in a big city situation during their raising tend to have an easier time - they’ve seen it all before. Your dog will also ride the city bus system and light rail or the subway as well as learn to work safely along a station platform edge.

Those special outings you attended with your puppy club in congested urban centers and on light rail, the bus, the train, or the ferry will help your dog adjust and cope effectively when it is in training.

Now that guidework basics are becoming well ingrained and your dog is working in a more consistent manner, the concept of low overhead clearances is taught. This is one of the most difficult aspects of guidework for a dog to master, because low overhead clearances (such as a tree branch) normally would not affect a dog. Overhead obstacles are usually outside a dog’s normal range of vision. Dogs do not naturally look up; therefore they’re not often aware of such obstacles. As a result, it is very difficult for a guide to indicate a low overhead clearance by stopping. However, with consistent practice and patience, a guide can become proficient in overhead clearance work if it is trained on a specific route that has low overhead clearances.

Your dog is now at another very important part of the progression toward becoming a guide; “formal traffic training” begins! At this stage of training, more responsibility is placed on your dog and emergency decisions must be made. Dogs become more secure about the responses in formal traffic training when deciding when to stop, hold their line, back up, or even move forward.

Training in the proper response to a total barricade is started in Phase Seven as well. Your dog is taught how to inform the handler of objects totally blocking the travel path, and how to work safely around them.

Obedience training now progresses to off-leash work to evaluate attitude and consistency. Only when your dog responds consistently in a reliable manner on leash under very distracting and difficult situations will your dog begin “off-leash training.” Note that off-leash work occurs very late in the training program and only after the instructors have a great deal of confidence in your dog.

Just a reminder: raisers should not do off-leash work with their puppies other than the off-leash recall (“come”) and that exercise only while within a securely confined area. Please refer to the Puppy Raising Manual for the proper training procedure for the recall. The best way that you can help prepare a dog for the challenges of off-leash work they will encounter in Phase Seven is to teach your puppy consistent responses to all commands while on leash.

Since many graduates will need to leash-relieve their dogs while at home, at work or while traveling, instructors will leash relieve the dogs in training on a regular basis.

Teaching consistent and proper leash relieving at home is very important. When a dog has learned to relieve at will, it is hard to then teach them to relieve only on command. Unfortunately, a good number of dogs are career changed both in training and later in graduate homes because of poor relieving habits. This is a potential career change characteristic that raisers can help prevent. Read your Puppy Raising Manual for the proper techniques. Ask your leader or your advisor if your puppy is having difficulty

**learning to relieve only on command. The longer improper relieving continues, the harder it is to correct.
Good relieving techniques are essential. We're counting on you!**