



**Guide Dogs  
of America**



**Tender Loving  
Canines**

# **PUPPY RAISER**

# **GUIDELINES & POLICIES**

## **Helpful Hint:**

If reviewing this document online, search keywords  
by using Ctrl F.

**Last Updated: February 2022.**

2021 © Guide Dogs of America | Tender Loving Canines – All rights reserved, revised September 2021.

Use of Graphics, images, information or any other content within this document and its pages is expressly forbidden without permission from Guide Dogs of America | Tender Loving Canines. Guide Dogs of America | Tender Loving Canines does grant permission to use information from this document for educational and informational purposes only as long as we are notified in advance and properly cited. Guide Dogs of America | Tender Loving Canines reserves the right to update this guide at any time.





Guide Dogs  
of America



Tender Loving  
Canines

# Puppy Raiser Policies and Guidelines



**Puppy's Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for becoming a volunteer puppy raiser with Guide Dogs of America | Tender Loving Canines! This is an exciting time, and we know you will have many questions about the proper care and training of your foster puppy. This guide will serve as a reference for you during your time with the puppy. As each puppy is different, we also encourage you to contact Guide Dogs of America | Tender Loving Canines whenever you are unable to find an answer to your question or require clarity. We are here to help! Thank you for your support and continued hard work!

# Table of Contents

## **Chapter 1: Welcome & Thank You**

15 - [Welcome to the GDA|TLC Family](#)

[Puppy Raising Objective](#)

17 - [General Information](#)

[Location](#)

[Hours](#)

[Social Media](#)

[Mission Statement](#)

18 - [Important Contact Information](#)

[Department Contacts and Emails](#)

[Important Medical Information and Dates](#)

[Vaccinations](#)

[Stool Sample](#)

[Heartworm Medication](#)

[Flea & Tick Medication](#)

## **Chapter 2: Before your Puppy Arrives**

24 - [Preparing For the Arrival of Your Puppy](#)

[Puppy Proof Your Home](#)

28 - [Items to Get Prior to Your Puppy Arriving Home](#)

[Things Not to Buy](#)

[Additional Items as Your Puppy Grows](#)

35 - [Puppy Go Home Kit](#)

## Chapter 3: Your Puppy Comes Home

### 37 - [The First Day](#)

[Car Ride Home](#)

[Introduction to Household Pets](#)

### 39 - [First Days at Home](#)

[House/Potty Training](#)

[Introduction to the Home Environment](#)

[Crate Training](#)

[Feeding](#)

[Training](#)

### 43 - [The First Two Weeks](#)

[Beginning Basic Commands](#)

## Chapter 4: Common Puppy Issues

### 50 – [Most Common Puppy Issues](#)

[Puppy Biting](#)

[Barking/Whining](#)

[Jumping](#)

## Chapter 5: Caring for your Puppy

### 57 - [Feeding](#)

[Water](#)

[Food](#)

[Sit for the Food Bowl](#)

61 - [Sleeping](#)

[The Crate](#)

[Other Sleeping Arrangements](#)

65 - [Eliminating](#)

[House Training](#)

[Leash Relieving](#)

[Marking Behaviors](#)

## **Chapter 6: Body Handling**

74 - [Comfortability with Body Handling](#)

[Rollover](#)

77 - [Grooming](#)

[Baths](#)

[Nails](#)

[Brushing](#)

[Ears](#)

[Teeth](#)

## **Chapter 7: House Manners**

84 - [What are House Manners](#)

[Alone Time](#)

[More Freedom in the House](#)

[Destructiveness](#)

[Stealing Items/Ingesting Foreign Objects](#)

[Counter Surfing](#)

[Eating/Stealing People Food](#)

[Getting on the Furniture](#)

94 - [Yard Etiquette](#)

[Digging](#)

[Eating poop/Coprophagia](#)

[Eating Grass/Plants](#)

[Swimming Pool](#)

## Chapter 8: Socialization

98 - [Early Socialization](#)

[Environmental Exposures](#)

[Critical Periods & Proper Socialization](#)

102 - [Recognizing Stress/Calming Signals](#)

107 - [Appropriate Places to Take Your Puppy](#)

[8-12 weeks](#)

[12-16 weeks](#)

[4-6 months](#)



[7-9 months](#)

[10+ months](#)

[Places that are Off Limits](#)

[Places that Require Approval](#)

114 - [Restaurant Manners](#)

115 - [Socialization with other Puppies/Dogs](#)

117 - [Socialization with People](#)

118 - [Socialization with Young Children](#)

## Chapter 9: GDA | TLC Specifics

121 - [Puppy Bib/Jacket](#)

[Get Dressed](#)

[Care and Cleaning of Puppy Jacket](#)

124 - [Puppy Sitting](#)

[Puppy Sitting Requirements](#)

[Is a Puppy Sitter Really Needed?](#)

[When Seeking a Puppy Sitter](#)

127 - [Kennel Time](#)

[Making a Reservation](#)

[Females in Heat](#)

131 – [Rules when you are out with your Puppy](#)

[Outreach and Special Events](#)

[Traveling/Vacations](#)

[Riding in the Car](#)

137 - [Monthly Reports](#)

138 - [Monthly Meetings](#)

140 - [Formal Evaluation](#)

142 - [Rehomes and Career Changes](#)

145 - [Potential Breeding Stock](#)

## Chapter 10: Medical Information

149 - [Giving Medication](#)

150 - [Diet](#)

[Transition from Puppy to Adult Food](#)

[Body Condition Score](#)

154 - [Internal Parasites](#)

[Flea and Tick Control](#)

[Heartworm Disease & Prevention](#)

157 - [Health Maintenance](#)

[Ears](#)

[Nails](#)

[Teeth](#)

159 - [Common Medical Concerns](#)

[Kennel Cough](#)

[Vomiting/Diarrhea](#)

[Foreign Body Ingestion](#)

[Bites/Stings](#)

[Bladder Infections/UTI](#)

[Oral Papillomas \(AKA "Mouth Warts"\)](#)

[Hot Spots](#)

162 - [Poisons](#)

163 - [Emergencies](#)

[Holiday Caution](#)

166 - [Vaccines](#)

[Young Puppies](#)

[DAPPC](#)

[Bordetella](#)

[Influenza](#)

Rabies

Older Dogs

DAPP

Bordetella

Rabies

Vaccine Reactions

## Chapter 11: Return for Formal Training

### 171 - Formal Guidework Training Phases

Phase Zero: Arrival Period

Phase One: Formal Training Begins – On Campus and In Town

Phase Two: In Town and Responsible Lead

Phase Three: Preliminary Testing

Phase Four: Intelligent Disobedience Introduction

Phase Five: Traffic Training and Initial Building Work

Phase Six: City Work

Phase Seven: Advanced Training

Phase Eight: Final Testing

Phase Nine: Finishing

192 - [Formal Service Dog Training](#)

## Chapter 12: Glossary of Terms

188 – [Puppy Raiser Glossary of Terms](#)

## Chapter 13: Training Section

209 – [Group Training Classes](#)

[Puppy Kindergarten](#)

[Obedience Classes](#)

[Training Methods](#)

[GDA | TLC Specific Rules](#)

212 - [Approved methods of Training your Puppy](#)

[Using Rewards](#)

[Preventing Bribery](#)

[Life Rewards](#)

[Consequences](#)

217 - [Dos and Don'ts of Obedience Training](#)

[Command List](#)

218 - [Training Benchmarks](#)

[4 months](#)

[7 months](#)

[10 months](#)

[12 months](#)

[Adolescence](#)

[Training Suggestions as your Puppy Matures](#)

## **223 - Appendix**

[Social Media Guidelines](#)

[Puppy Sitting Guidelines](#)

[Links to Commonly Used Puppy Raiser Forms](#)

# Chapter 1

## Welcome to the GDA|TLC Family



---

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

---

## **GUIDE DOGS OF AMERICA | TENDER** **LOVING CANINES**

Welcome to Guide Dogs of America | Tender Loving Canines. This is an exciting time for each of you, and we appreciate you becoming one of our volunteer puppy raisers.

If you are receiving this book, it means you are at the tail end (pun intended!) of your approval process for becoming a puppy raiser. Here is a quick checklist to make sure you have done everything that is required to become a puppy raiser.

- Filled out an online application
- Been contacted by the Area Leader closest to your home
- Observed a group class or attended a monthly meeting (and know you can attend these at the time they are scheduled on a regular basis)
- Attended an orientation held by the Puppy Department
- Received a home interview/check
- Are waiting with anticipation and plan to study this book front to back!

### **Puppy Raising Objective**

It is the objective of each puppy raising family to raise a puppy who shows overall good obedience skills and excellent house manners. Your puppy should be house trained and be able to relieve on leash on all types of surfaces. Your puppy should be well socialized, not only with people, but also dogs, and have been properly exposed to all types of environmental stimulation and social situations. Your puppy should be able to be examined by a veterinarian and be calm and easy to handle.

The puppy should be well cared for by the family, kept up to date on his vaccinations, heartworm medication, and flea/tick preventative, and should eat the food chosen by Guide Dogs of America | Tender Loving Canines. Each puppy, once old enough, should have been given ample



opportunities to stay at the kennel here at Guide Dogs of America | Tender Loving Canines prior to being turned in for formal guide dog training.

Sounds like a lot, huh? Good thing you'll be surrounded by the family of GDA|TLC staff, volunteers, and fellow puppy raisers. If we all work together as a community, our hope is that your puppy (and you!) succeeds in this exciting venture.



**Guide Dogs  
of America**



**Tender Loving  
Canines**

## **Locations**

13445 Glenoaks Boulevard – Administrative Offices  
13479 Glenoaks Boulevard – Visitor Education Center (and shipping address)  
Sylmar, CA 91342

16870 West Bernardo Drive –Service Dog Program Office  
San Diego, CA 92127

Phone: (818) 362-5834  
or (800) 459-4843  
Fax: (818) 362-6870  
Email: [mail@guidedogsofamerica.org](mailto:mail@guidedogsofamerica.org)

## **Hours**

Hours for various departments are located on the website, or you can contact each department directly.

## **Social Media**

Website: [www.guidedogsofamerica.org](http://www.guidedogsofamerica.org)

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/GuideDogsofAmerica/>

Twitter: [@guidedogsgda](https://twitter.com/guidedogsgda)

Instagram: [@guidedogsofamerica](https://www.instagram.com/guidedogsofamerica)

Tik Tok: [@guidedogsofamerica](https://www.tiktok.com/@guidedogsofamerica)

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

*Transforming lives through partnerships with service dogs.*

## IMPORTANT CONTACT INFORMATION

**Main & 24-hour Emergency Number** (818) 362-5834

### **Puppy Department/Canine Development**

**Stephanie Colman** – Puppy Program Coordinator (818) 833-6447

Email: [SMColman@GuideDogsofAmerica.org](mailto:SMColman@GuideDogsofAmerica.org)

**Mindy Romero** – Canine Development Manager (818) 833-6445

Email: [MMRomero@guidedogsofamerica.org](mailto:MMRomero@guidedogsofamerica.org)

**Hanna Belyea** – Canine Development Assistant (818) 833-6442

Email: [HEBelyea@guidedogsofamerica.org](mailto:HEBelyea@guidedogsofamerica.org)

**Kelly Thompson** – Canine Development Assistant (818) 833-6441

Email: [KAThompson@guidedogsofamerica.org](mailto:KAThompson@guidedogsofamerica.org)

**Veterinary Department** (Open Mon-Sat, 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m.) Main Number:

Email: [VetDept@GuideDogsofAmerica.org](mailto:VetDept@GuideDogsofAmerica.org) (818) 833-6470

Use this email address for all general medical concerns related to GDA|TLC dogs, including preventative medication orders.

**For after-hours medical concerns, call main # and follow prompts to reach on-call phone.**

**Kevin Conrad, DVM** – Director of Animal Health

Email: [KAConrad@guidedogsofamerica.org](mailto:KAConrad@guidedogsofamerica.org) (818) 833-6477

**Heather Garcia, RVT** – Registered Veterinary Technician (818) 833-6473

Email: [HMGarcia@guidedogsofamerica.org](mailto:HMGarcia@guidedogsofamerica.org)

**Morgan Braly** – Vet Dept. Assistant/Adoptions Coordinator (818) 833-6472

Email: [MLRaith@guidedogsofamerica.org](mailto:MLRaith@guidedogsofamerica.org)

**Boarding/Kennel Department** (818) 833-6448

General Email: [Boarding@GuideDogsofAmerica.org](mailto:Boarding@GuideDogsofAmerica.org)

Use this email address for kennel reservations and requests for sponsored dog food.

**Savannah Wallace** – Kennel Manager (818) 833-6448

Email: [smwallace@guidedogsofamerica.org](mailto:smwallace@guidedogsofamerica.org)

## OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

### My Area Leadership Team:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

[Online link to Puppy Raiser Area Groups](#)

### Nearest Emergency (24 Hour) Vet Clinic

Name of Facility: \_\_\_\_\_

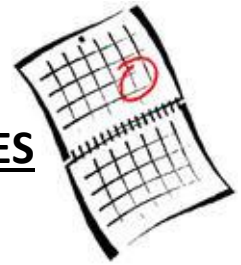
Major Cross Streets: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

Website: \_\_\_\_\_

Add the contact info to your mobile device you can quickly source directions in an emergency.

## IMPORTANT MEDICAL INFORMATION & DATES



Please print this page and use the chart below to track the puppy's vaccination and medication schedule.

9 week - DA2PP	
12 week - DA2PP	
12 week - Influenza (Time for fecal sample!)	
15 week - DA2PP	
15 week - Influenza	
16 week - Rabies	
Bordetella due	Annually. GDA will vaccinate when the puppy visits the kennel.
Heartworm due	MONTHLY. On the 1st of each month.
Flea treatment due	MONTHLY On the 1st of each month, or as directed.

## VACCINATIONS

When you picked up the puppy, you were given a vaccination schedule noting when vaccines, heartworm and flea and tick prevention medications should be given. You should also fill in the dates above so you have them in your guide that you will be referencing throughout your puppy's training. Also, make sure to mark this on your daily calendar for an extra reminder. It is vital that your puppy receive all vaccinations on time. If not, we risk a compromised immune system and a risk for contracting a contagious illness.

### How do you get your vaccinations?

- Come to GDA|TLC campus and receive your vaccinations from one of the kennel technicians. Booster vaccines are available at GDA|TLC Monday – Saturday from 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Rabies must be administered by a vet or RVT. If you're visiting GDA|TLC for rabies, please call first to make sure the proper staff member will be available.
- Your Area Leader may be able to administer the vaccination.
- If approved by the Vet Department, you can obtain the vaccination by a pre-approved vet clinic in your area.

Please make sure to send proof of the vaccination to the Veterinary Department if it was not administered by GDA|TLC. Send proof via email to [vetdept@guidedogsofamerica.org](mailto:vetdept@guidedogsofamerica.org).

## STOOL SAMPLE

***You will need to submit a stool sample at some point between 12 – 16 weeks of age.*** If you live a sizeable distance from campus, you may contact the Vet Department to set up arrangements to submit a sample locally. Also, if your puppy is having diarrhea or loose stools, the Vet Department may request that you bring in a stool sample.

The easiest way to collect this is to place a small sample in a plastic bag from the morning bowel movement.

Once you have the sample, you can then place that bag inside another plastic bag. If you are coming directly to GDA|TLC, just bring it along with you. If there will be a delay in the transportation time, place that sample in a refrigerator until you are ready to come to GDA|TLC. The fresher the better!

## HEARTWORM MEDICATION

You have been given a starter package that includes heartworm medication for the first six months you have your puppy. This medication is dosed based on the weight of the puppy, so be sure to check the weight class on the tablet package before using. When your puppy comes into the kennels at six months, you will get the heartworm for the remaining months you have your puppy. This is a very simple medication to give and most dogs will just eat it out of your hand. It is not recommended to just drop this medication in the food bowl, as dogs have been known to pick out medicines that are not their normal kibble, and then spit out the pill.

You will want to make sure you do not miss this monthly pill. If you do, you will be required to bring your puppy back to GDA|TLC for a blood test before giving any further heartworm medication. As a safety precaution, check the expiration date as well as the weight range of the pill you are giving each month. If either the date is expired or the weight range is not correct, contact the Vet Dept. for a replacement. **This medication should be consistently given on the 1<sup>st</sup> of the month.**

## FLEA AND TICK MEDICATION

You can purchase flea and tick medication from GDA|TLC and either pick it up or have it sent to you. Puppies go home with two doses of topical Frontline Gold. When you apply the second dose, please contact the Vet Dept. to order the next month's dose of preventative. We switch most puppies to NexGard, an oral preventative after the first two doses of Frontline Gold. **Flea and tick preventative should be consistently applied/given on the 1<sup>st</sup> of the month (unless otherwise directed).** If you want the medication mailed to you or given to you by someone other than vet staff (another puppy raiser, area leader, or GDA|TLC staff member), you will need to order and pre-purchase the medication via the Vet Department during regular hours before it will be dispensed. **You should only use the flea and tick medication recommended by GDA|TLC, and you should always purchase from GDA|TLC. Please do not purchase online, from pet supply stores, etc.**

# Chapter 2

## Before Your Puppy Arrives



---

[\*Back to Table of Contents\*](#)

---





## **PREPARING FOR THE ARRIVAL OF YOUR PUPPY**

Please take some time to prepare yourself and your home for your new puppy's arrival. Here are some of the important things that need to be completed before you bring your puppy home.

- Make sure any pets you have at home are healthy and current on their vaccinations. Have a plan for how to safely manage multiple animals of mixed species, if necessary.
- Decide who is going to be the primary raiser of the puppy. While this may be a family project, which is fine, one person needs to be designated as the main caregiver in the beginning. This person must put the crate in their bedroom, and be able to get up throughout the night to take the puppy outside to relieve when needed.
- Your puppy will be fed three times per day until the age of four months. Someone will need to feed, water, relieve, exercise and socialize your puppy throughout the day.
- Know where the closest 24-hour emergency veterinary hospital is located. Do not wait for an emergency to happen. Have the address and phone number written in this guide in case you are told by GDA|TLC to take your puppy to an emergency facility.
- Know exactly where you are going to relieve your puppy on a regular basis. Pick an area in your yard or a safe area near your home. Until your puppy is fully vaccinated, you'll need this spot to be away from where unknown dogs or animals have been.
- At work or school scope out an area where you can take your puppy to relieve. Until your puppy is fully vaccinated, make sure this place is away from unknown dogs.
- Set up your office/work area where your puppy will be spending the day with you. Perhaps you need to bring a crate, ex-pen, or install a tie down. Again, until your puppy is fully vaccinated you may need to carry your puppy in and out of the building, especially if there are a lot of other animals and dogs close by.

- Let your co-workers or classmates and instructors know that your puppy will be coming. It is important to answer questions and solve problems that may arise *before* you commit to a puppy.
- If you haven't received an email or phone call regarding Puppy Kindergarten classes, please contact GDA|TLC. Hopefully, you have already written the dates in your calendar and made sure you can attend all of the required group classes.

"Alone we can do  
so little; together  
we can do so  
much."

Helen Keller

# PUPPY PROOF YOUR HOME

It is extremely important to puppy proof your home to help ensure your puppy's safety at all times. Try to see things from a puppy's point of view – down low.

Here is a checklist of things to check and double check before your puppy arrives. Depending on your home, you may discover more items/areas in the process!

- **Dangers in the garage**

- Antifreeze may taste sweet to your puppy but has deadly consequences.
- Be sure to store bottles on high shelves and frequently check your car for leaks.
- Keep pesticides, fertilizers and other chemicals far from your puppy's reach.
- Other harmful garage items include batteries, cleaners and solvents, motor oil and gasoline, craft glues and cement mix.



SHUTTERSTOCK - 45334418

---

- **Take a look in your bathrooms**

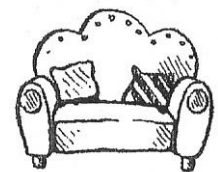
- Check around at your puppy's level for medications and chemicals.
- Do not store these items under the sink.
- Move poisonous toilet and drain cleaners from behind the toilet.
- Keep the toilet seat down.
- Put open trash cans up and out of the way, or get trashcans with lids.



---

- **Next check your living area**

- Tuck in and hide electrical wires and cables as best you can.
- If someone in your home smokes, keep tobacco products and ash trays far from puppy's reach.
- Keep paper shredders unplugged when not in use.
- Many plants can be toxic if chewed, so be sure to know what type of plants and vegetation you have in your house and yard. If you are unsure, take a clipping to your local nursery for identification.



---

- **In the kitchen**

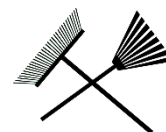
- Keep trashcans covered or behind closed doors.
- Hazards in the kitchen include coffee grounds, spoiled food, bacteria and sharp objects.
- Remove toxic cleaners and soaps from under the sink, or put childproof locks on the cabinets.
- Store baking goods, especially chocolate and raisins, on a high shelf in the pantry.
- Keep tempting foods off the kitchen counter, especially potentially toxic foods such as grapes and tree nuts.
- Check for insect bait and rodent poison behind the refrigerator and stove.
- Keep the dishwasher closed as dirty dishes and sharp utensils are tempting for your puppy to taste.



---

- **Be aware of workers who come in and out of your home or yard**

- Gardeners, pool cleaners, meter readers and others may inadvertently drop things in your yard, or leave gates or doors ajar. Tell them about your new bundle of joy and any necessary changes you will need to make to ensure your puppy doesn't run free!



---

You may not realize all of the potential hazards for your puppy in and around your home. You may (actually, you will) be surprised what your puppy will find! Look at this website for more information on toxic plants and food:

<https://www.aspc.org/pet-care/animal-poison-control>

## ITEMS TO GET PRIOR TO YOUR PUPPY ARRIVING HOME

- **Crate**



You will need to purchase or borrow a crate that is the appropriate size for your puppy. The crate should have enough room inside for your puppy to stand up, turn around, sit and lie down. This means that as your puppy grows you will need to change crates. Some crates come with a divider that allows you to expand the room in the crate as your puppy grows. GDA|TLC has a number of crates available for loan to puppy raisers. Please inquire about a crate for loan from GDA|TLC as soon as you are notified that you will be bringing a puppy home.

- **Exercise Pen**



An exercise pen (or ex-pen) is similar to a play pen. They come in metal or plastic, and are easy to set up where needed. They are temporary, and can be used to block off areas of your home or yard. An ex-pen can be used to allow your puppy some playtime in a confined area, if you are unable to adequately supervise him. You should make sure the ex-pen is properly secured so that the puppy can't jump or topple it over.

- **Baby Gates**



Baby gates come in handy when you have a new puppy. You can use a baby gate to block doorways or open areas to keep your puppy near you. They can be effective in keeping your puppy out of trouble.

- You can purchase these items new, or check with friends who have had puppies or young children.
- If you are having trouble finding a gate or ex-pen, check with us. We may have one we can loan you. You can also look for these items on sites such as Freecycle or Craigslist.

- **Dog Bed** 

While the puppy will be sleeping in his crate at night, you may also want to have a bed for the puppy in the room where you watch television, read or eat meals, as well as at your workplace. You can teach your puppy that this is his place as well. As your puppy may chew on his bed while he is young, we would suggest using something that is inexpensive and easy to clean. If the puppy consistently chews the dog bed, please contact Canine Development to discuss alternatives so the puppy doesn't continue to practice destructive habits.

- **Hard Toys**



There are hundreds of different toys on the market for dogs, and it can be difficult to know what toys are appropriate for your puppy. Use common sense when offering toys to your puppy to avoid choking hazards and easily swallowed items that could make your puppy sick.

- **Compressed Rawhide Bones/Bully Sticks**

Bones and chew toys can be useful to help a teething puppy exercise his jaws. Compressed rawhide bones are firmer and denser than the common white knotted rawhides, and can take longer for your puppy to chew.



Be sure to look for products made in the USA. Bones are only to be given when you can supervise your puppy to make sure he will not choke or swallow it whole. Edible bones such as compressed rawhides and bully sticks should be given in limited amounts. Hollow sterile bones, antlers, or cow horns/hoooves should not be used as these can sometimes cause chipped teeth, especially in younger puppies and hard chewers. **Cooked bones can splinter, so you should never give your puppy cooked bones, and be extra careful around kitchen trash containing cooked turkey or chicken bones, etc.**

- If the puppy can gnaw-off a large chunk of any bone, it's not the right bone for the puppy. Large bone chunks become potential obstructions when ingested. Himalayan Chews, Edible Nylabones and even the flexible Puppy Nylabones are all examples of bones that might work for very young puppies (if they don't cause diarrhea), but that need to be discontinued as soon as puppy teeth begin to fall out.)
- If your puppy starts having loose stools after chewing on a bone, he may have a sensitive stomach and you should refrain from using them.
- Bones will be used during puppyhood as you are teaching your puppy how to settle. As your puppy grows, the need to use them should lessen.
- If you feel your puppy is guarding a bone (growls, quickly jerks head away, etc. as you approach), please contact Canine Development immediately.

- **Chew Toys**

Chew toys are similar to bones but are made of durable plastic or rubber material. Some chew toys are relatively safe to leave with your puppy unattended as long as you have trialed it with supervision and it has proven to not break into pieces that could be ingested and harmful to your puppy.

- **Kong Toys** are bell shaped with a hollow core open at each end. They are made of a durable rubber, and can be a fun toy to toss for your pup, or can be used as a pacifier type toy to entertain your pup when you leave him alone. When your puppy is small, the Kong toy can be filled and frozen to keep your puppy occupied for longer periods and while teaching them to settle.
- **Nylabones** are made of a durable plastic, and can be useful as a teething toy for your puppy's sore teeth and gums. They come in several shapes and sizes. For our puppies, stick to the Dura Chew type Nylabones. Depending on your puppy's chew style, you may need to get a more durable chew. This is why monitoring them in the beginning is so important. **Be sure to purchase the "durable" or "Durabone" variety and not the soft "puppy" or**



**“edible” variety. It’s too easy for a puppy to chew off and ingest a piece of the puppy or edible Nylabone products.** Regardless of the variety, inspect the bones regularly and discard if it looks like a piece might easily be chewed off. If you can easily bend a flexible bone by hand, it should be discarded as soon as the puppy teeth fall out.

- **Plush Toys**

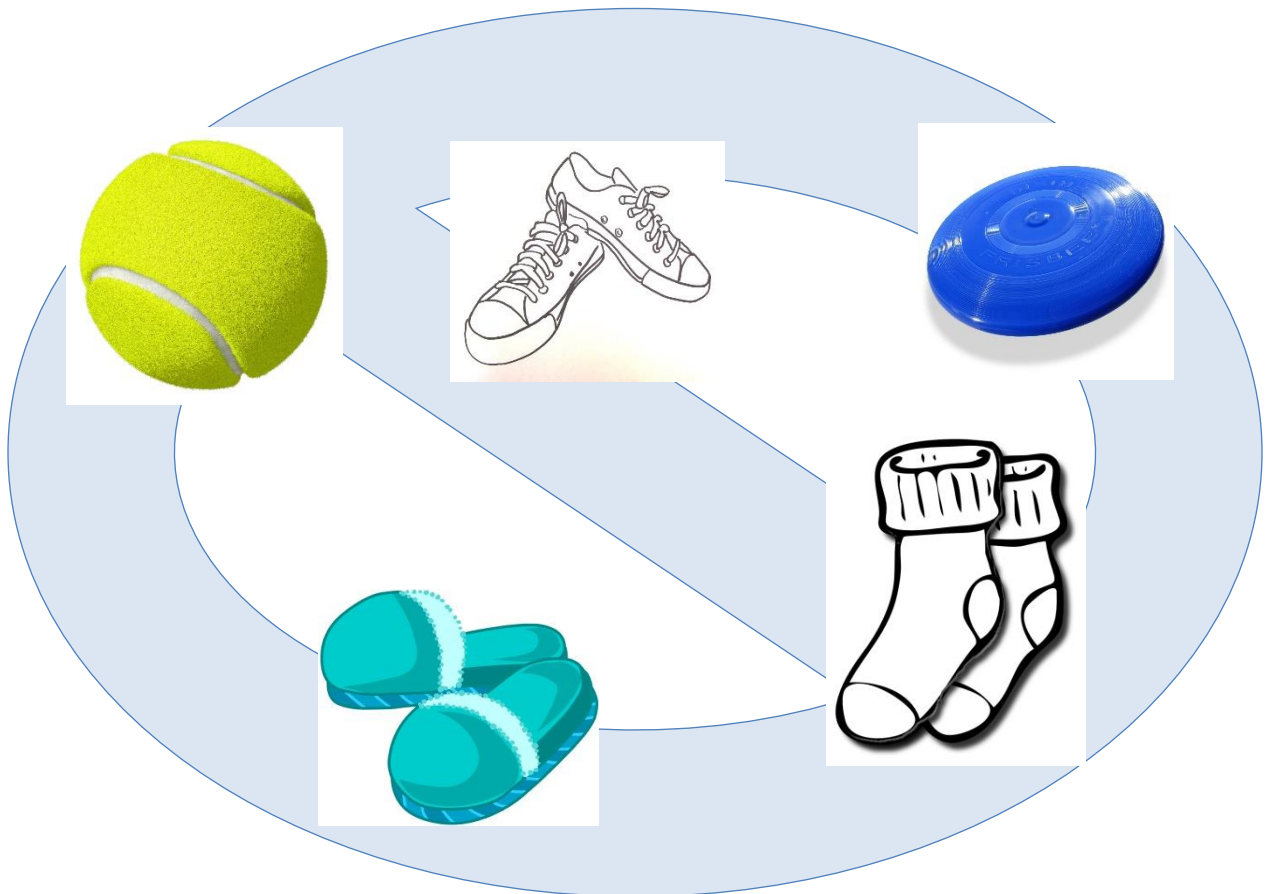
Plush and stuffed animal type toys are quite popular in pet stores. Please be sure to supervise your puppy with these types of toys, as they can shred them quickly, and swallowed pieces can be dangerous. Other pups love to play and carry plush toys around, and can find these soft toys to be comforting. So watch your puppy, and be careful with these easy-to-destroy toys.

- Make sure toys are large enough not to be swallowed as your puppy grows.
- **Rope/Tug Toys** can be fun to toss for your pup or to play tug. Having a rope toy made out of fleece is a good option as they don’t tend to shred as easily. You’ll need to monitor your puppy with the rope toy and if they begin to fray, take it away.
- Some puppies will be hard chewers and destroy and possibly ingest softer toys. If you find you have such a puppy, please refrain from giving them these types of toys. There are plenty of hard durable toys that your puppy will love. **Do not let the puppy develop the habit of destroying soft toys, even if the puppy does not ingest the shredded bits.**



- **Things NOT to Buy**

- Recreational Items: Please do not allow your GDA|TLC puppy to play with **Frisbee-type flying discs, tennis balls or similar sport balls**. No Chuck-It Balls or Ball Launchers. We do not want your puppy to become overly obsessed with these items, as he will later have to work around these distractions throughout his training and career as a guide or service dog. Balls intended for human recreation should not be used as dog toys.
- Socks and shoes should NEVER be offered as chew toys. The puppy will not be able to differentiate between old shoes and new ones, and will not understand that *all shoes* are not fair game.
- Anything other than an approved collar (buckle/snap or martingale). Body harnesses, pinch collars, or shock collars are not approved for use on GDA|TLC dogs. Head halters (Halti, Gentle Leader) are used occasionally, but ONLY when directed by, and under the supervision of, Canine Development.



## ADDITIONAL ITEMS YOU MAY NEED TO GET AS THE PUPPY GROWS

- **Tie Down**



GDA|TLC makes and sells tie-downs. A tie-down is a durable plastic cable that can be attached to a sturdy furniture leg or clipped to an eyehook anchored in the wall. Tie-downs are used to keep your pup secure when you can't directly monitor him. Like a crate, the puppy can move around but can't get into trouble. You'll need to desensitize your puppy to being on a tie-down starting with short periods of confinement when he is already tired. You can also give a chew bone or Kong toy to help the puppy learn to relax while on tie-down.

- **Collar**



- **Flat Collar:** This is a nylon or fabric collar like the one that you received when you picked up your puppy. Sometimes puppy raisers like to purchase their own collar to display their own personal style.
  - If you purchase your own collar, make sure of a few things:
    - It isn't offensive
    - The width is between .5 and 1 inch
    - It fits properly
    - Your ID tags are transferred to the new collar
  - You should be able to slide two fingers comfortably under the collar. When you slide the width of your two fingers between the collar and neck, the collar should feel snug, but not tight. You should not be able to slide your dog's collar off his head, or your dog may end up slipping his collar.
- **Martingale:** A martingale collar is a limited-slip collar. GDA|TLC has martingale collars that you can borrow, or you may wish to purchase one of your own if you want a particular color or pattern.
  - We typically consider putting a puppy in a martingale collar at around 6 months of age.

- You'll need to contact the Canine Development Team or your area leader **prior** to obtaining or purchasing this collar so that they can give you instructions on the use and fit.

- **Leash** 

- **Leather Leash:** These are available to purchase from GDA|TLC for \$30 per leash. These leashes have clips so that you can adjust the leash length. GDA|TLC recommends using a leather leash after your puppy has outgrown the leash you were given when you picked up your puppy. We find that the leather leashes are more durable and last longer than fabric leashes. (They are still susceptible to puppy teeth, though, so be sure to keep an eye on the puppy when he's with you on-leash.)
- **Fabric Leash:** If you purchase a fabric leash, make sure the length is 6-8 long. If you notice that your puppy has chewed it, or the fabric starts to fray, please purchase a new leash versus trying to rehab the worn one.

- **Long Line** 

A long line is a leash that comes in lengths of 15 to 100 feet. For GDA|TLC training, the ideal length is 15 feet, and no longer than 30 feet. Long lines are useful when working on recalls or stays in unsecured areas, or places with a lot of distractions.

## PUPPY GO HOME KIT

Every puppy leaves GDA|TLC with a well-stocked puppy kit! This kit contains:

- **One stainless steel bowl**
- **1 Nylabone chew toy**
- **1 puppy collar**
- **1 nylon leash**
- **1 grooming brush**
- **A small blanket**
- **A stuffed toy/animal:** Used to help him his first couple of nights at home. If your puppy chews a hole in this stuffed animal, please either immediately repair or discard it so he doesn't ingest the contents.
- **Heartworm medication:** An initial supply of oral heartworm preventative. An additional supply is provided once the puppy is 6 months old. Be sure to keep all medication safely out of reach of kids and animals.
- **Flea medication:** Two starter-doses of flea and tick preventative. (You will purchase future doses of preventative from the Vet Department.)
- **Puppy Food:** A 5-pound bag of puppy food. GDA|TLC puppies eat a specific diet. Do not switch foods unless directed to do so by the Vet Department.
- **1 GDA|TLC pet identification tag:** A blue bone-shaped tag with your puppy's name and ID#, GDA|TLC's information and phone number. **You will need to get a third tag with your name, home address and phone number to add to the collar. The few times GDA|TLC puppies have wandered away from home, they were easily returned by using information on their tags.**
- **1 microchip identification tag:** A bright yellow tag which has your puppy's Home Again microchip number on it. Each GDA|TLC puppy has been microchipped with a permanent ID. The microchip is about the size of a grain of rice, and has been injected under the skin between the puppy's shoulder blades. If your puppy gets lost and is taken to an animal



shelter or veterinarian, they will scan the microchip to access GDA|TLC's contact information. If this tag is lost or damaged, it cannot be replaced – but not to worry – microchips are common enough that everyone knows to check for a chip when they find a lost dog.

# CHAPTER 3

## YOUR PUPPY COMES HOME!



---

[\*Back to Table of Contents\*](#)

---



## **THE FIRST DAY!**



This is a very exciting day for everyone here at Guide Dogs of America | Tender Loving Canines, and we are always excited to see a new group of puppies enter their first cycle of training, working toward the goal of becoming guide dogs!

You, as the puppy raiser, are eager to take on this challenge, and are most likely excited to pick up this cute, tiny, lovable creature, and make him a part of your life for the next 12 to 14 months. Today marks a big change for the puppy, who has spent his first seven weeks living in a group with his littermates. The following tips will help create a smooth transition from the kennel to your home environment.

### **Car Ride Home**

Ideally, you as the puppy raiser will have a second person with you who can either drive or hold the puppy during the car ride home. The trip home from GDA|TLC is the only time the puppy should ride in your lap in the car. After the initial trip home, puppy raisers should begin teaching approved car travel techniques, found in Chapter 9 of this guide.

If you're travelling alone, the puppy should either ride crated (safest option) or on a blanket on the passenger floor in front of the seat. If the puppy is on the passenger floor, you *\*must\** use the leash as a tether to keep him from climbing onto the seat or interfering with you as you drive. Be sure to ask GDA|TLC staff how to do this before leaving campus with the puppy.

### **Introduction to Household Pets**

Introducing a young puppy to your resident animals should be done mindfully to ensure a smooth transition. Make sure you have a set up so that your resident pets have an "out" or a way to get away from your often mouthy, energetic puppy as they are first getting to know each other. It's a good idea to allow your resident dog (or cat) and the puppy to observe each other from a distance at first. If the resident animal or puppy seems uncomfortable, allow more time. Use a baby gate or a crate in the house to separate the puppy safely from other pets while still allowing them to adjust to the sight and scent of each other. Make sure to praise your puppy and your resident animals when they show

appropriate interest in each other. This can take time, so consistently practicing good management, and patience, is key.

With careful management, most household pets adjust to the puppy eventually. Make sure everyone has some individual attention and time with you. During questionable interactions, do a “consent test” by holding the more rambunctious animal gently by the chest allowing the less rambunctious one to “vote with her feet” and either remove herself from the interaction or consent to more by continuing to engage. Respect their decision by allowing play to continue or redirecting the rambunctious one to another activity. Again, it’s important for the humans to manage interactions and redirect as necessary to make sure all animals are learning to be appropriate with each other. You can read more about your pup playing with other dogs in Chapter 8 of this guide.

---

*It is your responsibility to keep both your resident pets and the new puppy from overwhelming or irritating each other.*

---





# FIRST DAYS AT HOME

## House Training/ Potty Training

The relieving area you chose should be in your backyard or a safe place that is not frequented by unknown dogs. You will want to relieve your puppy on-leash. This will ensure that he does not have access to the whole yard, as well as keep his mind on the task at-hand. Limit the area to the length of the leash plus a step or two. For detailed house training, see Chapter 5 of this guide. This is just a short recap of the process to get you started.

Our puppies are taught to relieve on the cue, “Get busy.” At this point in your puppy’s development, you want to add the verbal, “Get busy” when your puppy is actively going to the bathroom. You can find out more about teaching this cue in Chapter 5 of this guide.

Be mindful to take the puppy out frequently when house training. Never yell at your puppy for an accident in the house. Make sure you properly clean the area with a cleaning agent that works on urine or feces; Nature’s Miracle is a good option. If the spot they urinated or defecated on is not properly cleaned, your puppy is likely to think it is okay to keep going near that spot.

Tip: In general, the puppy can only hold his bladder one hour for every month he is old. He will also likely need to eliminate sooner if he’s been sleeping, eating/drinking, playing or training.



## Introduction to the Home Environment

Once your puppy has gotten “busy,” it is time to bring him inside! It is best to confine your puppy to a certain area of your home via ex-pens or baby gates at first. A kitchen or part of the living room/den works well. Put some safe toys, a blanket or bed, and the crate with the door open in the designated area. Sitting and spending some quality time with your puppy in the “puppy proof” area will make it a more pleasing place.

If you are able to directly supervise the puppy, then he can begin to have more access to your home. In each new area, spending time sitting on the floor and enticing him to chew his bones and toys, not your hands, arms or furniture, is important.

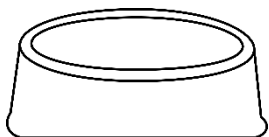
Most puppies love to put EVERYTHING in their mouths, so be sure to carefully “puppy proof” the environment before the puppy comes home (see safeguarding your home in Chapter 2 of this guide). Limit unsupervised access to your whole home until the puppy has proven he can behave appropriately. This usually does not happen until the puppy is at least 5 to 6 months old.

## Crate Training

In addition to house training, you will also want to work on crate training, starting the day you bring the puppy home. Please see Chapter 5 for extensive crate training information. For now, it is important to make sure your puppy is comfortable sleeping in the crate at night and that he is learning to rest in the crate during the day. Keep in mind this does take time and the first few nights may be hard for your puppy and you. Put the blanket and/or toy you scented with your puppy’s littermates in the crate with him. You can also include a durable chew toy. Do not put water in the crate.



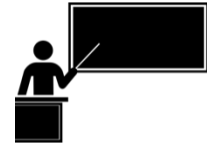
Your puppy will most likely whine or cry at first. Use calm praise to reassure and comfort him. Make sure the crate is facing you, and for the first few nights, you may need to keep the crate closer to you. You also may need to take the puppy outside a few times during the night until he gains better bladder control. This should only last for a few nights as well. In the morning, carrying your puppy outside is better than letting him walk to the relieving area, as he will likely have an “accident” on the way out.



## Feeding Time

Your puppy has been practicing being calm with four paws on the ground before being fed. Eventually we will teach him to perform a cue and wait for your “OK” (which is our release word) prior to eating his meals. However, for the first few days, just make sure your puppy isn’t jumping on you, barking, or biting prior to putting the food bowl on the ground. Also, give him the “OK” as you put the bowl down. It’s helpful to have someone hold your puppy a little way away from the bowl or keep him distracted with a toy. For detailed instructions on feeding time, see Chapter 5 of this guide.

## Training



As this is puppy's first day home, for today, just make sure your puppy is getting to know his name. We call this "name recognition." Before going home your puppy responded to "Puppy, come!" Now we want to teach him his name. It's important to say his name in an upbeat tone and start working toward teaching the puppy to quickly check-in with whomever is saying his name. This is the perfect time to start marker training as well. A marker is a unique sound that lets your puppy know he has done a behavior you like and that a reward is coming. We use the word "click!" to let the puppy know he has done the correct behavior. Call your puppy's name and then say "click!" as soon as he looks at you, following up with a yummy treat. Think of the "click!" as taking a snapshot of the behavior you want. As you teach new behaviors such as Sit or Down, you will use your marker word, followed by a treat, each time your puppy does the behavior you ask for. Remember that "click!" is a promise! It means that a reward is coming, so always reward your puppy after using "click!"

### Name Recognition

- Your puppy's name shouldn't be used if you are going to scold him. Especially in the beginning.
- Your puppy's name will be used throughout his life to get his attention and prior to giving a cue. This is an important skill to teach!
- Saying your puppy's name when you want his attention will help him learn his name. We want our puppy's name to be just like ours; when we say it, they pay attention and it starts a conversation between the two of us.
- If you say your puppy's name and he looks at you, reward him with "click!" and then a piece of kibble or any other item (play, toy, pets, food, etc.) your puppy enjoys. At first, you may need to say his name in a high pitched voice and then make another attention getting noise, like a kissy sound. Just make sure you are marking and rewarding as soon as he looks up at you.
- One of the most important things to remember when working on name recognition is that repeating your puppy's name does NOT make it more effective! In fact, it can have the opposite effect. Either your puppy will learn to tune you out or your puppy will think his name is "Juno, Juno, Juno, Juno, Juno!"
- If your puppy doesn't respond initially, you may need to make a kissy noise, or say "puppy" in a high pitch to get your pup's attention.



## End of Day

It's been a busy first day for you and the puppy! Take your time with the puppy. You have a lot to teach him, but it doesn't happen overnight. Remember, you have more than a year to train this puppy. As the saying goes, "Rome wasn't built in a day!" There's another saying in the service dog world: "Slow is fast!" It's important to take your time. These first several weeks are about getting to know each other, establishing a relationship, and helping the puppy adjust to his new environment. This is a journey, not a race. Remember to relax and enjoy the process!

*"Volunteers are not paid  
-- not because they are  
worthless, but because  
they are priceless."*



## THE FIRST TWO WEEKS



**Congratulations!** You've made it through the first few days! By now, we hope the puppy has settled into the evening routine and you're both enjoying several hours of uninterrupted sleep. Now, let's move on to what you should be practicing in the first two weeks the puppy is home, while you wait for your Puppy Kindergarten class to start

The main things to initially work on with your puppy are house training, crate training, sleeping through the night, adjusting to your daily routines and house manners. "House manners" is a broad term that includes preventing jumping on furniture, jumping on counters, chewing inappropriate objects, digging in the trash, etc. Your puppy is not fully vaccinated so you should not take him out in public just yet. If you want to work on your puppy's socialization, here are a few safe ways to do so in the first two weeks:

- **Introduce your puppy to the vacuum cleaner, hair dryer, washing machine, and other noises he will hear throughout his life.** Let your puppy discover the object without the sound first. You can also search for the sound on the internet and play the sound separate of the item. The key is to work in small slices for the best success. If you notice your puppy is shying away from the noise or item, move it further away or turn the volume down. Besides things that make sound, bring out odd items such as an umbrella, hats, bicycles, or baby strollers to allow your puppy to notice them as well. You can read more about socialization in Chapter 8 of this guide. Of course, don't introduce all of these on one day and keep in mind it may take many days for your puppy to acclimate to certain items.
- **Go for short rides in the car.** Start when your puppy is tired and have someone else drive. Place the puppy on his blanket on the passenger side floorboard, and offer a chew toy to keep him busy. Praise your puppy for quietly chewing on a toy. The motion of the car ride will probably lull the puppy to sleep. Getting your puppy used to the car, in short deliberate bouts, will go a long way toward teaching him to ride calmly in the car throughout his life. See more about car rides in Chapter 9 of this guide.

- **Have friends come over to meet your puppy.** A few visitors each day will ease your puppy into calm greetings as people come and go. Make sure you do not allow your puppy to practice bad behaviors, such as jumping, biting or nipping, or barking. Have some kibble and toys ready to help your puppy behave appropriately, and be sure to offer calm praise as your puppy works hard to make good choices! Make sure your visitors aren't smothering your puppy. If the puppy isn't willingly greeting people, he's saying he needs a little space. It's important to give him time to get used to people. You can read more about teaching proper greeting behavior in Chapter 8 of this guide and this is practiced and taught in your puppy kindergarten class.
- **Take a car ride to a friend's house (where no other dogs are present) for a quick meet-and-greet.** Since your puppy will most likely have to relieve soon after he gets out of the car, this will be a good chance to practice a "get busy" on a different surface. Don't stay too long to prevent any unforeseen "accidents" or chewing of a table leg! Make sure you bring your puppy's favorite toy to occupy him during your visit. Keep him under close supervision the entire time, and remind your human friends to follow your "dog rules" when it comes to not petting the puppy if his feet aren't on the floor, etc. Consistency is important!
- **Reward what you want to see repeated!** Give your puppy a piece of kibble when he is being a good boy. Puppies thrive off attention so if you are only giving attention to a jumping puppy, a jumpy puppy you will get! Make sure when your puppy is playing quietly by himself, that you reward him with a "good puppy" and a piece of kibble.

## BEGINNING BASIC CUES

For basic cues, sit/down/stand (also known as, “position changes”), recall/come, and loose leash walking (also known as, “Let’s Go”) we are using food rewards. You can read more about the use of food rewards in Chapter 13 of this guide. You will use the puppy kibble/regular food as the food reward/treat. Your puppy is probably still learning how to take food rewards. You want to deliver the kibble with an open palm, thumb holding the piece of kibble, open and release the thumb to give the kibble to the puppy once your hand is near his mouth. It is best to deliver the food down to the puppy’s mouth, so that they do not learn to jump up at your hands! Yes, your back may be a tad sore, but it will be worth it in the long run!

The “default position” for your puppy will always be on your left side. However, please practice position changes on both your right and left sides. Service dog clients may utilize a dog on either side, and early practice makes it easier to transition the dog to working on the right side during formal training. Always walk your puppy on the left side only!

### Position Changes (Sit, Down, Stand)

#### **TO TEACH SIT**

- Take a kibble and put it to your puppy’s nose.
- Tilt/move your hand towards your puppies back, keeping the kibble at your puppy’s nose the entire time. Be careful not to hold the kibble too far from his nose as that may cause the puppy to jump.
- Say, “Sit,” as your hand is moving.
- When your puppy’s bottom touches the floor, say “click!” and then deliver the kibble.

- *When working on the position changes, you want to do the three commands, (sit/down/stand), then release your puppy with “OK” and give them a small break between reps.*
- *Each time you practice, you will vary your pattern of commands: for example: Down/Sit/ Stand; Stand/Down/Sit; Sit/Stand/Down; etc.*

#### **TO TEACH DOWN**

- Take a kibble and put it to your puppy’s nose.

- Slowly move your hand straight down to the floor, keeping the kibble at your puppy's nose. Say, "Down."
- Puppy's front paws should move toward the floor. If not, you might need to move the food reward away from their front paws or towards their front paws.
- Once they are fully down (elbows on the ground), say "click!" and then deliver the food reward.

## TO TEACH STAND

- Take a kibble and put it to your puppy's nose.
- Move your hand in a motion as if you are pulling him by a string attached to his nose - away from his body but level with his nose. Say, "Stand."
- When all four legs are extended/upright, say "click!" and then deliver the kibble.

---

## Recall / "Come"

- Have three pieces of kibble in your hand.
- While someone is holding your puppy for you (gently by the chest, not holding the collar) run away from your puppy.
- Crouch down. In a high-pitched tone of voice, say, "{Juno}, COME!"
- When your puppy is focused on you, your helper should let the puppy go
- If needed encourage your puppy by saying "Good, puppy!" as he runs toward you
- Keep your hands low and toward the front of your shins. Say "click!" and Give one kibble to your puppy when he gets to you.
- Continue to deliver the remaining kibble while you put one hand gently into the collar.

- *You can recall between two people, mixing up who is calling the puppy to keep him listening and not just running back and forth.*
- *Set your puppy up for success. While he is learning, call him when you know he is already coming to you. Don't use the recall word in too distracting of an environment just yet!*



---

## Loose Leash Walking / “Let’s Go”

- Have kibble ready in your left hand. Hold the leash in your right hand. Be sure there is a “J” in the leash/it is loose. Keeping the leash loose is VERY important!
- Get puppy onto your left side, facing the direction you will be walking and even with your legs, reward.
- Say, “Let’s Go,” and take a few steps forward.
- When puppy walks and/or stays on your left side, bend down and deliver a kibble - you should use lots of verbal praise as well. Your verbal praise/coaching is what helps the puppy pay attention to you. Walk together as a team!

- Food rewards need to be placed near your left shin to keep your puppy in position when rewarding.
- Continue walking giving a verbal “Let’s Go” cue each time you begin to move, and after you have given a food reward. Food rewards should be given every couple of steps at this stage of training, so long as the puppy maintains a loose leash and is on your left side. A high rate of reinforcement is important.
- Make turns (turning 90 and 180 degrees) to increase the difficulty, feeding frequently, every few steps.
- Ideally, you are moving in a smooth motion; puppy should not have enough time between reward and the verbal “let’s go” to automatically sit. (Guide dogs should not automatically sit when the handler pauses or stops.)

- *Beginning leash walking is best practiced in a quiet, non-stimulating environment (inside your home or backyard is good).*
- *Practice this exercise off leash as well (in secure environments).*
- *A tight leash means the puppy is not making a choice to be with you. Do not pull your puppy or tighten the leash.*
- *If your puppy is not coming with you, try tapping your leg to encourage or making a ‘kissy’ noise to encourage your puppy forward.*

## **\*\*Important Reminders\*\***

- Be patient- these cues are new and your puppy is learning.
- The release word we use is “OK.” (Use this after you have finished working on a cue.)
- Keep sessions short and sweet, no more than five minutes of training at a time at this stage. However, many short sessions each day are beneficial.
- Be sure to use verbal and physical praise with your puppies as well as the food rewards. You aren’t just training behaviors – you’re building a working relationship with the puppy!
- Using a marker such as “click!” as soon as your puppy has done the correct behavior will make it easier for your puppy to learn what you want him to do. Be sure to “click” THEN treat: the marker always comes before the food reward!

That is a lot of information in just two weeks, we know. But remember, it is just a guideline to give you ideas of what to do prior to starting your Puppy Kindergarten class, and to help you get an idea of how your puppy learns. Now let’s dive more into the intricacies of training your puppy through the next year.

---

*Happiness is a warm puppy.*

*-Charles Schultz*

---

# CHAPTER 4

## COMMON PUPPY ISSUES



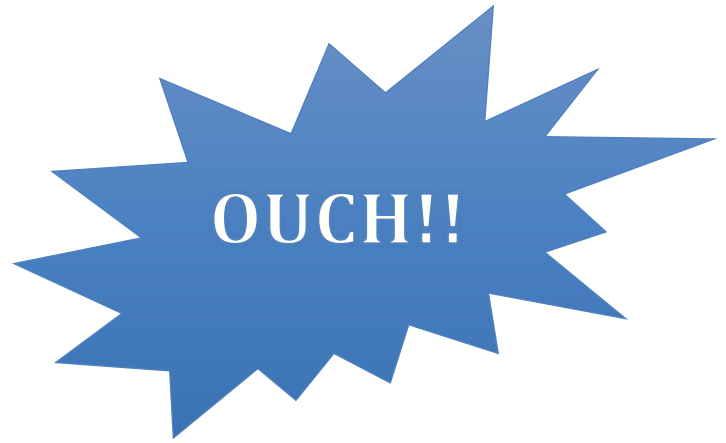
---

[\*Back to Table of Contents\*](#)

---

## PUPPY BITING

It may come as a surprise to you that your sweet little puppy came with a set of teeth that the average shark would be proud of! Even worse, your puppy likes to use those needle-sharp teeth on you! Fortunately, your puppy's first set of baby teeth (or milk teeth) will begin to fall out around 4 months of age, and his larger, thicker adult teeth will start to come in.



Biting during play is normal for all puppies, but you need to take action to keep your puppy from biting you and others. All puppies investigate the world with their mouths. It's a necessity of puppyhood, so we just need to make sure that we give our puppy appropriate things to chew on to satisfy the need.

Puppies play by biting each other's ears, tails, legs and any other parts that they can catch or hold onto. They also learn how hard they can bite on a playmate according to the reaction. If a puppy bites a littermate too hard, the littermate will yelp and disengage or retaliate. After which, the inappropriate biter hopefully learns a valuable lesson.

Since now we are the playmate, we need to teach our puppies to behave politely around their human friends. It is imperative that our puppies learn finesse with their jaws near our fragile human skin. After all, we don't have thick, tough skin and fluffy fur coats to protect us from the forces of canine bites. Discourage all puppy biting; even when it feels like soft mouthing and doesn't hurt. Puppy teeth do not belong on human skin. Period.

You are not a play toy, nor are your children, friends, relatives or houseguests. It's important for your puppy to learn that people are not play toys or litter mates. Puppies need to learn that people have fragile skin, and all human skin is to be respected, whether it's on you, or a complete stranger. This includes not just your skin, but also your hair, clothing, shoes, shoelaces, etc. Do not play rough and tumble games with your puppy, or play any game where your pup grabs your clothes, skin or hair. This will only encourage your puppy to bite, and will set back his training.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR DISCOURAGING BITING

- **Try using a sound like a yelp, similar to what another puppy would do.** The sound must be sudden, abrupt, and loud. It should start and stop almost instantly from silence to full volume in a microsecond. The point is to startle your puppy just as he bites down on you, and to get him to stop biting quickly.
- **Don't entice your puppy to bite you so you can correct him.** Just be ready to practice this if he initiates biting in the course of regular handling or play.

**Have a toy ready at all times!** Always have a toy or two available to give your puppy instead of biting on you. After you yelp, the instant that he startles, give him the toy. It's crucial that the toy be presented immediately. The purpose of the toy is to redirect him onto an appropriate object. The yelp startles him and interrupts the biting on you, but redirecting him shows him what he should be doing with his mouth instead. Show him what is acceptable. Most likely, the puppy won't

---

*It's important to always give your puppy information about what you want him to do, and not just correct him for unwanted behavior.*

---

just put the toy in his mouth and accept it, he will drop it and go for your skin again. To prevent this, once you grab the toy to redirect your puppy, entice him by engaging in a bit of play with the toy. Help him realize how fun the toy can be. Then praise him when he continues to play with the toy and not your skin.

As you work on this, be careful to not accidentally become the toy by jerking your hands away and shrieking. It's understandable – nobody likes being the target of puppy teeth, but your fast-moving hands paired with worried wails makes you look and sound like a giant squeaky toy! Be mindful of interactions between puppies and children. An adult should ALWAYS directly supervise to help both species behave correctly around each other.

Sometimes, young puppies become so over-stimulated, they lose the ability to make good choices. If you've genuinely tried to redirect his attention from your skin to a toy, and he insists on biting at you, it might be time for a short "brain break" in his crate or pen. If you need to separate yourself from the puppy, in order to give him a chance to re-boot his puppy brain, calmly lead him to the crate/pen and offer soft praise as he goes inside.

- **Redirect unwanted mouthing often.** You will do this over and over and over again! Puppies tend to forget, and during the next play session, he may come back and bite at you. Some pups will be very persistent about it; others will switch to a different item more quickly. Stick with it. They are all individuals, but eventually they all must learn to get more control of themselves. It doesn't mean your puppy is mean or vicious if it takes him more time and many repetitions to stop nipping you. It just means you'll need to be persistent until he gets the concept.
- **Teach new behaviors.** Obedience cues can manage the nipping and set your dog up to succeed. As the puppy learns handler focus and develops impulse control, he will be less likely to engage in nipping behavior. If the puppy becomes mouthy when you play, interspersing obedience behaviors with play can help the puppy better regulate his impulses. Keep him using his "thinking brain" so he's less likely to short-circuit and revert to mouthing/nipping behavior.

## REMEMBER

- Provide appropriate chew toys and bones for your puppy and praise him for chewing them. Your puppy will not only learn what is UNACCEPTABLE, but, more importantly, what is ACCEPTABLE in terms of using his mouth.
- Make sure to give your puppy ample physical exercise and mental activity to burn off excess energy and curb boredom. Reward calm, relaxed behavior with appropriate, gentle petting and praise.
- **NEVER** hit your puppy (on the nose or any other part) in response to mouthing or play biting! Not only is this unnecessary but also it will likely encourage biting to continue, either in play or in self-defense. Similarly, do not squeeze his snout shut or try to shove your hand farther back into his mouth. If you're struggling with puppy biting, please call the Canine Development Team for help.
- Once your puppy has successfully learned bite inhibition, practice the above steps regularly and reward him/her for being gentle to ensure a lifetime of success.

By the time your puppy is about 5-6 months old, he shouldn't be biting or mouthing humans at all. This includes soft mouthing when people reach to pet him. To learn more about appropriate greeting behavior with strangers, see Chapter 8 of this guide. You will also learn proper greeting techniques and practice them in puppy kindergarten class.

## BARKING/WHINING

Barking is one way dogs communicate with each other and with humans. If you want to curtail your puppy's barking, it is necessary to determine why it is occurring. Here are some reasons puppies bark:

- **Fear of an object or situation** This type of barking may be accompanied by a growl and raised hackles: If your puppy is barking at items (could be a person or an object) he is unsure of, take note and remove the item from view or move it further away from your puppy. Do not force your puppy to interact with the item. Allow him to investigate it at his own pace. Praise your pup when he is in a seeking state (i.e. interested in the object/person and not retreating). Allow your puppy to vote with his feet and stop the interaction if he wants. Forcing will only teach a puppy to fear the object or person more. This can then lead to a broader fear of the overall situation or environment.

If you notice your puppy is uncomfortable, come up with creative ways to slowly introduce the object or person again. For example, while the puppy is eating or playing, you can have the object/person in the distance. Again, the key is NOT to force the interaction and make sure he remains in a state of seeking and interest versus avoidance and fear.

- **Social isolation or frustration/boredom** Barking due to boredom can be relieved by providing a more stimulating environment. Interactive toys such as Kongs, Busy Buddies, or other puzzle toys can help. Make sure your puppy is getting enough physical exercise as well as mental exercise in the form of training and new experiences.
- **To induce play/attention seeking/barking for a reward** One of the main reasons a young puppy barks is to get your attention. Even if you give your puppy attention by yelling at him, he is getting your attention – even though it is negative! If your puppy barks to get your attention, do not reward him by giving in. Wait until your puppy is calm and quiet and reward him with attention, praise, pets, playtime, or whatever the puppy is seeking in that moment (assuming it's appropriate).
- **It works!** Dogs can inadvertently be trained to bark by receiving a reward. For example, a puppy who barks at garbage trucks is rewarded when the truck leaves, and, thus, a cycle is created. The dog begins to generalize the barking to other things such as buses, motorcycles, mail carriers etc. In order to stop the barking you must break the cycle and interrupt the natural system of reward.

## JUMPING

Puppies begin jumping on people when they are very young. They are trying to get near our faces and get our attention. We think it's sweet and cute when they are little. We bend over and pet them, scratch them, talk to them or even pick them up. In other words, we reinforce them for jumping up on us!

Then they grow taller, get heavier, grow longer nails, and become more boisterous, and now it's not so cute. That's why teaching dogs *not to jump* starts when they are still puppies. Bend down to greet the puppy, and ask him to sit every time he approaches you. Insist visitors do the same. Even though he may be tiny, he's still learning how to behave, and everyone will appreciate his polite greeting when he gets older and bigger.

Jumping is a natural way for our dogs to greet us because they want to be at our level. However, too much enthusiasm can be frightening to some people and is rarely enjoyed by strangers. As guide or service dogs, it is vital that we teach our puppies that jumping is an unacceptable form of greeting. The following tips will give you some clear guidelines of how to curb this behavior and ensure calm greetings.

- **Turn your back:** If your dog jumps on you, turn your back. Only pet your dog when they are not jumping on you, and only talk to your dog when they are not jumping; this includes saying, "No" or "Off." Remember: Negative attention is more fun for a puppy than being ignored.
- **Keep your dog on leash:** If your dog jumps on guests, put him on-leash when people come into your home, and only allow guests to pet your dog when the dog has four feet on the floor. You can step on the leash where it reaches the floor; this will self-correct the puppy when he tries to jump. Don't just rely on the self-correction – use your training to help him make correct choices.
- **Ask for an alternative behavior:** Teaching your dog to sit on cue is a great way to diminish jumping. Sitting will become an alternative behavior to jumping, and if you are consistent enough, your dog will learn the routine of sitting and waiting for pets and affection, rather than jumping and demanding it.
- **Get down to their level:** When our pups are small, we can get down to their level so they are less likely to jump. Although remember to still turn your back or stand up if they begin jumping again.
- **Interrupt prior to the jump:** Sometimes you can anticipate the moment your dog is considering jumping. This is a prime time to give a negative marker, like an "Eh eh!" or "No!" and reward with praise and a sometimes even a kibble when the paws stay on the ground.



- **Take a step forward:** A lot of times all you need to interrupt a jump is to take one step forward into your puppy's space. This step should not involve emotion or anger. If the puppy stops jumping and puts all four paw on the ground make sure to praise this and then ask for an alternative behavior.
- **Praise for good behavior:** Make sure to give feedback and praise when your dog is not jumping. Remember: If we accidentally ignore him when he's being good, he might experiment with unwanted behavior as a way to get our attention.

## THINGS NOT TO DO

- **Do not make a big deal out of your arrival home.**  
Do not engage in an enthusiastic reunion with the puppy when you get home. This encourages overly excitable greetings. It's better to completely ignore the dog for several minutes. By ignoring your dog completely for the first few minutes, letting him get the excitability out of his system before you pet him, he learns he will not get any attention until he is calm.
- **Do not push your dog off or touch him in an attempt to make this pattern stop.**  
Dogs, just like people, look at touch as a form of reward. Since jumping is an attempt to gain your attention, when you push him off of you, your dog is rewarded by gaining your attention, even if the attention is negative.

### **\*Consistency!\***

As with any training, consistency is the key. If you want to be successful in training, everyone who enters the house must observe the rules you have set. If even one person allows continued jumping, the dog will not learn a new routine or behavior pattern.

# CHAPTER 5

## CARING FOR YOUR PUPPY

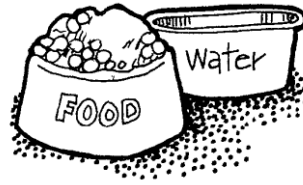


---

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

---

## WATER



Your puppy **MUST** always have water available. **Do NOT restrict your puppy's water.** Many times when a puppy's water is restricted, they develop a bad habit of what is called, "tanking up." This is when the puppy, being so excited about water, will drink too much at once. This leads to constant urination and sometimes dribbling. If puppies are accustomed to having water all the time, this habit usually does not develop.

---

### *WATER IS AN EXTREMELY VITAL NUTRIENT TO THE HEALTH OF YOUR PUPPY*

---

An animal can lose all of its fat and half of its protein and survive, but only a 10 percent loss of body water can cause serious illness. Water constitutes 84 percent of a newborn puppy, and 60 percent of an adult dog. Water is necessary for almost every function the animal body performs. On a hot day, the average dog can become dehydrated in only a few hours if fresh water is not present.

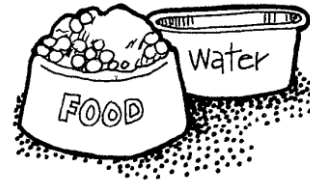
Factors such as high temperatures and exercise can double, or even triple, a puppy's required water intake. Most animals consume more than their daily requirement. A little extra water consumption never hurts, but too little can be catastrophic.

If your puppy wakes up in the middle of the night and needs to "get busy," you do not need to offer water. Just put him back into his crate after he has relieved. We want the puppy to learn to sleep through the night without waking. If you offer him water or food in the middle of the night, he will continue waking up for a snack and a drink.

Also, **do not leave water in your puppy's crate** at night or when you leave him crated during the day. Ideally, your puppy will learn to sleep whenever his is crated. Just like at night, your puppy won't drink water when he is sleeping.

**If your puppy plays in the water bowl** or tips it over, don't fill it as full. You will need to refill the bowl more often, but less water will mean less mess if the puppy starts to splash in the bowl. Teach the puppy not to play in the water bowl by immediately interrupting the behavior with a verbal, "Eh-eh!" or "No!" as soon as he starts the unwanted behavior. If you're consistent, he should quickly learn not to play with the water bowl.

## FOOD



Puppies currently go home eating approximately 2/3 of a Cup of **Purina Pro Plan Sport/Performance 30 20 Chicken** formula, soaked in warm water just until it softens a bit (5-10 minutes). Keep soaking the food for about one week, tapering the amount of time you soak by approximately one minute per day. (No need to set a timer, just estimate it!) By the end of the first week, your puppy should be eating dry food. Set aside some of food you will be feeding each morning for use as treats for training throughout the day. The Pro Plan Sport/Performance 30 20 Chicken is an all-life-stage formula, so you will not change to “adult food” when the puppy gets older. The puppy will continue to eat this food for the duration of its time in the puppy program, unless the Vet Department directs you to feed something different.

As your puppy grows you will need to adjust how much he is fed. This usually happens around 10-12 weeks of age, and the increase will likely be to 3/4 cup, three times per day. Again, keep some of the kibble to use in training. Make sure to reference the body scale index (in the medical section of this guide) or check with the Vet Department at GDA|TLC if you aren't sure you are feeding the right amount.

When the puppy is 4 months old, you will wean to feeding two times per day. The best way to do this is by using most of the midday food for training and slowly decrease the amount your puppy gets for that meal. You can also divide up the midday meal into breakfast and dinner (first taking 1/4 of the meal, then 1/2 of the meal, then 3/4 of the meal, then all of the meal – lessen the amount each 3-5 days). It should take no more than a couple of weeks of decreasing the midday meal to smaller and smaller increments.

---

*When the puppy turns 4 months old you will wean to feeding twice daily.*

---

Eventually, as your puppy matures, you will adjust the amount of food according to his metabolic rate. Please reference this body condition scale often to make sure you keep your puppy at a good weight. Each time you come into the kennels, whether to see the vet or for boarding, you will be required to weigh the puppy. Make sure to have some kibble with you, especially in the beginning, to make it a pleasant experience for your puppy. The goal is for the puppy to sit calmly on the scale in order to get an accurate reading.

As the puppy grows, if you aren't sure how much you should be feeding, please consult the Vet Department. What's printed on the bag of food is merely a guideline. Every puppy is different. We

want to find the amount of food that works best for your individual puppy, and maintaining a healthy weight is important.



## WHAT NOT TO FEED YOUR PUPPY

- People Food –It is critical that our guide dog puppies have good house manners and don't steal food. The best prevention for this is to never feed "people food," and to keep food off of the counter and out of reach.
- Food that has fallen - even kibble that has fallen to the ground should be picked up; do not allow the puppy to eat fallen treats from the ground; this can teach the puppy to scavenge for food.
- Any other dog food besides the Purina Pro Plan Sport/Performance 30 20 Chicken formula. The only exception is if the Vet Department has given you permission or suggested a different food.
- Low quality treats. Many commercially available treats are heavily processed and contain many unnatural ingredients. If you've been advised to use "high value" treats, look for soft, high quality, meat-based treats that can be broken into small pieces.
- Anything that causes loose stool. This should go without saying, but if the treats or regular food cause your puppy to have diarrhea, discontinue use (of treats) and contact the Vet Department.

## TEACHING SIT FOR THE FOOD BOWL

When feeding your GDA|TLC puppy, you will need to teach him to sit and stay while you set the food bowl down in front of him. You will then give him the release word, “OK,” to go eat his food.

Your puppy should have a good handle on the word “sit” already, or at least knows that sitting gets him good things. He’s been practicing this since Preschool and Head Start. However, now he is in a brand new environment, so he might find it a little more challenging.

Here are some steps and techniques to help you get started:

- Start with just a few pieces of kibble in the bowl, and ask your puppy to “sit.”
- Hold the bowl at your waist and slowly start to lower it toward the floor.
- If your puppy pops out of the sit, bring the bowl immediately back up to your waist. You can say “Eh-eh,” “No,” or “Wrong” to let puppy know he is incorrect. Do not use the word “stay” yet. You will learn “stay” in puppy class. Simply let him learn, through cause and effect, that failure to glue his bottom to the floor in the presence of a food bowl makes it take longer to get the food.
- Begin the process again. If your puppy continues to sit, praise calmly by saying, “Good puppy.”
- Continue to raise the bowl back to the starting position if your puppy’s bottom pops up.
- When you are just a few inches from the ground, and your puppy is still in the sit, quickly give him a verbal “OK!” and place the bowl on the floor, allowing him to eat the kibble in the bowl.
- Feed his meal in several small portions so you can repeat this exercise a few times in a row. Quickly, your puppy will be showing off his newfound patience!
- As your puppy gets better at sitting for his food bowl, and begins to learn the “stay” cue in puppy class, you can have him wait longer and longer as well as place the bowl further away before you give him the “OK.” However, don’t expect this right away as your puppy is a tiny baby and is just starting to learn self-control.

If you’re struggling with this, or any of the early training behaviors, please contact Canine Development for assistance. We’re here to help you troubleshoot, and the sooner we know you’re struggling, the easier it will be to help you.

## SLEEP

Getting a good night's rest is just as important to our puppies as it is to us. However, they don't come knowing when and where to sleep so it takes time and patience to teach them. Use the below guidelines to ensure restful sleep for everyone!

### THE CRATE

Your puppy has already been introduced to the crate while at GDA|TLC. Puppies have access to an open crate during the day and night, and they are fed in the crate to help create a positive association.

**When your puppy is home**, the crate should be accessible when you are around. If your puppy chooses to go into the crate on his own, make sure to softly praise him.

Furthermore, **during the day** if you need to leave your puppy briefly, or are unable to keep a constant eye on him, put him in the crate with a special toy.

- Make this toy something he only gets when he is in the crate. This can be a Nylabone, Kong or durable soft toy.
- As your puppy matures, you should notice your puppy is more comfortable settling in the crate.

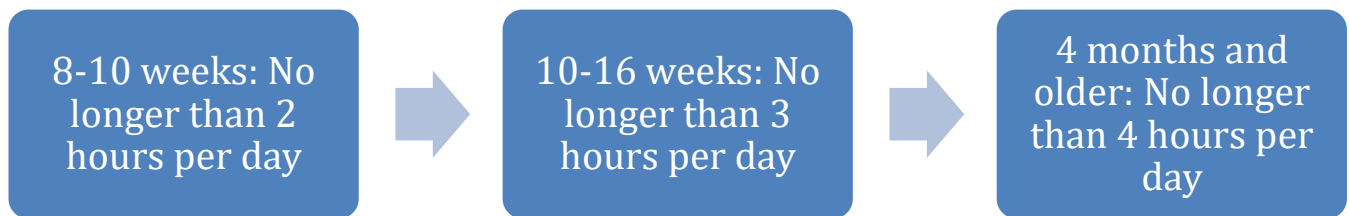
*For the first couple months, when you notice your puppy is sleeping (but is not in the crate), put him into the crate and quietly close the door. He may fuss for a few moments, but should settle down and go back to sleep.*

**At night**, your puppy will be sleeping in the crate.

- In the beginning, the crate should be in your room and close to your bed. You can ask your puppy to "kennel," go over to the open crate, and cue him inside. Reward him when he walks in on his own. If he needs some encouragement to enter, please do not force him inside (it is okay if you need to gently pick him up and bring him to the crate), but have a piece of kibble in your hand and lure him inside it so he walks in on his own.
- Once inside, give calm verbal praise while continuing to treat. Close the door and treat again. It is best that you then walk away and either go to bed or keep the room quiet (covering the crate with a blanket can help). Your puppy may whine or bark for a bit until he understands the routine. You can give him some soft verbal praise, keep a soft plush toy inside with him (make sure he can't chew it apart), and make sure he has his special toy.

- Having your puppy nap in the crate during the day will help him be more comfortable in the crate at night.
- As your puppy matures, begin to move the crate farther away from your bed. We want a puppy to be able to go quietly and happily into his crate wherever it is and whenever we need.
- You'll get to know your puppy and know when a whine in the crate means he needs to go to the bathroom and when he is whining because he would rather play and not settle. If he needs to go to the bathroom, of course, take him out. If he is having a hard time settling, it is OK to let him whine for a bit. If you give too much attention to the whining, it will teach him to do it more.
- In general, avoid letting the puppy out when he is vocalizing. If he's whining, and you think he needs to relieve, try making a sudden noise away from the crate – stomp your foot or slap the wall. The sudden noise will likely catch the puppy's attention and buy you a few seconds of quiet so you can open the crate and let him out.

**How long should you crate your puppy during the day? Use the guideline below:**



- No GDA|TLC puppy should be in a crate for more than **4 hours** at one time during the day. If you are away for longer, please bring your puppy to GDA|TLC for kenneling or contact an approved GDA|TLC puppy sitter.
- Crating your puppy at night is different from daytime crating and your puppy should be able to stay in the crate comfortably overnight.



## Tricks to Keep in Mind

- A very young puppy may need to be taken out once or twice during the night to relieve. This is okay to do for the first few days/weeks until they have more bladder control.
- Never let your puppy out when whining or fussing, wait until they are quiet for at least 30-60 seconds (10-20 seconds if younger than 10 week olds) before you open the crate.
- Do not make a big deal when your puppy comes out of the crate; be calm and matter-of-fact.
- Be careful what you do immediately upon letting your puppy out of the crate. For example, if you feed or play with your puppy first thing in the morning, he may anticipate the food or fun and fuss in the crate earlier than you would like!
- Make sure your puppy has had a chance to relieve before being crated.
- When your puppy is older than 5 months of age, the crate can be housed in different family members' rooms at night, in different areas of the house during the day, or taken with you when you visit a friend's house. Your puppy can also be crated when traveling in the car.

## When to Contact GDA|TLC

- When your puppy is soiling regularly in the crate.
- If your puppy's fussing in the crate is getting worse and not better.
- If you need a smaller or larger crate. (We have crates you can borrow.)

## OTHER SLEEPING ARRANGEMENTS

It's extremely important for GDA|TLC puppies to maintain the skill of sleeping in the crate at night and being able to rest calmly in a crate during the day. Our guide and service dogs sleep in a crate in our prison training program, and on campus with their partners, and many graduates choose to continue using the crate once they return home with their dogs. Please don't stop using the crate just because the puppy has matured and is trustworthy in the house.

---

*The majority of the time, your puppy should be sleeping in a crate.*

---

Once the puppy is reliably housetrained, readily sleeps through the night, and is comfortable going in and out of the crate whenever you ask, you can practice *occasionally* letting him sleep outside of the crate. Use a tie-down to keep the puppy on his dog bed in your room. When he can reliably stay on his bed, try removing the tie down. If you ever wake up and discover the puppy has joined you on the bed while you were sleeping, go back to consistently crating the puppy at night.

### *Your puppy should never be allowed to*

- *Sleep on your bed.*
- *Sleep on a sofa/chair or your lap.*
- *Roam freely throughout the night.*
- *Sleep away from you (unless he is in a crate).*
- *Use a dog-door to relieve at night.*

---

*Allowing these behaviors, even once, can teach the puppy bad habits. We know it's tempting to snuggle with the puppy on the couch or bed, but please DO NOT DO THIS. Not even once! (Please and Thank you!)*

---

## HOUSETRAINING

The basics of house training, sometimes called “potty training” or “house breaking,” are simple: Never let your puppy relieve himself in the wrong place and praise him when he goes in the right place! Be consistent in supervising your puppy, and you will be pleased and surprised with how quickly your puppy will learn the basic concept of not relieving in the house.

It is important to understand a few things before house training your puppy. Up until 3 weeks of age, your puppy needed his mother to help stimulate him to relieve. Since then, your puppy has been able to relieve himself whenever and wherever he wanted to and has not had to “hold it” for any length of time. As you bring your puppy into your home, remember he is comfortable relieving himself whenever he feels the need. “Holding it” until you take him outside is a brand-new skill. Management, supervision and anticipating his needs will help create success.

**Keep a close eye on your puppy at all times**, as he does not yet know to indicate when he has to “go,” and may not even realize he needs to relieve until it is too late.

*Start working on house training the moment you get home from picking up your puppy.*

You should have already designated the safe place near where you enter your home, preferably a backyard if you have one, where you are going to regularly relieve your puppy. This can be on grass, concrete, rock or dirt. When you get home, take your new puppy to this designated relieving area. If you always take him to this same spot, he will tend to seek out this area by choice in the future. Have your puppy on-leash and keep distractions such as

children, adults, other dogs, etc. to a minimum. Walk him around the designated spot (using the idea of a leash length plus a step or two for the amount of space), softly repeating, “Get busy.” Wait quietly as he goes, and softly praise your puppy with, “Good ‘get busy,’” when he does. Do not use food to reward relieving. Clever puppies will quickly learn to ration their urine to eliminate more often and earn more food rewards, or learn to “fake it” and squat without actually relieving. The relief from the feeling of a full bladder, paired with your calm praise, is a huge reward for successful elimination.

Even if your puppy relieves immediately, keep him outside for around 10 minutes. Continue to move him around your designated area, allowing him to sniff the ground, as this will help stimulate relieving. It takes time for young puppies to develop the muscle control to fully void their bladders

in one session. By staying outside for 10 minutes, you lessen the chance of the puppy “getting busy” outside, but still having an “accident” in the house a few minutes later.

**REMEMBER:** Do NOT let your puppy get into the habit of walking all over the yard to find a spot to relieve. Use the leash and limit your steps to teach him to relieve in the area provided. As a guide dog, he won't be allowed to wander around in search of the perfect spot.

When you are inside with your puppy, constant supervision is required for successful house training. This means you are watching him very closely ALL of the time, or he is confined to a small area to encourage him to “hold it.” Be aware of those times when you are physically there with your pup, but you may not be paying close attention to him. Accidents often happen when you are preoccupied with something else. You are the teacher, and are responsible for watching for those subtle signs that indicate your pup may need to go outside.

Generally, dogs will try their best not to soil their sleeping area, so your puppy is unlikely to soil his crate. If he does have an occasional accident in the crate, don't worry about it. A few accidents in the crate are not a big deal. Clean it up, using an appropriate product (see below) and try to figure out what the problem was. Was he in the crate too long? Did you make sure he went outside before you put him in the crate? Did you change his diet, or give him treats? You can usually figure out what the problem was.

## ADDITIONAL REMINDERS

- Up to about 4-6 months of age, your puppy hasn't yet developed full bladder control, so he will need to urinate at least once every hour or so when he is awake, even more frequently if he is active. It is a good idea to take him out every half-hour, or more frequently, while he is awake and active. As a general rule, dogs tend to be more metabolically active first thing in the morning and again in late afternoon to evening.
- If your puppy is playing, chewing hard, running around, getting very excited, or generally being active in any way, he may need to go out as often as every 15 minutes.
- He will also need to go out right after eating or drinking (within 5-10 minutes after he finishes).
- When a puppy is sleeping, he can wait much longer without needing to go outside to relieve. Just because your pup can sleep for 3-4 hours (or more) without needing to “go,” does not

mean that he can wait that long during waking hours. Dogs, like humans, are much more metabolically active when awake and moving about than when they are sleeping.

- Some puppies will figure out the routine of going to the bathroom and then going right back in the house. Since they want to stay outside, they will try to put off relieving. Make sure you are having your puppy “get busy” first, then play with him after his “business” is taken care of. The playtime will be part of his reward.
- Dogs of any age, but especially puppies, do not always completely empty their bladders or bowels all at once. Some dogs do, some don’t. It’s not all that uncommon to have your pup “go” outside and come in and need to “go” again 5 to 10 minutes later. In that case, he probably didn’t relieve himself completely the first time. Learn your dog’s natural pattern so you aren’t taken by surprise once you go back into the house. If your puppy has a tendency to do this, then you may need to spend longer periods outdoors, and avoid distractions until he finishes up. Then play with him and bring him inside. If he won’t finish his “business” after you’ve waited several minutes, bring him inside, put him in his crate, and take him out again in 10 minutes.

## WHEN ACCIDENTS HAPPEN

What about when the guaranteed accidents happen? You got distracted, turned your back for a moment, or for whatever reason, you now find a “surprise” on your carpet? Don’t rub your pup’s nose in it, for heaven’s sake! Don’t hit him or give in to the urge to punish him in some way. After all, it was YOU who gave him the opportunity to make a mistake, wasn’t it? So don’t blame the puppy. Instead, put him in a safe area and clean it up.

If you do see your puppy beginning to squat in the house, make a loud, abrupt noise to startle him. Something as simple as a light slap on a nearby wall or table can be enough to startle and interrupt your puppy. Then immediately rush him outside (cheerfully) and give him a ton of praise for doing it out there.

*If you didn’t actually see your puppy making the mess, you’re too late to do anything about it.*



Remember that the goal is to startle him to interrupt the behavior of soiling the floor indoors, not to punish him. Being very harsh with him or punishing the mistake will only help him learn that he shouldn't do it while you are watching or while you are in the same room. The "guilty" look people refer to when attempting to punish a house training mistake is the dog responding to your mood when you find the mistake, not because they made the mistake. Dogs do not have the ability to connect your current mood with their past behavior.

**Don't use vinegar or household cleaners to clean accidents indoors.** Most cleaners contain ammonia, which will attract your dog to that location, just as the scent of his own urine would. Instead use a commercial, enzymatic cleaner designed specifically for this purpose (such as Nature's Miracle).

Below is a list of signals to help you identify when your puppy may be getting ready to relieve. It is crucial that you observe your puppy and learn to read the signals.



By now, you must have decided your puppy should be taken out every five minutes! It's not usually that bad, especially once you learn your puppy's preferred signals that say, "I need to go out." Remember though, a guide dog user may not be able to see those signals, so don't wait for your pup to tell you he needs to go out. It's your job to take him out, not his job to ask.

If at any point you find your puppy regressing and making mistakes, don't despair! This is common, and nothing to worry about. Although it might be a bit frustrating for you, try to relax and help your puppy by backing up in your training. Go back to taking him out more often, watching him more closely, and confining him more judiciously when you can't keep him under your watchful eye. Basically, go back to the beginning and start teaching him again. It won't take nearly as long the second time around (or third time).

Also, look at how fast you were progressing. Perhaps it was too fast for him to gain a thorough understanding of the rules. Have faith! It will come with time. Three months is a good benchmark for success. Until you've had three consecutive months without a soiling mistake, continue to employ whatever management, supervision and confinement techniques have helped create success. Try not to give too much freedom too soon.

## LEASH RELIEVING

***All GDA/TLC puppies need to be taught to relieve on command and while on a leash.***

You will start this training the very first time you take your puppy outside to relieve himself, and most every time after that.

When you take your puppy outside, attach the leash to his collar. (Remember in the beginning of housetraining you most likely

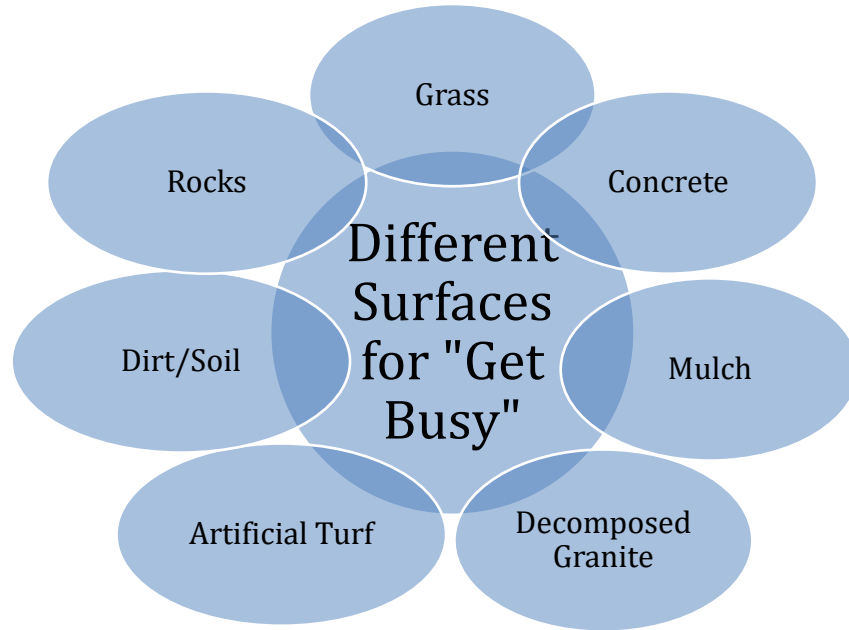
will be carrying him outside.) Once outside, set your puppy down where you want him to relieve. Keep a nice loose leash and in a soft tone of voice repeat, “Get busy, get busy.” Your puppy will most likely start to sniff the ground, as this helps stimulate relieving.

**Allow your puppy to sniff around no more than a 2- to 3-foot area around you.** Do not allow your puppy to get in the habit of needing to roam all over before finding the perfect relieving spot. He needs to learn from day one to attend to his “business” quickly, and in a fairly small area. Also, make sure you limit his ability to circle or quickly move back and forth in the small area. Once your puppy starts to relieve, use a soft tone of voice and say, “Good get busy.” Make sure you remain calm as to not distract or scare your puppy and cause him to stop relieving.

In the beginning, keeping this time quiet with few distractions (no other dogs, kids, loud voices, etc.) will make it easy for him to start to relieve. It is extremely important that your puppy be comfortable with leash relieving, so keep practicing this, even when you feel as though your puppy has got it down, even in poor weather and at night.

Once your puppy is reliably relieving on leash, it is important to teach him to relieve on different surfaces and places. If your puppy always relieves in the backyard, he will tend to hold it when he is in the community. As a guide dog, he will need to “get busy” in various places and at different times. Teaching a young puppy to relieve on concrete is far easier than trying to teach an older dog, who has always relieved on the grass, to relieve on concrete.





**As a guide or service dog, your puppy will need to be able to relieve with the “get busy” cue on any surface, at any time.** A guide dog should never relieve in harness, so we will never allow our puppies to relieve in the bib or jacket. Be sure to remove the bib or jacket before asking the puppy to “get busy.”

### Mistakes to avoid

- Allowing the puppy to have free, unsupervised access to a dog door. (You should know when the dog is going out to relieve.)
- Not relieving your puppy on-leash. (They MUST learn to relieve quickly when given the opportunity. Relieving on leash helps with this.)
- Allowing your puppy to relieve in the bib/jacket
- Not watching your puppy, and therefore, not knowing if he has relieved or not
- Allowing your puppy to relieve on walks without the “get busy” cue
- Not teaching your puppy to “get busy” on different surfaces
- Letting your dog “mark” (lift his leg on vertical objects)

## **BODY CONTACT WHILE LEASH RELIEVING**

As your puppy ages and has been successful with the “get busy” cue, we want to start lightly touching the puppy’s back while he is relieving. GDA|TLC instructs vision-impaired graduates to use this technique so they can identify if their dogs are urinating or defecating.

When your puppy stops walking and begins to relieve step closer to him, reach forward with your hand, and lightly touch his back. The first few times you touch your puppy, he will most likely stop doing his “business” and walk off. That’s OK, he will get use to this procedure. Make sure to calmly praise him when he stays still and allows you to touch him. Work your way from a gentle touch to an actual pet; just one stroke along the back is enough. Imagine you need to follow his tail down to the ground in order to know where to pick up his feces.

If your puppy tends to walk around while he is defecating, gently hold his collar to stop him from travelling. This prevents him from spreading the feces around, which, again, makes it easier for a person who is blind to clean up after the dog.

## **MARKING BEHAVIORS**

Do not allow your dog to lift his leg and urinate on vertical objects or repeatedly urinate in small amounts. This is called “marking.” It is primarily a male behavior, but females can mark as well. Marking behavior is more common among intact dogs, and the behavior often begins when the dog is 6 to 12 months old.

Signs that your puppy is beginning to mark are:

- Not relieving fully at one time; saving some urine so he can “go” more often
- Lifting a leg
- Sniffing a tree or vertical object and positioning himself next to the object

If you notice this happening, immediately pull your dog forward so all paws are on the ground. To prevent this in the future, do not relieve your puppy near vertical objects, and give him more time to fully eliminate in one spot. Immediately interrupt any attempts to relieve without first being told to “get busy.” If you interrupt a marking attempt, walk a little farther, remove the jacket (if necessary) and then use the “get busy” cue.

# CHAPTER 6

## BODY HANDLING



---

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

---

## ACCEPTING HANDLING

It is important that we teach our puppy to be comfortable with all sorts of body handling. People who are blind need to be able to run their hands all over their guide dogs in order to check for health problems. The vet will need to be able to handle the dog throughout its life. Practice with your puppy by feeling his tail, ears and face. Rub his legs, paws and chest. We want your puppy to be familiar and comfortable being handled, as well as restrained. Restraint isn't something your puppy will naturally be fond of, especially when he has lots of energy and puppy teeth to keep you away. We need to work up to this and will start with gentle touching, progressing as our puppy is comfortable to light restraint and simulation of vet procedures.

The goal for restraint is for the puppy to be calm while held in position while another person, such as a vet, examines his ears, eyes, mouth and teeth. Your puppy should be accepting of others checking his paws and belly. As your puppy grows, you will continue to practice restraining him for exams, as this is something we will experience throughout his life. Have your puppy sit while you look inside each ear. Hold his head in your hands and gently examine it. Have someone else extend his front legs one at a time and check each foot.

To start, use kibble rewards and soft praise to help build a positive association with being handled. After each handling experience below, give your puppy a piece of kibble. Do very short bouts of touch at first, and work your way up to a hold (only building as puppy calmly tolerates the experience) and then to a light squeeze (simulating how a tech might restrain a dog during a medical exam).

---

***DO NOT RUSH THIS! If your puppy has a negative experience with restraint or touch, it will stick.***

---

### **Suggestions for handling, treating after each exercise**

- **Ears** - lift each ear flap and tilt the head so you can look directly into the ear canal. Place a finger just inside the ear canal to simulate a medication bottle. Reward.
- **Mouth** - lift each lip in turn. This is far less intrusive than putting the hand over the muzzle and pulling both lips at once. Slide your finger along the gum line of one side of the mouth and then the other. Gently open the mouth for brief moments. Reward.

- **Feet** - with your puppy on the floor, sitting or lying down, lift each foot in turn and examine the toes and nails. Apply a slight pressure/squeeze to the foot as if you're trying to steady the foot in order to trim a nail. Separate the toes and look in between each one. Reward.
- **Legs** – lightly run your hands down each side of the leg, doing gentle squeezes/pulses as you go. Lift up the leg to inspect the armpit area (with puppy lying down). Reward.
- **Tummy** - with puppy standing, run your hands all over his body, feeling for any foreign bodies or lumps. Vary the pressure you use as you apply pressure to the underbelly. Reward.
- **Tail** - with puppy standing, run your hand along, and briefly hold, the tail. Reward.
- **Body** – run your hands down the back, applying slight pressure as you administer light pulses along the spine. Part the hair in various places to expose the skin. Reward.

## RELAX ON SIDE

As your puppy becomes more comfortable with touch, teach him to roll onto his side. If he knows “down,” ask him for this cue or just work with him when he is already lying down.

From there, use a piece of kibble to lure the dog's head toward his tail. You want to lure your dog to turn his head and shoulders back and down. Start with the kibble at his nose and move it along his body toward his tail, so he turns his head in that direction. Give him the piece of kibble as soon as he shifts his weight onto one hip. Repeat this process often until he easily offers the weight-shift as you lure his nose toward his tail.

The next step is to gently help the dog fully relax onto one side by applying slight pressure to the exposed hip using a flat palm to ease him toward you. The dog doesn't have to immediately give into the pressure, just get him used to it in stages. Reward after he accepts the pressure and do this a couple more times. If your puppy ever lies on his side willingly, give him a few pieces of kibble, praise him lavishly, and offer some calm massage to make being on his side extra enjoyable. Some dogs find it easier to do this when they're a little tired.

---

*Never force your dog onto his side or hold him down. This isn't about brute control. It's about getting your dog to lie flat willingly and in a relaxed way.*

---

It might take a few training sessions where you simply accomplish the weight shift, and then you can progress to gently easing the dog onto his side. That's OK. Take your time. We want the puppy to be comfortable with this experience.

Teach the dog to lie on one side first and then the other. It's not uncommon for dogs to be more comfortable on one side than the other, so be extra patient when working on the dog's difficult side.

As your puppy accepts your touch and restraint, you can start to use other life rewards instead of always using food. When he's ready for this step, practice any of the above examination exercises and then throw your puppy's favorite toy or play a bit of tug as a reward. Always praise your puppy for accepting your examination and restraint. This finished behavior has no verbal cue – we simply need the puppy to be comfortable with someone gently easing them from a “down” position to being flat out on their side.

If you have any questions or problems, please let us know, and we can help you with body handling and restraining your puppy.

## GROOMING

### BATHS

Bathe your puppy only as needed to keep his coat clean and well groomed. He is a public representative of Guide Dogs of America | Tender Loving Canines, and should be a good example of a well-cared for dog. Bathing too often can remove natural oils from the skin, which can cause skin problems. When bathing is necessary:

- Use a product specifically made for dogs.
- Stand the puppy in a tub and wet him with warm water.
- Work up a good lather. Be very careful to keep your puppy's head up, to keep soap out of his eyes and ears.
- Use a wash cloth to clean your puppy's face.
- After you finish soaping up your puppy, rinse him thoroughly. You cannot rinse too much as dried shampoo left in his coat can cause skin irritations.
- Once he's clean, towel-dry your puppy.

---

***Puppies in training should NOT be taken to a groomer and left for grooming.***

---

You can use a do-it-yourself dog wash facility once your puppy has been fully vaccinated. When your puppy comes into GDA|TLC for kennel stays, we can bathe the puppy for you.

Grooming also plays a big role in the bonding process. Take your time and make it a positive experience for your puppy. Guide and service dog users are taught how to brush and bathe their dogs as part of the bonding process. It is imperative that our puppies learn to accept and enjoy grooming.

If you have any questions, or are having difficulty getting your puppy to accept grooming, call the Canine Development Team.

## NAILS

It is important to begin handling your puppy's paws and nails early on. When the puppy is already relaxed, sit on the floor and start by petting his paws and gently separating the toes. Have the nail clipper sitting next to you and, at first, simply show it to your puppy as you handle his feet.

Once the puppy is comfortable with having his feet and nails handled, touch the nail clipper to a single nail and give the nail a slight tap. Reward your puppy when he calmly accepts this. Make sure that you give your puppy a treat after each individual nail to make nail trims a positive experience. Desensitizing your puppy to nail trims takes time. Nail trimming isn't really something any dog enjoys, but it's a necessary evil of being a dog, and we want him to calmly cooperate with the process. Make sure to simulate clipping the nails and restraining the feet often even if you don't plan on clipping his nails yourself. When your puppy comes in for boarding or for a vet appointment, you can ask the technicians to clip the nails for you. The time you spend practicing at home will make the experience less stressful for the puppy no matter who does the nails. If you want to learn how to do it yourself, have one of the technicians show you.

## BRUSHING

You were given a grooming tool in your go-home bag. All dogs should have their coat brushed often to remove dirt and loose hair and to stimulate necessary oil production. Also, since our puppies are often out in the public eye, it is important we keep them looking their best! At first, you may need to help your puppy get used to the brush so he doesn't learn to bite at it and treat it like one of his toys. Here are some tips to get your puppy to accept brushing:

- Brush your puppy when he is tired and relaxed.
- Keep initial brushing to short bouts, no more than a few minutes at a time.
- Have some kibble or a chew toy to keep your puppy occupied while you brush him.
- Enlist a helper to feed your puppy some kibble while you brush him.



- Calmly praise your puppy when he cooperates with being brushed.

## EARS

Inspect your dog's ears often to check for debris or odor. Do not administer any medication without consulting with the Vet Department, but do try to catch any ear infections early. It is very important to get your puppy used to having his ears looked while he is young and before he has an opportunity to develop an infection and now we HAVE to spend considerable time looking in his ears.

## TEETH

Monitor your puppy's teeth weekly by looking in your puppy's mouth. Again, if you start when your puppy is young, it will become a common thing and your puppy will easily accept the experience as an adult. Look for any cracks in the teeth. Puppies tend to lose their baby teeth at about 4 months of age, so don't be alarmed when you find one in a toy or your pup's mouth is bleeding around that time. Permanent teeth will soon replace the baby teeth and, luckily for us, they aren't as sharp!

# CHAPTER 7

## HOUSE MANNERS



---

[\*Back to Table of Contents\*](#)

---

## WHAT ARE HOUSE MANNERS?

House manners ensure that your puppy is well behaved in the home. This includes:

- Not jumping/sleeping on any furniture
- Not begging for or stealing food
- Not eating or picking things up off the floor
- Not destroying household items (clothing, shoes, table legs, walls, carpets, etc.)
- Not putting paws on counters or tables
- Coming when called from anywhere in the house
- Able to be alone either in a crate or in a safe area for up to four hours without being anxious or causing destruction

Dogs are opportunists and there are many great things in our homes that, if left to their own devices, puppies will find quite entertaining. It is important to instill good house manners so that when your puppy is placed with his graduate, problems won't ensue. Dogs who aren't taught proper house manners have the potential to be returned to us because as they are too much for the graduate to manage.

Puppies and dogs get good at what they practice. If we combine thoughtful training with skilled management, our puppies will easily develop good house manners. If we give too much freedom too soon, and don't invest adequate time in teaching the puppies to behave appropriately, they will develop bad habits. Unwanted behaviors develop much faster than they are subsequently extinguished. Manage your puppy wisely to prevent problems!

## ALONE TIME

All puppies need to learn to be left alone for short periods. Your puppy should learn that confinement does not mean abandonment. Your puppy does not need to be (and *should not be*) with you 24 hours a day. When your puppy comes in for training, he will spend some time alone in the kennel. Puppies can be left in their crates for no longer than four hours at a time during the day. However, it is important that they can be left alone in the crate and be relaxed and comfortable.

Start off with short time periods, and build up to longer. The sooner you start working on this, the easier it will be as the puppy grows up.

### Suggestions when leaving your puppy:

- Give your puppy plenty of exercise before leaving him alone.
- Be sure to relieve the puppy before you leave.
- Confine your puppy to a crate before you leave.
- Provide him with SAFE toys while confined. Rotate toys often to keep his interest. Do not give rawhides to unattended puppies. Only allow your puppy access to toys like ropes, bones, squeaky toys, or stuffed animals when you are there to supervise.
- Use hollow, or hard rubber toys that he can't destroy but that you can stuff with kibble and top off with a bit of peanut butter. Nylabones are another safe choice.
- Make your exits and entrances low key. Be matter-of-fact when you come and go. Emotional displays ("Mommy loves you! I'll be home soon!"), while well-intended, can create anxiety in some dogs. Leaving a radio or a television on can mask outside noises and might make your puppy feel less alone, or less likely to bark at unknown noises.

Guide and service dog users occasionally leave their dogs home, and it is much easier to do this when the dog has been taught to be left alone. Teach the skill now to avoid unnecessary stress in the puppy/dog later in life!

---

*While GDA/TLC puppies should be routinely left home alone for short periods, they should NEVER be left alone in the backyard or outside when you aren't home.*

---

## **MORE FREEDOM IN THE HOUSE**

The key to success in introducing your puppy to new rooms of your house is to take it one step at a time always building on the idea that your puppy earns more freedom with success.

*Puppies can learn to be reliable in all rooms of the house if they are introduced to them one at a time with you there constantly supervising them.*

When you first start to allow your pup into a new room, he won't realize the same house rules apply until you teach him. That's where your careful planning and supervision comes in.

Take him into the new room after he has relieved outside and you are certain he won't need to "get busy." Sit in the room with him as he explores. Make sure to interrupt any potential bad behavior like putting his paws on the furniture or picking something up that isn't a toy, as well as praise him for investigating new items and then moving on. Bring some appropriate toys in the room with you, and if your puppy chooses to play with them, praise and interact with him. Do some training in the new room to reinforce good manners.

The process of assimilation and understanding can take a while for your puppy, so don't try to rush it. Carefully introduce new rooms one at a time. If he is doing well in a new room, you can begin to leave him for short periods while you peek in. If he continues to do well, you can gradually allow him

longer access to the room without you, but continue to watch him from a distance or from around the corner.

If he starts to make a mistake, give him an “Eh-eh” or “No,” and if he stops what he is doing, praise him. If he continues to make the mistake (examples might be biting on a rug, putting paws on furniture, chewing on a table leg, etc.) remove him from the room or redirect him to an appropriate item or activity. He might not be ready for that much freedom yet. Be patient, eventually you’ll be able to give him run of the house with peace of mind.

## **DESTRUCTIVENESS**

If you haven’t followed the rule of allowing your puppy more freedom only as he has proven worthy of the additional privilege, you may find yourself with a destructive puppy. It’s important to set your puppy up for success by making sure you know where he is at all times, and when you can’t keep a close eye on him, he is confined to a safe spot. Also, make sure you provide plenty of toys and chew items for your puppy, and reward him when he chooses to interact with the correct things.

Puppies go through different stages when they are more likely to find a table leg appealing. So, just because your puppy has earned more freedom, doesn’t mean that at some point he couldn’t lose it, if only temporarily. Especially when your puppy is teething, keep a more watchful eye on him. Make sure you have toys of different textures to give him during this time. If you catch your puppy in the act of chewing on your beloved heirloom, interrupt him with a loud clap or, “No!” and then redirect him away with a toy and engage in play with him for a bit. It’s vital during this time that he is being heavily rewarded and praised when he is being appropriate in a room. Often, we forget about our puppy when he is being good, only to find out he has quietly been chewing on the corner of your cabinet! If you notice your puppy is entertaining himself with an appropriate item or just quietly watching you with interest, walk over to him and calmly tell him he is being a good boy and reward him with a piece of kibble. By doing this when he is a young puppy, you’ll be certain to allow him more freedom and independence as he ages.

## STEALING ITEMS/INGESTING FOREIGN OBJECTS

Stealing items from around the house is a fun puppy sport! Unfortunately, it can lead to all sorts of problems later on if it is encouraged at an early age. Dogs discover that running off with the remote control gets the whole household in an uproar! This is fun for puppies. Just think about it from your puppy's point of view. There he is lying on the carpet being ignored. He chews gently on a dog toy. Still he is ignored. Bored, he gets up and wanders over to your glasses case. He picks it up. Suddenly the whole household descends upon him! He runs, and a great game of chase around the house and garden ensues! Guess which item he will choose again next time he wants something to do!

Even worse, is when our puppy decides that, in order to keep us from knowing he has the forbidden object, he should eat it! Or he suddenly discovers our day old socks are a delectable snack. This is a dangerous habit.

- Put away items of value! Make sure that your puppy cannot get ahold of your most precious things. Puppies especially love things that smell like us such as socks, hair ties, pens, and shoes! Keeping items picked up and out of reach is an important part of puppy-proofing your home. Nothing makes you tidier than a young puppy in the house!
- Make sure you have appropriate toys for your puppy. Rotate these toys instead of having them always available to your puppy. If you bring out "new" toys each week and put away the old ones, it will keep them exciting to your puppy (and maybe a bit better on your pocket book!). It's important to have a variety of textures available to your puppy.
- If your puppy puts something inappropriate in his mouth, instead of running after him, try calling your puppy to you. Ask for the object and give him an exuberant "good boy" if he relinquishes the item to you. Then find an appropriate toy (hopefully nearby) and have some fun playing with your puppy. The goal is that the next time your puppy thinks to pick something up, it will be a toy and he will bring it to you. Your job is to always be available for a bit of fun when he does so. Don't worry, saying "Good boy!" when he releases the object and playing with him does not reward him for initially stealing the inappropriate object. It's OUR job to keep things picked up. If we don't, and the puppy "steals" something, our job is now to prevent a game of "keep away."
- If your puppy has learned to run away (plays "keep away") when he has something inappropriate, try picking up a favorite toy and play with it without your pup. Act like the toy you have is the best thing going! This should entice your puppy to either drop the inappropriate item or bring it

to you in exchange for some fun with you. Again, you should engage and have fun with your puppy when he makes this choice to convince him that HIS toys are much more fun than random objects around the house.

- Practice “leave it” and “give” and incorporate lots of different items into your training sessions. When training "leave it," put the potentially desired item (i.e., the sock!) on the floor and set up a scenario to practice "leave it" with that item. Train this often with different things. It’s important to set up specific TRAINING sessions to help your dog fully understand the behavior before expecting the behavior to hold up out in the world against myriad temptations.

---

*It is easier to prevent bad habits, than to break them.*

*-Benjamin Franklin*

---

## COUNTER SURFING

Dogs are opportunists and there are a lot of great things to find on most counters! Using the below techniques will help ensure counter surfing doesn’t become a habit.

- **Prevention:** If your puppy gets something yummy from jumping up on the counter, it is reward enough to continue jumping on the counter. Set your pup up for success by making sure any temptations are put away. Consistency is key! Remind other family members to keep counter tops free of temptations, too.
- **Reward Good Choices:** Many times, we miss the opportunity to praise our dogs when they are sitting or lying down near us and NOT jumping on the counter. Be sure to catch your dog in the act ... of being good! If you are cooking and he is lying nicely watching you, this is a definite reward-worthy moment! Calmly pet, praise and maybe even offer a kibble or two. If we don’t give





any attention to when our dog is being good in the kitchen, sometimes they choose to get our attention by jumping on the counter.

- **Provide an Alternative:** Give your puppy an alternative fun activity to occupy him while you are in the kitchen to prevent counter surfing. This is a great time for a puzzle or chew toy or to practice obedience cues. Have your dog work on sit/stays and down/stays while you are working in the kitchen. Then call your dog to you and reward him for doing an excellent recall!
- **Teach Go To Spot/Mat/Place:** You can teach your puppy to lie in a certain spot when you are in the kitchen. This can be a dog bed or rug that you designate as his spot when you are cooking. At first, you can manage your puppy with a tie down to help him get the idea. When you train the behavior, lure your puppy onto the mat with a piece of kibble. Tell him, “Go to your mat,” and reward when all four paws are on the mat. Do this 4-5 times in a row. Then take the kibble away but still use the same hand to point to the mat while you say, “Go to your mat”. Reward your puppy with kibble if he follows your hand signal and gets on the mat. Once puppy has mastered this first step, you can ask him for a “down” and to “stay.” Continue to practice this exercise in short increments working your way up to longer periods. Remember to go back to reward your puppy for staying and settling on the mat.
- **Management:** If you aren’t able to work with your puppy and you know there are going to be temptations on the counter, it is best to manage the situation by keeping him out of the kitchen all together. This can be accomplished by crating him or using a barrier/baby gate to prevent entry. This will set him up for success but does not take the place of the training good house manners. If you go this route, make sure your puppy is safe on the other side of the baby gate and not going to get into even more trouble outside of the kitchen! And remember to set up training sessions where you specifically work on teaching the puppy to behave appropriately in the kitchen.

## EATING/STEALING PEOPLE FOOD

An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure! The best remedy for a dog that eats people food is to make sure he never has the opportunity. While some things seem quite innocent, they can lead to a puppy who learns to like people food.

Basically, unless instructed otherwise, anything your puppy eats should come from a source that is specific to dogs and not people.

### PUPPY RAISERS SHOULD NEVER DO THE FOLLOWING

- Use “people food” as your puppy’s treats. This includes carrots, chicken, cereal, hot dogs, cheese, etc. (The occasional use of a small amount of peanut butter in a KONG toy or similar is allowed.)
- Give your dog ice cubes directly from the automatic ice dispenser. If it’s particularly hot outside and you feel ice cubes will help your dog cool down, put the cubes in the water bowl.
- Never give food from your plate – EVER!
- When you are at a restaurant or establishment that serves food, check where your dog will be settling and make sure the area is clean of food debris.

## GETTING INTO THE GARBAGE

It’s a great idea to follow the above rules to prevent your puppy from getting or digging in the garbage. You may also want to invest in a trash bin that has a lid versus one that is always open. Keep in mind that dogs are not selective as to the type of garbage; it’s not just kitchen and food trash they find tempting. Facial tissue can be very appealing for a young puppy, so be mindful of all garbage cans in

your house. Even more reason to monitor your puppy until he has earned his freedom in the house, as once this habit forms, it can be hard to break. We cannot expect a guide or service dog user to manage a garbage eater, and this is one of the main reasons working dogs are returned to GDA|TLC.

## GETTING ON FURNITURE

Dogs naturally want to be where you are, but it is important to instill good house manners so that when your puppy is placed with his graduate, he will behave appropriately. Most of the calls we receive from our graduates are not due to lack of doing guide or service work, but because they are having problems managing poor house manners. This is unfair to the graduate and embarrassing for GDA|TLC!

Using the below techniques will help you ensure the puppy understands he is not to jump on furniture and ensure a peaceful home environment:



- **Get up/Remove Yourself:** If you are sitting on the couch and your dog jumps up with you, quickly stand up and walk away, looking mildly disgusted. Even if your puppy puts his paws on you, stand up until he stops. There is no need to talk to your puppy, in fact, if you give too much feedback, he may think this is a great way to get your attention during your favorite show. Remember: any attention, even negative, is better than none at all to your dog.
- **Reward Good Choices:** If your puppy chooses to sit next to you on the floor, this is a great opportunity to reward him with a ton of praise, pets, and a kibble. While you are teaching your puppy to stay off the couch, having some kibble hidden away is a great idea for when he makes the awesome choice to stay on the ground.
- **Consistency is Key:** If your pup can jump on the couch with one person, he will think it is OK with all people. Everyone in your household, and everyone that watches your puppy, must have the same rule: GDA|TLC dogs are NEVER allowed on furniture. Period.

- **Provide an Alternative:** Make sure your puppy has an appropriate and comfortable alternative. This can be a rug, dog bed, yoga mat, etc. Give your dog a special chew toy or bone when he is laying on his “spot.” If your dog goes to the “spot” on his own, walk over and feed a kibble and praise. This “spot” should be more special than the couch! What’s great about this is that you can then take the “spot” with you when you go other places so that the house manners are transferrable!
- **Interrupt:** If you catch your dog while he is just thinking about being on the couch, tell him, “No,” then redirect him to his “spot” and praise him when he gets there. Interrupting him before he makes the wrong choice is a great opportunity to stop a habit before it starts.
- **Use a Deterrent:** As you give your puppy more freedom, you can put a deterrent on the couch to help prevent habits. Something like tinfoil, baking sheets, or even placing a chair or large object on the couch work well. This will prevent your puppy from getting on the couch AND you will see if your puppy is practicing bad behavior because you can see if the deterrent has been moved when you return. If you notice this, restrict the puppy’s freedom and continue working on house manners. (If you suspect the puppy is jumping on furniture when you aren’t home, please crate the puppy when he is home alone.) Never use deterrents that could potentially harm or scare your puppy.

## YARD ETIQUETTE

In general, a GDA|TLC puppy-in-training should not be left outside, unsupervised, until you are certain he does not indulge in unwanted behaviors such as nuisance barking, digging, or chewing/ingesting inappropriate objects. Realistically, this means you won't be allowing unsupervised yard time until the puppy is at least 10- 12 months, maybe older, depending on the puppy's natural tendencies. GDA|TLC PUPPIES SHOULD NEVER BE LEFT HOME ALONE IN THE BACKYARD, but, once proven trustworthy, allowing brief periods of "alone time" in the yard while you are home is a great way to make sure the puppy learns it's okay to be away from his primary caregivers. When you are first testing his trustworthiness in the yard, put the puppy outside but spy on him through a window, so that you can immediately interrupt and redirect unwanted behavior.

Following are a few behaviors to watch out for.

### **DIGGING**

Just like instilling good manners in the house, a lot of the same rules apply for your yard as well. Your puppy should earn his right to be free in your yard. If left unattended, a young puppy will most likely develop the habit of digging, and once started, it can be very hard to break. Prevention is key, and you can't prevent what you don't see! Supervision is key!

The main reasons a puppy will dig in the yard are:

- **Boredom:** Left unattended, often your puppy will get bored, and boredom breeds trouble as your puppy tries to find some way to entertain himself. If you catch your puppy starting to dig, immediately interrupt him with a loud clap or, "No!" and then redirect him to a more appropriate activity like chewing on a toy or playing a game with you.

In the same vein, make sure when your puppy is appropriately chewing on his toy or entertaining himself appropriately, that you give him praise and pets to make sure he knows he is being a good puppy. This will help reinforce appropriate behavior in the future.

- **To stay cool:** If it is too hot outside, your yard is in full sun, or your puppy has been running around the yard, digging to make a cool spot in the ground is as natural to our dog as us fanning

ourselves off or standing in front of the air conditioner. Our dogs don't dress in layers, so we need to keep in mind that it's up to us to prevent them from overheating. Again, once this becomes a habit, it is harder to break than preventing it from the start. Simply, bring your puppy inside if it is hot outside!

## **EATING POOP/COPROPHAGIA**

As yucky as poop eating is to us, it is actually not uncommon in the canine world. However, we want to do everything we can to discourage and prevent our puppies-in-training from learning and practicing this icky behavior.

Below are a couple of steps to hopefully curtail your pup from eating poop (his own or others).

- **Pick it up!** We need to be very diligent about not allowing any free access to feces. Immediately pick up all stool immediately after defecation. Be sure to also pick up after any personal pets too. The yard should be poop free before you let your puppy go play or relieve. You may even need to hose down after you have picked up the poop, if your puppy is going after the residue that may be left.
- **Relieve your dog on leash:** If your puppy is experimenting with eating poop, put him on-leash to relieve. By doing this 100 percent of the time, you can prevent him from turning around and immediately trying to eat his feces. If this seems like a lot of work, remember, it is a temporary management strategy, and will all be worth it once the puppy gives up the icky habit. If your puppy is eating a resident dog's poop, make sure to relieve the dogs separately so you have time to clean up after the resident dog before letting the puppy-in-training into the yard.
- **Teach a reliable "leave it" cue:** Once your puppy has a good handle on the "leave it" cue, put him on leash and do some set ups with poop on the ground. Have your puppy on leash and practice walking by the poop using the "leave it" cue. Make sure you start far enough away so that your puppy can't get to the poop but knows it's there. Use either a toy or treat/kibble and reward him when he walks by it without pulling or lunging toward it. Repeat, repeat, repeat! Don't get closer to the "item" until you know your puppy understands the rules of the game. If your puppy lunges towards it, give him a firm, "No!" or, "Uh-oh!" and no treat or toy. Move a bit farther away and try

again. Keep these training sessions short and sweet. Stop BEFORE your puppy gets bored or loses focus. No more than 10 minutes per session, but practice multiples per day. Make sure you are saying, “Leave it” while your puppy is still thinking about going toward the poop but hasn’t actually lunged for it. If he’s already lunging, you’re “Leave it” cue is late!

- **Additional Advice:** This may be an old wives tale but some trainers believe letting a dog watch you clean up the yard can contribute to a dog’s desire to eat poop because our attention to the waste inadvertently raises its value. “Poop must be valuable ... my human wants all of it!” We certainly raise the value of items we, as humans, pay attention to, so there could be something to this. When it’s time to scoop the poop, try keeping the dogs inside so they don’t have a front row seat to what might appear to be, in their minds, our own fascination with feces!

Figuring out how to curb a puppy’s poop-eating can sometimes be a matter of trial and error. If the above suggestions aren’t helping over time, please contact the Canine Development Team so we can problem solve further.

---

*I think dogs are the most amazing creatures;  
they give unconditional love. For me they are  
the role model of being alive.*

*-Gilda Radner*

---

## **EATING GRASS/PLANTS**

All puppies investigate the world with their mouths. This is normal, but we want to make sure they are not ingesting the things they explore. A little bite of grass here and there is not a huge worry, but too much grass is difficult to digest, and many plants can be toxic to animals. In general, we want to prevent the puppies from becoming canine lawnmowers! Here are a few tips:

- Many puppies will eat grass when they have an upset stomach. This can be a side-effect of your puppy ingesting other items that his stomach can’t tolerate. Call the Vet Department if your puppy is obsessively eating grass.

- If your puppy is eating/biting at plants and grass in your yard, it could be because he is bored. Make yard time interesting by playing and training together, or giving your puppy a bone or interactive toy to enjoy as he relaxes outside. Boredom breeds curiosity in a puppy, and this often leads to trouble! Teach him what he is supposed to do in the backyard, or he may just find his enrichment by munching on your favorite flower.
- If you give your puppy too much attention when he bites at a shrub or eats grass, this may also teach him to perform this behavior to get your attention. Make sure you are praising your puppy when he is doing appropriate things in the yard or investigating the yard with his other senses and not his taste buds.
- Try to proactively help the puppy choose to put his mouth on other things when you see him about to eat grass or plants. Run over and grab a toy, wiggle it around, and basically make it seem so fun and interesting, the puppy can't help but run over and see what you're doing, thus abandoning the garden buffet. This makes leaving the grass his idea as opposed to potentially creating a conflict where you rush over and try to extract it from his mouth.
- As the puppy learns "leave it," you can use this in your yard. Make sure you are rewarding and praising him when he responds to the "leave it" cue. Then redirect him to something more appropriate. Make doing other things more fun than eating grass and plants!
- Make sure the toys you offer your puppy have varying textures and sizes. If all the toys are the same, the puppy can become bored with them and discover a new texture and toy in the grass.

## SWIMMING POOL

Swimming is a great way to cool off on a hot Southern California day. It's also great exercise. Not all dogs like to swim and it's important not to force the issue. The most important step in teaching a dog to enjoy the pool is to make sure he knows how to safely enter and exit, and that **he's never allowed to jump into the pool from the deck**, as that's unsafe for any humans who might be in the pool – especially if they are blind or visually impaired! Puppies should be at least 4 months old before you begin any pool work.



- Someone must be present to supervise your puppy. He should never be left unattended in or around the pool.
- Make the top step of the pool a high-value place by feeding kibble. Teach the puppy to confidently hop in and out of the pool via the top step. This is the first step in teaching safe pool behavior.
- Once the puppy knows how to exit the pool, one person can sit on the step while another person carries the puppy out a few feet, aims the puppy toward the steps, and lets him go. The person on the steps should offer encouragement and praise as the puppy swims to the steps. Practice having the puppy swim to the steps and exit several times, from a variety of locations in the pool.
- Teach the puppy to enter the pool only when invited. He must also willingly exit the pool when you ask.
- Do not let the puppy run frantically around the pool when people are swimming. If he's not invited in the pool at that moment, and he can't observe calmly from the deck, he should be crated indoors with a favorite chew bone while the family enjoys the pool.
- Keep in mind, not all dogs love water. Never force your dog into the pool. If he doesn't like swimming, that's OK -- he doesn't need to learn how, and this is valuable information to share with the graduate in the future.
- If the puppy does enjoy swimming, make sure it doesn't become an obsession, as that can potentially distract a working guide dog from his job when around natural or man-made bodies of water.
- If you have multiple dogs who all enjoy swimming, be cautious of how many are swimming at a time and make sure this is manageable by the people monitoring. Pups may not realize they're getting tired as they swim, so provide ample opportunity for rest breaks. All dogs should readily exit the pool when asked.
- Do not let the pool become an obsession for the puppy.

# CHAPTER 8

## SOCIALIZATION

*“One of the quickest ways to get your dog not to trust you is to keep overriding your dog when he’s telling you he does not feel safe.”*

– Suzanne Clothier



---

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

---

## **EARLY SOCIALIZATION**

Socialization means giving your puppy careful, positive exposure to all of the things he might encounter as an adult dog. It's vital to do this as soon as possible, while your puppy is still in the "critical" or "sensitive" period of socialization. This period starts at about 3 weeks of age and continues to approximately 12 to 14 weeks of age.

Puppies need continued socialization throughout their lives, especially the first year. However, the "critical" or "sensitive" period of determining social relationships happens only once in your dog's life. It is called a "critical" or "sensitive" period because a relatively small amount of change in your puppy's life now, has a tremendous lifelong effect on your dog's future behavior. Socialization now will help your puppy to grow up to be friendly and confident throughout his lifetime.

However, there is a RISK of disease involved when young puppies are exposed to the world at-large before they've been fully vaccinated. GDA|TLC puppies do not get their last set of puppy vaccinations until 16 weeks of age. This is why it is so important when you make the choice to take your puppy out into the world that you really think about where you are going, and with whom you may come in contact. Use common sense, and keep your puppy safe by keeping him in areas you know are not frequented by unknown and potentially unvaccinated/unhealthy animals.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL EXPOSURES**

After your puppy has received all of his vaccines, he is well on his way to developing a good immune system. However, vaccines are not a 100 percent guarantee against illness, so it's still important to make smart choices about where to take the puppy. If you are not sure, contact the Canine Development Team or your area leaders.

Your puppy is still young, so keep your outings age-appropriate. Too much too soon can overwhelm him and leave a lasting effect on your puppy.

## CRITICAL PERIODS AND PROPER SOCIALIZATION

As your puppy ages, keep in mind the below stages of development. This may help you understand what is going on in that puppy head, especially on those frustrating days!

### Human Socialization Period (7 - 12 Weeks)

The pup has the brain wave of an adult dog. He now has the ability to learn simple behavioral responses like sit, stay, and come. Housebreaking begins. He now learns by association. The permanent human/dog bonding begins, and he is able to accept gentle discipline but our main goal should be to help him establish confidence.

### Fear Impact Period (8 - 11 Weeks)

Try to avoid frightening the puppy during this time, since traumatic experiences can have a lasting effect during this period. As you can see, this period overlaps with the previous one making this stage particularly important. It is very important now to introduce other humans, but he must be closely supervised to minimize adverse conditioning and negative experiences. Learning at this age is permanent. Also, introducing your puppy to other dogs at this time will help him become more socialized.

### Seniority Classification Period (13 - 16 Weeks)

This critical period is also known as the "age of cutting" - cutting teeth and cutting apron strings. At this age, the puppy begins showing the confidence he has learned and testing his skills. This is a particularly crucial time to stay consistent with your training and reward good behaviors. Praising for the correct behavior response is the most effective tool. Meaningful praise is highly important to shape positive attitude. Reward/praise what you want repeated and ignore what you want to go away.

### Flight Instinct Period (4 - 8 Months)

During this period, puppies test their wings- they will turn a deaf ear when called. This period lasts from a few days to several weeks. It is critical to praise the positive and minimize the negative behavior during this time. This period corresponds to teething periods, and behavioral problems become compounded by the physiological need to chew.

## Second Fear Impact Period (6 - 14 Months)

Also called “The Fear of Situations Period,” this usually corresponds to growth spurts. Great care must be taken not to reinforce negative behavior. Force can frighten the dog. Adversely, too much soothing when a puppy is afraid can serve to reinforce the object or situation is scary. His fear should be handled with a balance of patience and kindness. Using the training previously learned during this period puts the dog in a position of success. Allowing him to work things out and make good choices encourages his self-confidence. Our puppies will begin to learn about consequences – either positive or negative depending on their actions in this period as well.

## Maturity (1 - 4 years)

The average dog develops to full maturity between 1.5 and 3 years of age. This is when consequences are key. If your puppy complies with your request, he continues to get praise. If he chooses not to comply and instead chooses self-interest, he must know there is a consequence. If you have been diligent with your training and rewards up to this point, consequences will likely be few and far between.

Each puppy is an individual and maturity levels can vary greatly. Our goal in each stage is to support our puppy and be observant to his needs. It’s important to keep in mind that dogs don’t do things to spite us or make us angry. “Stubborn” isn’t a word we should ever use for our puppy in training. Instead, think about how you can better communicate with your puppy and advocate for his needs to help him be successful. Usually, if you think your puppy is being stubborn, it is more likely that your puppy does not completely understand what you expect of him. When a puppy truly understands what’s expected, and understands how to earn our praise and other rewards, nine out of 10 times they will do as we ask! Always remember to reward the puppy every time he does as you ask, as rewards are what let the puppy know he’s on the right track! It’s completely normal for a puppy to be great at certain skills at home or in other calm, familiar places, but then struggle to perform as well in new locations and around distractions. THIS IS NORMAL! All it means is we need to manage our expectations and make a point to practice and help the puppy be successful under these conditions – training!

---

*Since each puppy is an individual, it's important we realize how the puppy at the end of **OUR** leash responds to the world and its potential stressors.*

---

Sometimes a puppy fails to respond correctly because he is stressed by or worried about the environment. By recognizing when our puppy needs some extra support, we help him build confidence and cope with the world. The following section details some of the signs our puppy may show when they are aroused or stressed. However, make sure you contact the Canine Development Team if you are struggling with your puppy or you aren't sure if what you are seeing is normal.



## RECOGNIZING STRESS/CALMING SIGNALS

Calming signals, sometimes called stress signals, are all part of a dog's non-verbal communication. Through these signals, dogs are able to calm themselves and other dogs. By learning these signals, we will increase our ability to communicate with our dogs and assist them in coping with their environment. While the occasional calming signal is actually a sign of healthy coping, seeing multiple calming signals in a short amount of time is a sign that your puppy is overwhelmed and needs a change of environment.

Some examples are:

- A shake-off after the puppy jacket comes off or just after it is put on.
- A yawn shortly after you have asked your puppy for a cue in a stimulating environment (i.e. down/stay at the mall).
- Lip licking as a loud object is approaching (i.e. screaming kid, garbage truck, etc.).
- Stretching just as you take out the leash or the jacket.

Again, some calming signals serve as a way for your puppy to cope with their environment, and are actually encouraged as long as they are not in clusters (several in a short amount of time) or are happening with some of the stress signals mentioned below (shaking, moving away, balking, etc.).

Always be mindful of the following behaviors in your puppy, as they can indicate the puppy is experiencing varying degrees of distress.

- **MOVING SLOWLY**

This is an exaggerated slow motion used by dogs to try and calm a stressful situation. This slow motion movement can be toward or away from the object they are uncertain about. Many puppies will do this when they are unsure of an object or sound. If your puppy is still interested in investigating, give him verbal encouragement as he moves toward the item, but do not force him by pushing or pulling him toward it.

- **SNIFFING**

When dogs are uncomfortable, they will often sniff a small area on the ground, or another surface, for a long period of time or in a quick staccato motion. If your puppy is suddenly fixated on sniffing the ground or floor, there's a good chance the puppy is concerned about something in the environment or something about the situation. Many times the dog will side-stare toward the item, so watch where the eyes are pointing to help you discover the area of concern.

- **SCRATCHING EXCESSIVELY**

Uncomfortable dogs will also sit and scratch themselves as if they have an itch. Usually the scratching occurs at the neck.

- **LIP LICKING**

This is a small, quick flick of the tongue that can accompany other signals. It is seen when dogs are anxious about something, and is often used as an appeasement gesture. Of course, if your dog has just finished eating, lip licking is normal. Excessive lip licking means your dog is stressed but mild lip licking means your dog may be just a bit uncomfortable but still processing his environment. This is a great time to offer some verbal encouragement or ask for a simple obedience behavior.

- **BLINKING, AVERTING EYES**

Dogs who do not want to appear threatening will avoid eye contact and blink softly. Many times, your puppy may continue to look briefly at the object or person of concern, then blink and/or look away. Give your puppy time to investigate on his own if he would like, offering calm praise. You can also create some distance from the item/object/situation if you know the cause for concern, and allow your puppy to observe from afar.

- **WHALE EYE**

A dog who shows the whites of his eyes and side-stares at an object is feeling stressed by/about the object. They want to keep the stressful item in view, but also want to be appeasing and non-threatening. If you see the whites of your pup's eyes, you will often also see other calming signals. Create distance and give your puppy time to reset. Do not force a whale-eyed puppy to "get over it" and confront the source of his stress.



- **TURNING AWAY**

An anxious dog will often turn his head or body away from what is causing him stress. Sometimes your dog may re-engage with the item, but it is important not to force him. A puppy in training at an event, may choose to lie facing away from all the action. This should be your sign that your puppy has had enough and needs time to rest and regroup in a quieter environment.

- **YAWNING**

Dogs will yawn to reduce their stress and help calm the situation around them. It is often seen in training when the dog is nearing the end of their energy to learn. Yawning alone does not mean you should stop the activity, but it should be a signal to you to pay closer attention for any additional calming or stress signals.

---

*These signals are critical points for us to be aware of. If we don't react and advocate for our dog when these behaviors are displayed, our dog learns not to trust us. If our puppy is repeatedly put in situations that are stressful without proper encouragement or desensitization, it will have lasting effects.*

---

- **STRETCHING**

When you see stretching in a dog who has not just awoken from a nap, it is often a calming signal to de-stress. It is often seen after a mildly stressful event. Stretching can be a good sign in that your dog is dealing with the stress in a healthy manner, but if the stretch is accompanied by too many other calming signals, it might mean the surroundings are too much for the dog.

- **'SHAKING OFF' (shaking whole body)**

This is the same thing dogs do when they are wet and want to dry off. When you see this on a dog who is already dry, it is a calming signal. It is almost like the dog is getting rid of the excess energy that has built up during a mildly stressful event. Seeing a shake-off is a good sign the dog is coping well with the situation.

- **URINATING OR DEFECATING**

Dogs under stress will often urinate or defecate more than usual. In cases of extreme fear, dogs will submissively urinate with a lowered body posture. (Excitement urination is similar, but the puppy's body is very loose and squiggly.) Both urination and defecation can also come from extreme excitement as well as fear.

- **EXPOSING ABDOMEN** *(Sometimes referred to as “tapping out” or “bottoming out.”)*

This very often is confused with a dog asking for a belly rub, which is only seen in relaxed dogs. Fearful dogs will actually “tap out,” which means they have done everything they can do to defuse the situation, so now the only thing left is to show the most vulnerable part of themselves – their delicate underbelly. They will not, however, expose all of their genitals, and they still have part of their leg covering their stomach unlike a dog that is wanting a belly rub. It might look cute, but this behavior means the dog is way over threshold and is asking for help.

- **TAKING TREATS ROUGHLY**

If you notice that your dog is suddenly taking treats rougher than usual, or taking treats without thinking about chewing or swallowing, he may be feeling overwhelmed by the environment. While the treats are still valuable enough to eat, they are not concentrating on working for the treat or why they received the treat. Creating distance and moving to a calmer environment is needed.

- **REFUSING TREATS**

A dog who feels threatened or overwhelmed by the surroundings will often stop taking treats. If your puppy usually takes treats and suddenly stops, we need to consider his emotional state and adjust the situation so the puppy is in a better position to learn.

- **PULLING ON LEASH**

This could be pulling to get away from something or pulling to move closer to something. Often, if a dog is overly aroused, he will begin to pull more on the leash and not respond to any feedback from the handler. This is different from a dog who pulls because he’s still learning how to walk on a loose leash. Distressed pulling looks and feels frantic.

---

*If you see multiple calming or stress signals, it is important that you take the dog out of the situation and move him to a calmer environment. By doing this, you are demonstrating that you understand his needs and this will help him be more confident and able to cope in future similar situations.*

---

- **PANTING**

While some panting could just mean your dog is warm or is physically exerting himself, panting in cool weather or in the absence of physical activity can indicate stress. Any panting that is out of context (not due to activity or heat) should be noted.

- **TAIL TUCKED / LOW**

A low or tucked tail is a sign your dog is trying to make himself small and protect his genital area from a threat. This is often accompanied by a lowered posture and other stress signals. The tail may still be wagging (usually a quick small wag) in appeasement. If your dog has a tucked tail, it is important to get him out of the situation and progress to similar environments more slowly in the future. This is a fear-based response and pushing a dog through the situation will only make him more fearful.

- **PAWING UP**

If your puppy suddenly starts pawing up on you, take note of your surroundings. Your puppy is seeking reassurance from you and telling you he is overwhelmed by the environment. It will be different from an excited greeting in that it is persistent and usually accompanied by other stress signals like panting or whining.

- **WHINING**

Some whining in a puppy is normal but is usually a sign that they are unsure and need your encouragement to acclimate to their surroundings. If you notice your puppy tends to whine while he is in a “stay,” he is having problems settling/relaxing. You may need to try this cue in a quieter and more familiar environment first. Also, make sure you are rewarding your puppy when he is not whining (versus admonishing them with “Sush!” or “Quiet!” when they whine).

## **APPROPRIATE PLACES TO TAKE YOUR PUPPY**

The following pages are guidelines for where you might take your puppy in order to socialize him to what he might encounter as a working guide dog. Please remember that each puppy is an individual, and your puppy might be ready for more, or might need more time to adjust to new situations. Socialization is a slow-and-steady journey, not a race! If you notice any signs of stress, please contact the Canine Development Team for assistance. Especially in the early stages of development, a negative experience can have a devastating and lasting effect on a puppy.

---

### **8-12 WEEKS OF AGE**

The first few weeks, you should keep your puppy home. This is time for your puppy to get adjusted to his new surroundings, new voices, new people, new way of eating, a new place to sleep, a new place to “get busy,” and wearing a collar with tags. As you can see, your puppy has a lot to learn in his first few weeks. There is no need to add going out into the big wide world. Plus, at this age your puppy is very susceptible to catching many different illnesses. Remember your puppy is not fully vaccinated yet, so taking your puppy out is a big risk at this age.

Even though you cannot take your puppy out, there are many activities and training exercises you can start at home. Refer to Chapter 3 of this guide for ideas about socialization in the first few weeks.

As far as exercise goes, remember that your puppy is still growing so any physical exercise should be in short durations and spurts, just like the obedience training!

Here are some things you can expose your puppy to around the house

- Different surfaces
- Different household objects
- Different locations of the house
- Different people
- Different sounds

- Different obstacles

We encourage everyone to use their imaginations; find ways to do different things in your own home and back yard. The restriction of taking your puppy out is not forever, and you will have many opportunities to expose your puppy to the world once he is fully vaccinated.

---

## 12-16 WEEKS OF AGE

Your puppy is still not fully vaccinated at this age, so it is critical to make the right choices for exposure and socialization. After your puppy receives the 12-week vaccine, you may start to give your puppy a bit more exposure, still keeping him safe from places where unknown pets have soiled. Use a blanket on the ground and carry him into places, as parking lots can harbor contagious disease. Puppy raising is a great upper-body workout, isn't it?

Be mindful of how much exercise you provide a young puppy. The puppy is growing rapidly, and too much exercise can be harmful. Yes, "a tired puppy is a good puppy," but exercising to the point of exhaustion, or near exhaustion, is not the best plan. Watch the puppy for signs he's getting tired and don't over-do it. Throughout your time with the puppy, avoid endurance-based exercise such as running, jogging or biking with the puppy, as this type of exercise is especially hard on growing joints. Regular leashed walks and, if available, opportunities to play off-leash in a fenced area are sufficient.

You can attend these places with your puppy at this time:

- **GDA|TLC** - Of course you will need to carry your puppy onto the GDA|TLC campus from the parking lot. If you are heading toward the kennel area, please carry the puppy and keep him in your lap while waiting in the lobby. We don't want the puppy on the floor because, even though we sanitize the area, the lobby of the Vet Department is where sick dogs have been waiting to see the vet.

If you need to relieve your puppy (or set him down because your arms are tired!) while in the kennel/vet area, there is a puppy relieving area to the left of the entrance to the lobby.

The “top” of campus by the Visitor Education Center is a safe area for puppies, once you’ve carried them in from the parking lot. Puppies can walk around the VEC and the adjacent outdoor area.

- **Your monthly meeting** - Again, you will need to carry your under-vaccinated puppy into the meeting to avoid contact with the parking lot. Once inside the meeting space, the puppy can walk on his own.
- **Your puppy kindergarten class** - As with the meeting, carry the puppy into the class location to avoid the parking lot.
- **Your place of employment** – Treat your office as an extension of your home and plan accordingly. You will need a safe area for the puppy to relieve and a plan for managing exposure to other people and other dogs (if applicable). If you need to immediately begin taking the puppy to work, please discuss this ahead of time with the Puppy Department and/or Canine Development.
- **To visit friends and family** - If they have pets, make sure they are vaccinated and well-socialized.
- **To visit other GDA|TLC puppy raisers** - Don’t forget to work on training while you are there and keep a close eye on your puppy so he doesn’t get into trouble. If there is another GDA|TLC dog at the puppy raiser’s home, do not allow the dogs to play when on-leash. Contact Canine Development for suggestions on how to introduce the puppy to other dogs and for tips on keeping off-leash play safe and enjoyable for the impressionable puppy.
- **Go for a short car ride.**
- **A short neighborhood walk** – Keep the puppy on pavement and avoid letting him loiter in areas where other animals are likely to have soiled.
- **Indoor mall for a short walk** – Carry the puppy into the mall. Keep trips short as the puppy hasn’t yet developed full bladder control. Avoid busy times. **DO NOT RIDE THE ESCALATOR.**
- **Visit the bank.**
- **Quick trips to the market** – This is training exercise, not a grocery shopping expedition. Carry the puppy into the market. Once inside, set him down and let him explore while on a loose leash. Practice a few cues along with loose leash walking. The whole experience should take 15-20 minutes at the most. Be sure to leave before your puppy is over-stimulated. The puppy will likely

need to eliminate again after only a short time in the store, so be mindful of this and be sure to end the training experience before an “accident.”

### PLACES YOU SHOULD NOT TAKE AN UNDER-VACCINATED PUPPY:

- Parks of any kind (GDA|TLC dogs are NEVER to visit an off-leash dog park or dog beach)
- Areas where a high volume of dogs urinate or defecate (like the designated potty area in an apartment complex)
- Animal shelters
- Areas where assorted wildlife are common
- Pet food stores
- Grooming salons
- Zoos
- Graduation at GDA|TLC. Dogs should be fully vaccinated before attending graduation.



If you are not sure about what is safe for the puppy at this age, please call the Puppy Department for advice.

---

### 4-6 MONTHS OF AGE

Finally, your puppy is vaccinated! However, this doesn't mean you should thrust him into the world at large and he'll be ready for it. Too much too soon can sometimes hinder rather than help your socialization goals. Remember, your puppy needs time to let new experiences sink in. A good rule of thumb at this age is every new experience should be followed by a familiar one.

Even though the puppy may seem to have a lot of energy at this age, physical exercise should still be lower impact and not involve a lot of jumping or running.

Appropriate places and things to do:

- Longer walks
  - Low-key restaurants
  - Big-box stores (like Home Depot or Costco)
  - Shopping centers (during off hours)
  - Local downtown areas (during less busy times)
  - Libraries
  - Obedience class
  - GDA|TLC age-appropriate events
  - Work
  - Monthly meetings
  - Friends' and fellow puppy raisers' houses
  - City Parks and Recreation areas (watch a soccer game or a tennis match!)
- 

## 7-9 MONTHS OF AGE

- Neighborhood walks with new sights and smells (trash day!)
- Stores, including indoor malls/shopping centers



- Obedience class
- GDA|TLC events & monthly meetings
- Work/office environments
- Movie theater
- Bus/train/subway ride
- Church
- Youth sports games
- Restaurants
- Public walking paths / pedestrian shopping areas
- Medical appointments
- New downtown areas
- Museums
- Walk near water, the ocean, or fountains
- Fairs (depending on your dog)
- Larger sporting events (depending on your dog)
- Library
- Overnight stay in a hotel or relative/friend's house




---

## 10 + MONTHS OF AGE

By this age, you probably know your puppy and what he enjoys, as well as what types of situations he might be a little cautious about. Remember to contact the Canine Development Team if you are unsure of any situations or experiences.

- All of the above places

- To larger-scale events such as conferences, “Expos,” etc.
- Vacations (See Chapter 8 regarding traveling with your foster puppy)

## **PLACES/ACTIVITIES THAT ARE OFF LIMITS!!**

- Off-leash dog parks – of any kind!
- Dog walkers or sitters that are not affiliated with GDA|TLC
- Zoos
- Being off-leash in any area that is not completely secure (dog beaches, campgrounds, your unfenced front yard, etc.)
- Animal shelters
- Events with firework displays/shows. Be mindful of sporting events or concerts that might include a fireworks display at the end of the evening.
- Professional grooming salons
- Escalators
- Riding in bicycle carriers or grocery carts (or running alongside a bicycle)
- Having your puppy wear dog booties

- Running: No forced or high-impact exercise. A puppy's joints are not fully mature until they are around 2 years of age, and running, especially high-impact or long-distance running can be harmful to the puppy's structural development.

## **PLACES THAT REQUIRE APPROVAL!!**

If you are not sure about safe options on where to take your puppy, please call the Puppy Department and we will advise you. The following are places that require approval from the Puppy Department prior to attending, so that we can discuss the appropriateness based on your puppy's temperament. It is not that these locations are completely off-limits, but the nature of the activity means there's a greater chance the puppy-in-training might have a negative experience, which could affect his chances of becoming a working guide dog.

- Disneyland/Theme Parks
- Large indoor concerts or large arena sporting events
- Plane and boat trips

## **RESTAURANT MANNERS**

Before you start taking your puppy to a restaurant, it is important to teach him what to do and how to behave in such a place. Your puppy should be trained to go under the table and lie quietly at your feet. He should not lick the under-side of the table, the floor, or the base of the chairs or booth. He should walk calmly into the restaurant and ignore patrons along the way.

Your puppy should be out of the way of people and servers, and should have all of his extremities protected (tail, all 4 paws and legs). Puppies should never be allowed to lie in the aisle or walkways. If you are seated somewhere that you are not able to get your puppy under the table, ask for a different table or booth. The goal is always for people to not realize a dog is present – because he's so well behaved!

- Start at home. When you sit down to eat, have your puppy on-leash and put him under the table to lie down while you eat.
- In the beginning, try this for short sessions, maybe sitting down for a snack or coffee, and eventually work up to longer durations.

- When first teaching this behavior, it's okay to give the puppy a chew bone or stuff a KONG with a little kibble so he has something to occupy his time.
- Practice often. If you don't typically eat at a table, you'll need to develop the habit for training purposes. This has to be taught at home before taking the skill "on the road" and expecting the puppy to calmly lie under a table in public. Soon you will see your puppy will learn that this is his place at meal times.
- The first time you go to a restaurant, make sure you relieve your puppy before going inside.
- When your puppy is young, it's OK to bring a chew bone to help him settle in public. However, by the time he is 6 months old, he should be able to settle under the table without a "pacifier."
- Make your first trip to a restaurant short and positive. Perhaps just a cup of coffee or tea, then leave. As your puppy grows, you can increase the duration.

A cue that is helpful for dining at restaurants, as well as anytime you are in a chair or bench and need to keep your puppy protected, is the "close" cue. You will learn this cue in your puppy kindergarten class if you haven't already.

## **SOCIALIZATION WITH OTHER PUPPIES/DOGS**

Your puppy also needs to have good exposure to other dogs throughout his puppyhood. It's important that encounters with other dogs are a positive experience. The puppy does not always need to directly interact with other dogs for it to count as socialization. Simply having the opportunity to observe and be around other dogs helps the puppy better understand the world around him. Your puppy will see plenty of other GDA|TLC dogs at monthly meetings and events, and whenever you happen to be on campus. Remember: When the puppy is on-leash, he should not be interacting with other dogs.

When your puppy starts boarding at GDA|TLC, he will play with a roommate and enjoy time in "community" where he will play with many other GDA|TLC dogs.

You can also create additional opportunities for dog-to-dog socialization via play dates at your home (if you have a safe secure play space) or the home of a fellow puppy raiser. Play dates with non-GDA|TLC dogs are allowed so long as you know the dogs well and know they are healthy and appropriate with other dogs. One bad experience can have a lasting effect on our puppy's future attitude about other dogs.

---

*A play date should not be a free for all! Closely monitor the situation to create a positive experience for your puppy, and make sure the dog your puppy is playing with is a good match.*

---

When you do have a play date, please be sure to supervise and actively participate in the experience. Obviously, be sure none of the dogs are physically hurting one another, but also watch for intimidating behaviors that could frighten your pup. If you are unsure if your pup is gaining a positive experience from meeting a certain dog, remove the more intimidating puppy from the play and see what your puppy does. If he heads in the other direction, he is telling you he isn't having a good time. If he runs to engage more, allow the play to go on for a bit longer but keep a close eye on the play and make sure to allow for breaks in the play.

Throughout the play, step in and ask both dogs to take a break. Test their ability to engage their "thinking brains" over their "play brains" by asking them to "sit." If they can't perform a simple behavior, they are quite over-stimulated and would benefit from a longer break from the exciting play. Throughout the play, we want the dogs to maintain the ability to make good choices.

If you are ever unsure, end the play before it turns into a bad experience.

**Here are some suggestions for off-leash play:**

- Develop friendships with other puppy raisers and other adults who have dogs - not only puppies, but friendly adult dogs, who will teach your pup how to be polite.
- Be mindful of opposite-sex pairings when dogs are intact. Once dogs are 6-7 months old, dogs of the opposite sex should only play off-leash together when at least one of the dogs has been spayed or neutered. Intact same-sex pairings are generally OK so long as temperaments/personalities are a good match.

- Puppies need to learn that good manners are necessary even when exciting things are going on. They should begin to learn how to sit still when you ask, and come when they're called - even when playing with other dogs.
- The relationship you have with your puppy should override the relationship he has with other puppies. Your puppy should learn that you are the source of all good things, including opportunities to play with other puppies.
- One of the main rules we should always follow with our puppies is that they do not play or greet other dogs while on-leash. When we are holding the leash, the puppy should remain focused and connected with the handler. Think about how important this is when the dog is paired with a blind partners or a partner with another disability. That is why it is SO important that, starting at a young age, we not allow on-leash greetings with other dogs.

## SOCIALIZATION WITH PEOPLE

Your puppy will most likely attract the attention of many people when you're out together. It is okay for people to pet your puppy, however, your puppy should remain under control.

- When your puppy is young, he may still be very mouthy. By you kneeling down and helping control him, you can prevent your puppy from mouthing the person who is petting him.
- If your puppy is having a hard day, or you are, it is okay to politely decline someone's request to pet the puppy and try again another day. Alternatively, you can ask the person to step back so that you regain control of your puppy before allowing petting.
- As your puppy grows, you will sometimes purposefully decline requests for petting/avoid letting your puppy visit with people. The puppy should not grow up to expect interaction with everyone he sees along the way.
- Remember that if your puppy can jump or mouth on you or your family, they will think everyone is fair game so it's important to be consistent.
- As a guide or service dog your puppy will need to walk past people without any interaction yet still be aware of their presence.
- You will learn techniques for greeting people in your Puppy Kindergarten classes. "Sit for greeting" is when your puppy remains in a sit as a person comes up to pet them briefly. "Go say Hi" is a technique where your puppy checks in with you and then is allowed to go up to a person to greet them briefly before returning to you.
- A good illustration of proper and improper greeting techniques can be found here:  
<https://drsophiayin.com/app/uploads/2017/08/How-to-Greet-a-Dog-Poster.pdf>

## **SOCIALIZATION WITH YOUNG CHILDREN**

- Young children and puppies should not be together unsupervised. Period.
- Children don't know what hurts or scares puppies. If you don't protect your puppy from children, you'll be forcing your puppy to protect himself. All puppies/dogs have teeth.
- Puppies will tolerate many things they are less likely to tolerate as adolescent or adult dogs. Be aware that even though your 5-month-old puppy tolerates certain types of behavior from children now, he may not always.
- Do not let children sit or lie on the puppy. Similarly, do not let children crawl into the crate with the puppy.
- Teach children the right way to approach and pet your puppy. They should be kind and gentle to your puppy. It's up to you to show them how. Teach them to pet your puppy on the chest and cheeks, rather than slapping him on the top of his head.
- Involve children in the training of your puppy as soon as they are able, but supervise closely. Children tend to go to extremes with their cues, repeat cues, and don't always follow through, so your puppy may learn to ignore cues.
- Avoid picking up your puppy whenever possible. He needs to learn how to walk with you from place to place, rather than be "air-lifted" all the time! Don't let kids carry your puppy around either. Puppies can develop a real aversion to being grabbed, squeezed, smooshed, and carried by well-meaning children, and it may elicit defensive aggression from the puppy as he matures.
- Don't let your puppy play chase games with children in which the puppy chases the kids (or the kids chase the puppy). Running, giggling, screaming kids are overly exciting for most puppies, which may cause your puppy to behave inappropriately. (Supervised "come" games where the child stops as the puppy approaches are fine as long as the puppy isn't using his mouth when he gets to the child.)
- Teach children to play appropriately with your puppy. Hide and seek, catch, fetch, or simple agility exercises can all be good games for children to play with puppies. Limit the amount of time the kids and puppy are allowed to play, as they can both get carried away, if left together for long periods. It also helps to have your puppy burn off a little energy before playing with children.



- If you aren't able to directly supervise interactions between puppies and young children, use a management strategy to prevent the rehearsal of unwanted behavior from either species!

## How Kids SHOULD NOT Interact with Dogs

It's common sense. Just imagine how people should interact with each other.

<p>Avoid taking people's food</p> 	 <p>Avoid bothering dogs when they are eating</p>
<p>Avoid stealing other people's toys</p> 	 <p>Avoid taking a dog's bones or toys</p>
<p>Avoid putting your face right up to someone else's face</p> 	 <p>Avoid putting your face right up to a dog's face</p>
<p>Avoid bothering when asleep</p> 	 <p>Avoid bothering animals when they are resting. Let sleeping dogs lie.</p>
<p>Avoid pestering</p> 	 <p>Avoid grabbing tail/ears</p>
<p>Avoid climbing on or trampling</p> 	 <p>Avoid climbing on or trampling</p>
<p>Avoid pinching</p> 	 <p>Avoid hugging. Most dogs dislike it.</p>
<p>Avoid screaming around</p> 	 <p>Avoid hollering and shouting. Use your "inside" voice instead.</p>

**Dr. Sophia Yin, DVM, MS**  
*The Art and Science of Animal Behavior*  
 For additional free dog bite prevention resources and more dog behavior books and products, visit [www.drsophiayin.com](http://www.drsophiayin.com).



# CHAPTER 9

## GDA | TLC SPECIFICS



---

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

---

## GDA|TLC PUPPY JACKET

You will be given a yellow Puppy-In-Training jacket during the required Puppy Kindergarten class. The puppy was first introduced to wearing a training jacket while in Preschool, but it's important we continue building a positive association to the new puppy jacket. We will use kibble/treats initially to help build this association. If you have a helper, have them give your puppy kibble while you fit the jacket. Once fit, and in order to continue the positive association, have your puppy play in the jacket and be fed while wearing the jacket for the first week. If your puppy is comfortable wearing the jacket after the first few weeks, you no longer need to put it on for meals and when feeding. If your puppy is shying when you try to put the jacket on, please contact Canine Development so we can problem-solve with you.

---

*Your puppy should wear his jacket when out in public places. It is not required for your puppy to have his jacket every time you are out of the house, but you will want to create a good balance. Every time you are in a public building or non-dog-friendly area, your puppy should be in-jacket.*

---

When the puppy outgrows the small jacket, you will trade it in for a larger size. This typically happens at around 6 months of age. Please contact the Puppy Department to arrange for a larger jacket. Your puppy jacket is to be kept clean and in good condition. Please do not sew or add anything to your pup's jacket. Do not leave the jacket where it can be chewed by the puppy. And, it probably goes without saying, but, do not ever use the GDA|TLC jacket on a non-GDA|TLC puppy-in-training.

**These jackets belong to Guide Dogs of America | Tender Loving Canines.** If your jacket is lost or stolen, please contact the Puppy Department immediately.

If your puppy is "career changed" before returning to campus for formal training you will need to return the jacket to GDA|TLC. When your puppy comes in for formal training, you'll be required to return the jacket.

---

*It is important to remove your puppy's jacket every time you try to relieve your puppy.*

---

GDA | TLC puppies should never be given the opportunity to relieve in-jacket. If your puppy starts to relieve while wearing the jacket, don't panic, yell or scream. Just

calmly reach down and try to remove it. This may cause your puppy to stop relieving, so be sure to give him ample time to finish "getting busy" after you've removed the jacket. Be aware of your puppy's body language, and if you start to see signs that he needs to relieve, remove the jacket sooner rather than later. Remember to create an environment where your puppy is right, not wrong.

## GET DRESSED

The term you'll use when putting the jacket on the puppy is, "Get dressed." To teach this, have a kibble in one hand and the jacket in the other. Hold the kibble in the neck loop of the jacket and lure your puppy's head through the opening. As your puppy gets close to the neck loop, pull the kibble a bit farther back so he puts his head through the opening, as you simultaneously bring the jacket back toward the puppy's body. Feed him the kibble as soon as his head goes through the loop. Do this a couple times per day. Each time, just prior to luring your puppy's head through the loop, say, "Juno, get dressed."

After a week of luring your puppy with the kibble and while saying, "Get dressed," start to ask your puppy for the behavior without the kibble visible. Ask him to "get dressed" and hold the opening of the jacket in front of him. If he puts his head through the hole, praise and give him a piece of kibble. You may need to make a similar motion to luring (without kibble in your hand) at first, but soon you should just be able to reward with a piece of kibble after the jacket is on. Once your pup is confidently and cooperatively putting his head through the neck loop, start to reward with kibble only when they get dressed exceptionally well. However, always praise your dog when he readily gets dressed. After a week of rewarding for the best instances of "getting dressed," you should be able to fade the kibble and simply offer praise to your puppy as he puts his head through the opening.

Your puppy should enjoy this cue as it means they are going someplace fun! If you notice your puppy is avoiding having the jacket put on, contact the Canine Development Team for assistance.

## CARE AND CLEANING OF THE PUPPY JACKET

If (or more likely, when) the jacket gets dirty, please wash it in cold water with a mild detergent, and hang it out to dry. Hand-washing is recommended. If you machine wash the jacket, please buckle the straps so they don't tangle, and use a zippered, mesh laundry bag to further protect the jacket in the washing machine. These jackets identify you as part of Guide Dogs of America | Tender Loving Canines and we want to make a good impression no matter where we go. If you are unsure about the appearance of your training jacket, please contact the Puppy Department.

---

*“Dogs do **speak**, but only to those who  
know how to **listen**. “*

*– Orhan Pamuk*

---



## PUPPY SITTING

If your puppy is under 6 months of age, and you have to find a puppy sitter, follow the below guidelines to locate an approved puppy sitter. You can also find the formal guidelines in the Appendix of this guide.

As you attend monthly meetings, make an effort to get to know fellow raisers, as they are the people you will turn to for puppy sitting. If you're new to the group, or aren't sure who to ask, consult your area leader for suggestions. Once you've secured an appropriate puppy sitter, email the Puppy Department manager and your area leader so we know who is caring for your puppy (and when) in your absence.

### **PUPPY SITTER REQUIREMENTS**

Must be an experienced GDA puppy raiser.

Must regularly attend monthly meetings.

Will not have more than four dogs in their home at one time.

Will be able to attend Puppy Kindergarten class with the puppy, if needed.

## **IS A PUPPY SITTER REALLY NECESSARY?**

Puppies-in-training can – and should – be left home alone for short periods of time. When given a chance to eliminate first, and when properly confined to a crate, a young puppy can hold its bladder approximately one hour per month of age. Creating opportunities for the puppy to be left home alone for short periods is an important step in guarding against separation distress. (On a similar note, be sure to practice teaching your puppy it's OK to be crated or tethered, away from you, when you're home, too!).

Please refer to Chapter 7 of this guide for information regarding time left alone and age of your puppy to see if a puppy sitter is necessary. Keep in mind that, other than at night when sleeping, GDA|TLC puppies should not be left alone in a crate longer than four hours at a time.

If you'll be away from home longer than four hours and cannot take the puppy, either ask a member of your raiser group to stop by your home to relieve the puppy and offer a mid-day break from the crate, or arrange for your puppy to be cared for by a puppy sitter using the guidelines above. Because socializing a guide dog puppy is so important, if you have a life-changing circumstance that requires you to leave your puppy home alone on a regular basis, you should contact the Puppy Department for guidance. Professional dog walkers or sitters are not approved by GDA|TLC.

## **WHEN SEEKING A PUPPY SITTER**

- Remember to plan ahead as much as possible and secure puppy sitters early, especially during high-demand times such as the holiday season and during the summer months. In an emergency, please notify the Puppy Department and your group leader and we will work together to secure a puppy sitter as soon as possible.
- If you are currently working through an ongoing behavioral issue with your puppy, please consult Canine Development for recommendations regarding puppy sitters and share relevant information with the puppy sitter.

- If your puppy will be in the care of a sitter on a Puppy Kindergarten class night, look for a sitter willing to attend class with the puppy on your behalf. (You'll still need to audit the session you missed for your own learning, but at least your puppy will have continuity in his early group training.)
- If your puppy will be in the care of a fellow raiser on the 1<sup>st</sup> of the month, when medication is due, be sure to bring medication with you and alert the puppy sitter.
- Supply adequate food with feeding instructions, a bowl, crate (if needed), etc.
- Confirm the puppy sitter is familiar with GDA|TLC's after-hours emergency phone number.
- Take care not to abuse a fellow raiser's willingness to puppy sit. Get to know several raisers in your group so you can recruit different puppy sitters, as needed. This provides better socialization experiences for your puppy as well.
- When picking up your puppy, remind the sitter to complete a Puppy Sitting Report, even if the sitting assignment was only a few hours in duration. It's helpful for the Canine Development Team to know how the puppy handled the experience, responded to cues given by a different handler, etc. The Puppy Sitting Report is available online under "Programs" > "Canine Development" > "Forms for Current Puppy Raisers." If you are viewing this guide online, you can click on this link: [Puppy Sitting Report](#)

**\*\*REMEMBER\*\***

**Puppies 6 months of age and older should be visiting the kennel on a monthly basis.**



## KENNEL TIME

Once your puppy reaches 6 months of age, he will start spending time at the GDA|TLC kennel. This is one of the most important contributing factors to the success of your puppy. Dogs who have not been acclimated to the kennel over the course of their puppyhood have a much harder time adjusting to life in the kennel when they return for formal training. This added stress negatively affects their ability to concentrate on learning guide work skills, and as a result, they are more likely to be released from the program.

---

*Regular kennel stays are required once the puppy has turned 6 months old.*

---

Also, if you have a female puppy and she comes into “heat” (or is “in season”) before being spayed, she will be kept here at GDA|TLC for a minimum of three weeks. It is important your female puppy has a chance to get used to the kennel before this happens.

- If you live close to campus, start with a day-stay or a one-night stay to acclimate your puppy to the kennel. **If you live a distance from campus, the first stay can be up to two days if needed, but shorter stays are preferred.**
- Try bringing your puppy with another dog he knows or has spent time with. We will try to kennel them together.
- After a couple of short stays, add another day to the reservation, so eventually, by the time your dog is 10 months old, he is able to stay up to seven days at a time.
- If you know you have a planned trip that requires your younger puppy to stay in the kennels for longer, you will need to plan ahead and build up days in a shorter period of time. You might also split the time between the kennels and an approved puppy sitter.

While here in the kennels, your puppy will learn to adapt to kennel living, which includes using the water Lixit®, scheduled feeding times, and relieving on concrete in his outdoor run. Your pup will also adjust to sleeping locked inside, not having 24-hour human contact, the sound of barking dogs, bath time, kennel technicians, and playing with and having a variety of roommates while he is at Camp GDA|TLC!

## MAKING A RESERVATION

When you are ready to bring your puppy to the kennel, email [boarding@guidedogsofamerica.org](mailto:boarding@guidedogsofamerica.org) or call (818) 833-6448 to make a reservation. Reservations are required. The kennel is open for pick-up and drop-off from 9:30 a.m. to 7 p.m., seven days a week. There is a [boarding drop off form](#) that you can fill out prior to bringing your puppy in for a kennel stay. It can be found on the GDA|TLC website under Programs > Canine Development > Forms for Current Puppy Raisers. If you'd like your puppy to be seen by the Vet Department during a kennel stay, you should mention this when making your reservation and fill out a [puppy raiser veterinary department questionnaire](#) prior to the appointment.

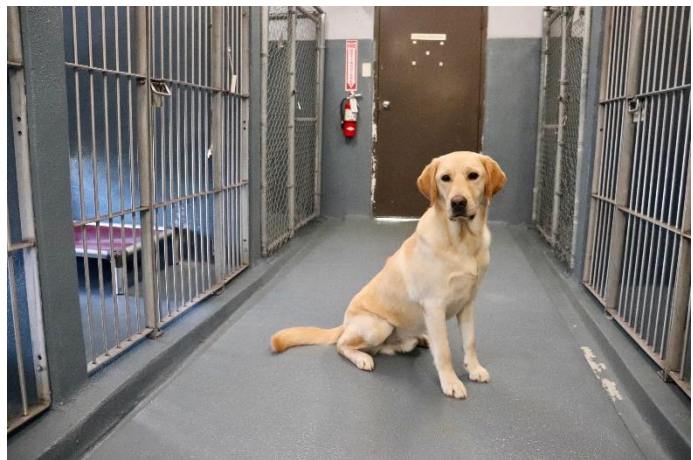
Please do not bring any personal items such as toys, blankets, beds, special collars, or your GDA|TLC puppy jacket. If your puppy is on a special food prescribed by the Vet Department, please bring the food with you. If your dog is on any medication, bring that with you as well; this includes your heartworm pill if it is due during the scheduled kennel stay.

When you arrive at the kennel, a technician will admit your puppy. You will be asked questions such as how much and how often you feed your dog and does your dog have any medical problems or need to be seen by the vet?

Your puppy will be examined by the tech, and any areas of concern will be noted on his chart. Your puppy will also be weighed. (Kennel visits are a great time to practice sitting calmly on the scale!)

After the check-in process is completed, the kennel tech will take your puppy to his run and return your leash. Your puppy will be monitored by kennel staff to make sure he is happy and adjusting to the kennel environment. We will teach your puppy how to use the Lixit<sup>®</sup>. He will be matched with a roommate, assuming one is available, and monitored to make sure they play well together. Time permitting, your puppy will receive a bath prior to you picking him up, unless he is just staying with us for the day.

Kennel dogs also interact together in supervised "community" sessions where they play together in groups and enjoy a variety of fun activities. Community time is closely supervised by GDA|TLC staff.



We strive to make the kennel a fun and enjoyable place for your pup where he can play but also relax in a stress-free environment.

On occasion, we do have puppies who show a high degree of stress and are not able to settle into the kennel. In these rare cases, we will call the puppy raiser and have them come and get the puppy, or have an approved puppy sitter watch the puppy for the remainder of the kennel stay. We will then work out a program designed for that individual puppy to help him adjust to kennel life.

Soon you will see that your dog is eager and excited to get to the kennel and enjoys spending time here! Then you'll get to work on reminding the puppy to walk to the kennel on a loose leash, as he's so excited to see his GDA|TLC friends!

It isn't uncommon to see a few skin scrapes or scratches on your puppy from his time in the kennels. Most of the time, it means your puppy had a lot of fun playing. Make sure to keep an eye on these scratches for any infection or redness that may develop and call the Vet Department if you notice this. Otherwise, these small abrasions will usually subside on their own.

## FEMALES IN HEAT

An un-spayed female typically goes into “heat” between the ages of 7-10 months. If your female has not been spayed prior to her heat cycle, you will be required to bring her to GDA|TLC immediately. She will board in the kennels for a minimum of three weeks. This is why kenneling your puppy starting at 6 months of age is so important, especially if she is a female. Imagine having never been kenneled before, and now your puppy is staying in the kennel for three weeks straight! Once your puppy is nearing the end of her heat cycle, she will be examined by the Vet Department.

### **SIGNS YOUR FEMALE DOG IS IN HEAT**

- She may be licking her vulva area often.
- Her vulva area may be swollen.
- Other dogs may show a higher interest in her vulva area, lots of sniffing and possibly licking.
- Discharge from her vulva.
- Drops of blood coming from her vulva. If you use a piece of tissue and wipe her vulva area, you can see blood or discharge.

If you are unsure if your puppy is in heat, you can always have her checked at GDA|TLC. Our Vet Department will do a swab of her vulva and look at this under a microscope to check for blood.



## **RULES WHEN YOU ARE OUT WITH YOUR PUPPY**

As a puppy raiser for Guide Dogs of America | Tender Loving Canines, it's important to remember you are essentially a walking billboard for the organization every time you are with your puppy in-jacket. For this reason, we require abiding by a strict set of rules when you are in the public eye. While most businesses will allow puppies-in-training to enter otherwise non-dog-friendly establishments, and understand that puppy training and socialization are essential to create a successful guide dog, it is important to follow some guidelines when in public places. In most states, a place of business does not have to grant access to a service dog in-training, and our volunteers with puppies-in-training do not have the same public access rights as our clients with working guide dogs. When socializing your puppy out in public, and especially when in places that do not otherwise allow dogs, please abide by the following guidelines:

- Only a puppy raiser or someone with GDA|TLC puppy-raising experience (your family members or an approved puppy sitter) should handle the puppy while in public. You should never give your puppy to a stranger or allow him to be handled by a child.
- Make sure to bring clean-up supplies with you. Similar to carrying a diaper bag with a human child, most puppy raisers invest in a backpack when training a GDA|TLC puppy, so they can keep necessary supplies such as poop bags, paper towels, water, water bowl, kibble and a spare collar/leash easily at-hand.
- Your puppy should not be eliminating in establishments or in jacket. Make sure to offer ample opportunity for your puppy to “get busy” before you go inside!
- Do not let the puppy jump up on people or objects. He should be under control at all times. If he starts to bark, bite, or jump excessively, immediately remove yourself from the situation. Even fully trained service dogs can be asked to leave a public space if they appear to be out of control.
- Your puppy should not be eating items off the ground (even if you drop a treat, pick it up before your puppy eats it). They should also not be sniffing the ground in excess or pulling you to sniff things. If you find this happening, contact Canine Development for assistance.

- If for some reason a place of business asks you to leave, you may politely ask them why, and try to educate management about the importance of being allowed access for training purposes. If the answer is still, “No,” please be respectful of the decision and leave without incident. Contact GDA|TLC if you feel you were treated inappropriately.
- Your puppy should be well-groomed and the jacket should be clean.
- If your puppy starts to exhibit signs of stress, leave the situation and contact GDA|TLC for assistance.
- Your puppy should NEVER go on escalators. Find the nearest stairwell or elevator.

## **OUTREACH AND SPECIAL EVENTS**

People find their way to Guide Dogs of America | Tender Loving Canines and become puppy raisers for a variety of reasons. We are always working to introduce new people to the organization and educate them about puppy raising. From information booths at community events to organized walks in busy pedestrian areas, our current puppy raisers are our most valuable recruitment tool! We also rely heavily on volunteer support for on- and off-campus special events and fundraisers. Attending such events is not mandatory for puppy raisers, but it’s definitely appreciated when puppy raisers can occasionally volunteer additional time at an event. Plus, events are great training opportunities for age-appropriate puppies-in-training!



### **GRADUATION**

We love it when our puppy raisers can attend the graduation ceremony for our newly matched guide and service dog partners. This is a great way to expose the public to all the stages of the guide and service dog training process. Once your puppy is fully vaccinated, he can come to graduation as long as you are able to keep him calm and quiet during the ceremony. Be prepared to step out of the auditorium as needed, if your puppy is having difficulty settling quietly. Be mindful not to let your desire to socialize override your ability to make smart training choices regarding the puppy before and after the ceremony!

## TRAVELING/VACATIONS

If you plan to travel for more than seven days, or will cross state lines with your puppy, you must contact GDA|TLC to let us know of your plans. Also, all air travel must be pre-approved by GDA|TLC.

Travel across state lines requires a health certificate. The certificate must be within 10 days of your travel dates. Your puppy cannot travel across state lines unless they are fully vaccinated. Call or email the Vet Department to set up an appointment.



**If you aren't sure whether or not you should take your puppy, here are some questions to ask yourself:**

- Has your puppy met the kennel requirement for the month? Consider making a kennel reservation instead of traveling with your puppy if kennel time is needed. Make a kennel reservation by emailing [boarding@guidedogsofamerica.org](mailto:boarding@guidedogsofamerica.org) or calling (818) 833-6448.
- Are you sure you want to be a dog trainer while on vacation? It's OK to want a break from the full-time responsibility of raising a program puppy. If your puppy has already met the kennel requirement for the month, you might also consider recruiting a puppy sitter to give the puppy some experience working with a new handler and in a new environment.
- Consider where you are staying and places you will visit. Will it be too much for your puppy? Will all the places you go allow access? Call ahead of time to ask so you don't get stuck changing your plans at the last minute. Some states are more used to seeing service dog puppies-in-training than others. Remember: Puppy raisers do not have public access rights like service dog handlers – the ability to bring a puppy-in-training into a non-dog-friendly establishment is entirely up to the gatekeeper of the establishment.
- Do you know where to access emergency medical care at your destination or along the way? Be sure to research this in advance. If you'll be gone on the first of the month, make sure you pre-



order necessary preventative medications to bring with you. Some parts of the country have zoonotic disease not common in California. If an area is known to commonly have a disease for which we do not commonly vaccinate, we will not be able to approve travel.

- Has your puppy been socialized and exposed to all the things you will see? Have you stayed for one night in a hotel prior to a seven-day stay in an unfamiliar environment? Is your puppy comfortable in his crate?
- If there are other dogs or animals where you will stay, are they appropriate around new dogs?
- Are you willing to dedicate adequate time to the dog's training while you are away?
- If you do not plan on taking your puppy everywhere with you, is the puppy comfortable being alone in a crate should you need to leave him in a hotel room or relative's house? (Do not leave the puppy loose in an unfamiliar environment.) You should only leave the puppy crated in a hotel room if you are absolutely certain the puppy will be quiet, as nuisance barking reflects poorly on the organization. Remember GDA|TLC puppies should not be left alone for more than four hours at a time.
- If you have a female, is she between the ages of 7-12 months? If she has not yet come into season/heat, you should not take her on an extended vacation unless you can uproot your plans to bring her back to GDA|TLC. In-heat females are required to stay in the kennels during their heat cycle (approximately three weeks).

If your puppy is younger than 6 months old and you decide not to bring him on vacation with you, you will need to find an appropriate puppy sitter, as puppies younger than 6 months of age are not ready to board in the kennel.



## RIDING IN THE CAR



Guide and service dog users are taught to ride in vehicles with their guide dogs on the floorboard between their legs, if enough room is available. If adequate floor space is not available, guide and service dogs may lie on the backseat. It is very important that the dog lie quietly and not move around on the seat or hang his head out of the window. If the car is large enough, the guide or service dog can ride in a crate or lie down in the back of an SUV-type vehicle. **All GDA|TLC puppies MUST learn to ride calmly on the floorboard of the front passenger seat.** If your vehicle set-up allows room for a crate, it's helpful for puppies to learn this method of travel as well. Some raisers teach puppies to ride on the floorboard of the backseat as well. Riding on the backseat, itself should only ever be used as a last resort.

In order for guide dogs to ride calmly in the car, we need to train the behavior early. Start by teaching your puppy to stay quietly on the floor in front of the passenger seat of your vehicle. Exercise the puppy first and give him an opportunity to relieve. You may need to start with small car rides at first, especially if your puppy seems uncomfortable.

Signs that your puppy is uncomfortable may be drooling, vomiting, excessive panting, being fidgety when riding, or avoiding getting into the car. If you see any of these signs, contact the Canine Development Team.

Place a towel on the floorboard of the car, and keep a couple of chew toys handy to entertain the puppy. If you are driving by yourself, you will need to tether your puppy with a leash or tie down in order to keep him in place. Tie the leash under the front passenger seat or close a portion of it in the glove box, leaving enough room for your puppy to move around, yet not too much room so that he can get up on the seat or cross over to the driver's side, which is a serious safety issue.

If you have a passenger with you, the puppy should lie between the passenger's front legs on the floor. Be aware of the air temperature on the floor area of the car. The puppy will be closer to the engine and may not have good airflow on the floor. You may need to utilize the vent to help keep your puppy comfortable.

As your puppy grows, the floorboard area may become more difficult for him to fit comfortably. Keep in mind, our puppies are very talented in making themselves comfortable in smaller spaces so many will never outgrow this area. However, if this happens, you have a couple of options.

- You can place a crate in the back part of your vehicle and place your puppy in the crate. This is a good idea to do even if your puppy rides calmly when not in a crate. In formal training, the puppy will ride crated in a cargo van to and from all off-campus training sessions. Getting him comfortable being crated in a car is vital to him being able to do the same when in formal training.
- Your puppy can lie on the floor of the back seat area. He should not be able to move back and forth but should remain in one spot. You can utilize a tie down or tether the leash similar to when you taught him to lie quietly in the front seat floorboard if needed.
- Have your puppy sit or lie on the back seat. Place a towel or blanket on the seat, and teach your dog to lie quietly on the seat. This area should only be used if the puppy doesn't fit on the floor of the backseat. Do not let your puppy run back and forth from window to window or hang out the window.
- If you have an SUV-style of vehicle, you can teach your puppy to sit in the back. You may have to use a tie down cable to aid in teaching your puppy to ride in the car calmly.
- If you are a passenger, your puppy should ride on the floor of the car between your legs or on the floor next to you. The puppy should only ride on the seat next to you if he cannot fit on the floor.

*MAKE SURE YOU TEACH YOUR PUPPY TO RIDE  
CALMLY IN THE CAR. HE SHOULD REMAIN  
STATIONARY THE ENTIRE CAR RIDE.*

## **MONTHLY REPORTS**

Puppy raisers are required to complete a monthly report detailing the progress of the puppy and activities you have explored, starting the month you bring the puppy home.

Monthly reports are due on the 1<sup>st</sup> of every month.

There are links to the monthly reports on our website. You will find these links under Programs > Canine Development > Forms for Current Puppy Raisers. The completed report goes to our Canine Development Team. If you have listed any areas of concern about your puppy, we will contact you to set up an in-home session or one-on-one meeting to help you. If you have immediate concerns, PLEASE DON'T WAIT for a response from your monthly report. Contact the Canine Development Team so that we can help you as soon as possible!

If you are viewing this guide online, you can click on this link to get to the puppy reports: [Monthly Puppy Reports](#)

The reports are based on your puppy's age. These are very important, and give us a lot of feedback and insight on how your puppy is coming along.

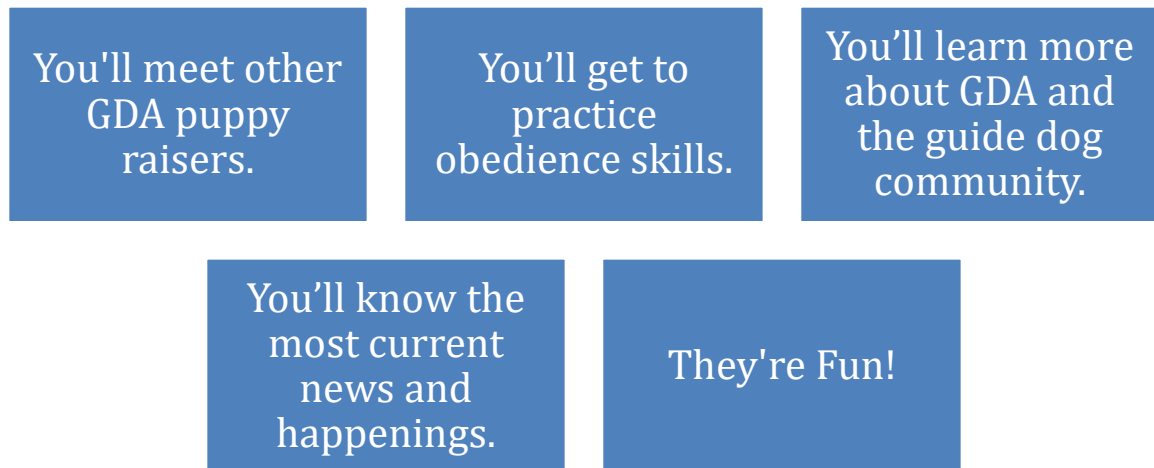
---

**FILLING OUT THE MONTHLY REPORT IS A  
MANDATORY PART OF PUPPY RAISING.**

---

## MONTHLY MEETINGS

Monthly meetings are an important part of our puppy raiser requirements, and offer numerous benefits to both our raisers and our program puppies:



Puppy raisers pick a regional group with which to affiliate throughout their time in the program. We recommend you choose the area group that's closest to you and offers the easiest evening commute, as most monthly meetings are held in the evening during the week. There's a list of puppy raiser area groups on the GDA|TLC website under Puppy Raising > Raise a Puppy > and then under the Southern California heading, [or by clicking here](#).

Your puppy can begin to accompany you to monthly meetings once he is 12 weeks old (16 weeks for Sylmar meetings, due to group size). Before then, you may need to have someone stay home with your puppy while you attend the meeting. Most meetings last approximately 1.5 hours.

As these meetings can be a bit overwhelming for a young puppy, here are some things to keep in mind to set you and your puppy up for success:

- Be aware of your puppy at all times - and others' puppies too.

- Be an advocate for your puppy. Watch for signs that he is uncomfortable and create some space and offer reassurance so he becomes more comfortable.
- A meeting is not puppy playtime. Dogs may not play with each other on-leash.
- Take your time to walk in and practice loose leash walking. Do not let the puppy drag you into the meeting.
- Make sure you are aware of what your puppy is doing while you are socializing. Give him a cue and praise him when he complies. The person you are talking to will understand if you need to interrupt them to attend to your puppy - and it will help them remember they need to attend to their puppy too! When you are with your puppy, good training comes before your desire to socialize.
- Relieve your puppy BEFORE the meeting to minimize the chance that you need to take your puppy out during the meeting to relieve.

## FORMAL EVALUATION

At approximately 8-10 months old, most puppy raisers will be asked to bring the puppy to the kennel or to meet Canine Development staff in public for an assessment. This evaluation gives us some information on how your puppy is developing and allows us to give you important feedback to help focus your future training efforts.



The evaluation includes, but is not limited to:

- Overall obedience level - Is he on the right track? Does he demonstrate a good foundation of obedience skills, such as sit, down, stand and stay?
- Leash Manners - Does he walk well on leash? How does he respond to a new person handling him?
- Handling - Is he able to accept being handled and examined by someone new to him?
- Leash Relieving - Can he relieve on-leash when asked?
- Environmental Soundness - Does he handle the overall environmental change well?
- Is he sensitive or distracted by sights, sounds, or smells? What is his primary way of gathering information from his environment?
- Behavior in establishments.
- Degree of willingness.
- Degree of self-interest.

Once this evaluation is completed, it gives GDA|TLC an idea of where the dog is heading. Suggestions are then made to the puppy raiser, either by verbal or written report, to improve or work through any problem areas. Other times, an in-home training may be set up to further set you and your puppy up for future success. Some dogs will be required to come back for another evaluation, usually in three months, to reevaluate their progress. Dogs change a lot in this three month time period, and



many times, if we do have concerns, we see them disappear or resolve themselves as the dog matures.

GDA|TLC might also request an evaluation if we notice issues in the dog's littermates; in response to information shared via monthly reports, puppy sitting reports or observations by area leaders; or to evaluate the dog's mental maturity prior to formal training.

Decisions about spaying and neutering may be made after a dog has been formally evaluated but this is not always the case and a dog can be called in to be altered at any time during the puppy raising period for a number of reasons including scheduling and availability of veterinarian services.

## REHOMES AND CAREER CHANGES

### REHOME

There are many reasons a puppy might need to be transitioned into a different home during its puppyhood. We understand your life situation can change and this may result in you not being able to meet the obligations of raising a puppy-in-training. In addition, a puppy may need a change of home environment to further evaluate training potential or help him with a particular skill that is lacking. It's important to remember that we always need to look at the puppy as a potential guide dog and work toward that goal.

**“Rehome” is not a dirty word!** It does not mean you have failed as a puppy raiser or your puppy is failing in the program. Here are just a few of the reasons a rehome may occur:

- Puppy raiser life change: Job no longer allows puppy access, physical illness, personal issues that result in lack of training opportunities, traveling for an extended period, moving, etc.
- Puppy needs more or less exposure to a certain environment: dogs, cats, kids, work, traffic, etc.
- Specific problem solving requires a more experienced raiser.
- Medical issue requiring more supervision than current puppy raiser can provide.
- Puppy needs to be closer to campus or come to campus often.
- Requirements for puppy raising aren't being met: Attending monthly meetings or group classes, socializing, adhering to training plans, being available when GDA|TLC requests, etc.
- There is a safety concern for either the puppy raiser or the puppy.

We understand that we are asking a lot of our puppy raisers, and sometimes, once the initial cuteness of having a puppy wears off, and the workload is realized, it can be overwhelming. It's OK to ask for help, and it's OK to conclude that raising a puppy isn't meant for you or your family. Sometimes, even if temporarily, your life demands and the demands of the training will not coincide well with each other. There are many other opportunities to volunteer with GDA|TLC in other capacities. Conversely, if we notice that the puppy isn't progressing normally, we need to take action to ensure that the puppy has every opportunity to become a working guide or service dog. It's not

personal! We need to look out for the best interest of the puppies and the program in order to serve the blind, visually impaired, and disabled communities.

If a rehomed dog is ultimately career changed, GDA|TLC will make final decisions regarding which puppy raising family is given the opportunity to adopt the dog. (See more about the career change process below.) When a puppy is rehomed, assuming the rehome was amicable and not due to negligence or lack of raiser compliance, both families can be informed of the dog's progress during formal training, and both are notified when the dog graduates. Typically, the raiser who fostered the dog the longest is invited to accompany the graduate on stage, although members from both families are encouraged to attend the ceremony.

## CAREER CHANGES & RELEASED DOGS

Not every puppy is destined to become a guide dog. If Guide Dogs of America | Tender Loving Canines releases a dog from a guide or service dog training program, it will be evaluated for one of our other training programs. If the dog is not determined to be an appropriate candidate for another training program, or is, but is ultimately released from such program, the puppy raiser is given the option to adopt the dog. Should the raiser choose not to adopt the dog, we maintain a lengthy waiting list of vetted families interested in adopting a released dog. Every dog from our program ends up in a loving home.



a

Here are just a few of the reasons a dog might be career changed:

- Body sensitivity: The puppy/dog is uncomfortable and unable to work in a jacket, vest or harness.
- Undesirable behaviors: Scavenging, poor house manners, reactivity, aggression, fear, poor impulse control.
- Medical: Hip or elbow dysplasia, vision issues, allergies, etc.

## **POTENTIAL BREEDING STOCK**

As GDA|TLC breeds its program dogs in-house, we commonly identify potential breeders from the pool of puppies-in-training. There are a variety of things to consider when evaluating potential breeding stock, including:

- Necessary bloodlines
- Physical soundness
- Medically desired eyes, hips and hearts (must pass health screenings)
- Sound temperament
- Willingness
- Trainability

We'd like to remind raisers that they started raising a puppy to be a guide or service dog, and not to get overly excited about the possibility of the puppy they raised becoming a breeder. The tests are demanding and the requirements are solid and strong. It is not unusual to start with 10 dogs testing as potential breeders, and end up with only one qualifying as a breeding dog.

If a dog is selected to be part of our breeding program, the breeding manager will contact you to discuss the requirements to become a "breeder host" or "breeder keeper."

# CHAPTER 10

## MEDICAL INFORMATION



---

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

---

Guide Dogs of America | Tender Loving Canines has an on-campus Veterinary Department. Our veterinary staff provides services ranging from routine medical care to emergency procedures. GDA|TLC's surgical suite provides our veterinary staff with the facilities to perform many surgical procedures. Spays (Ovariohysterectomies) and neuters (Orchiectomy) are performed on the GDA|TLC campus, along with dental work and other routine surgical procedures.

Unless prior authorization has been given by a GDA|TLC staff member, you are expected to bring your puppy to GDA|TLC for all medical care. If, by prior arrangement with GDA|TLC's Veterinary Department, a puppy needs to be treated by an outside veterinary facility, GDA|TLC may cover all reasonable costs of that medical care.

If you live in an outlying community (more than two hours away), you may be given authorization to take your puppy to your local veterinarian, but you are still required to obtain permission prior to the veterinary visit.

For non-routine/emergency procedures, GDA|TLC will cover all reasonable costs of medical care subject to approval by GDA|TLC management. You'll need to fill out a [veterinary reimbursement form](#) as well.

GDA|TLC is grateful for the efforts and commitment of our puppy raisers and, in every possible case, payment will be approved, provided the care required is not due to improper supervision on the part of the puppy raiser.

"Improper supervision" may include, but is not limited to:

- Failure to leash a puppy when outside the confines of the home.
- Lack of supervision when the puppy is present with other animals, family members or friends.
- Failure to provide a safe environment for the puppy, including removing all toxic materials, environmental barriers or obstacles, or other materials that could be ingested by or in any other way harm the puppy.
- Failure to remove a training ("choke") collar when the puppy is not under immediate supervision.
- Failure to seek medical attention in a timely manner.

All non-routine medical bills will be reviewed by GDA|TLC's management committee and are subject to payment terms ranging from full or partial payment to denial of reimbursement. All decisions are open to discussion and/or negotiation. In order to receive reimbursement for an authorized outside vet visit, you will be responsible for submitting 1) reimbursement form, 2) invoice, and 3) veterinary records. Please allow 4-6 weeks from the time the paperwork is received to the time you receive your reimbursement check.





## DIET

Please follow the school's recommendations for feeding schedules and type of food you may feed your puppy.

From the age of 8 weeks to 4 months, your puppy should be fed three times a day. From 4 months until In-For-Training, your puppy should be fed twice a day. The amount to feed depends on the brand of food and the dog's individual requirements. GDA|TLC feeds a high-quality diet, so the quantity necessary becomes much less.

Please monitor your puppy's weight carefully. Your puppy should have a tummy tuck and a waistline. **You can reference the body condition score chart at the end of the section** for more details on appropriate weight. Labradors and Golden Retrievers tend to gain weight easily. If you have any worries about the amount of weight your puppy is gaining, please contact GDA|TLC.

---

***PLEASE NO FREE FEEDING!** Any food not finished within 15-20 minutes should be picked up. Fresh water should be available at all times.*

---

We DO NOT recommend any dietary supplements; our high-quality food meets all dietary requirements. Do not anything to the puppy's diet without consulting with GDA|TLC.

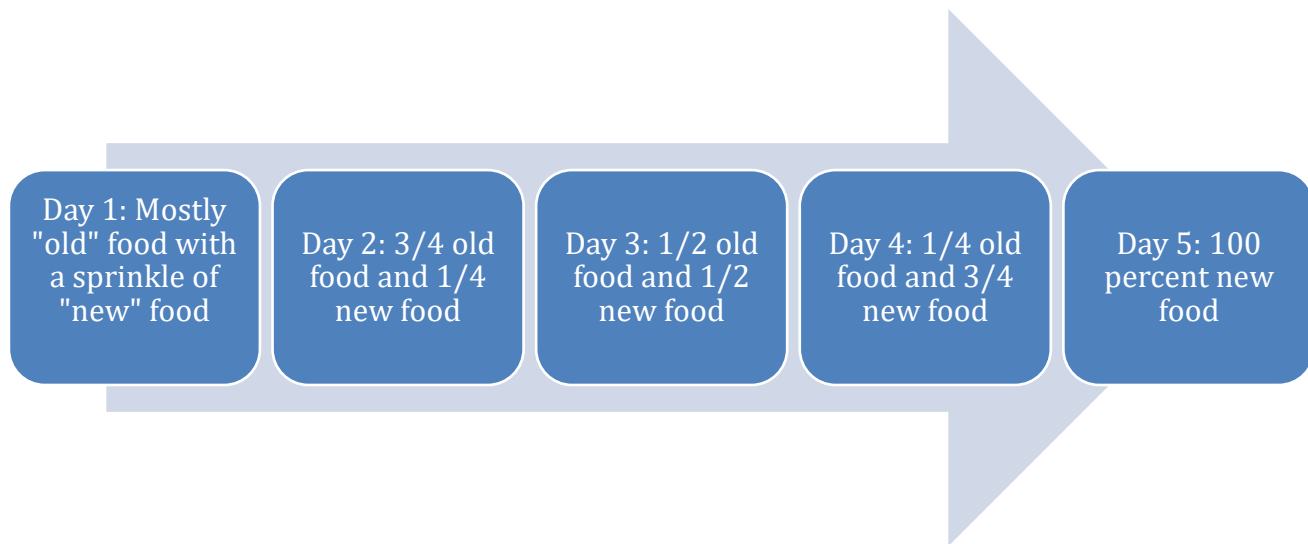
Canned food is not necessary and not recommended. The guide dog in-training will be fed dry food only. It is much easier for your puppy to adjust if he is accustomed to eating only dry food. **PLEASE, NO TABLE SCRAPS.**

If you find that your dog is displaying "picky" eating behavior, please contact the Puppy Department and/or Veterinary Department before coaxing the dog to eat, hand feeding, or adding any powder, broth or other additives to the food.

## TRANSITIONING BETWEEN TYPES OF FOOD.

If you are directed to change the puppy's diet, the transition should take 5-7 days. This slow transition will lessen the chance of diarrhea in response to the new food.

Sample transition schedule:



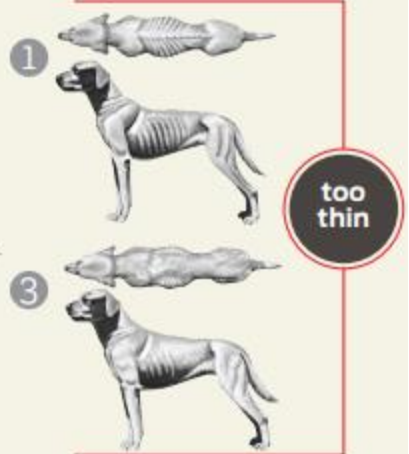
**When transitioning to a new food, some soft stool for 3-7 days is not uncommon.** If your puppy starts to develop soft stool or diarrhea during the transition, you may need to slow the transition down so that it ends up taking 7-8 days to get to 100% "new" food. Most soft stool from dietary transitions resolves on its own in about one week. If you find that the soft stool has not resolved after a week or the diarrhea is worsening, please call the Veterinary Department for assistance.

# Body Condition System

PLEASE NOTE: This chart was developed by and for veterinarians. For specific questions about how to interpret this chart or how to assess your pet's weight, consult your veterinarian.



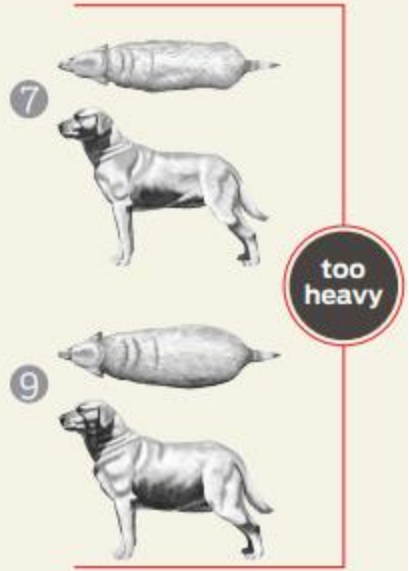
1. Ribs, lumbar vertebrae, pelvic bones and all bony prominences evident from a distance. No discernible body fat. Obvious loss of muscle mass.
2. Ribs, lumbar vertebrae pelvic bones easily visible. No palpable fat. Some evidence of other bony prominence. Minimal loss of muscle mass.
3. Ribs easily palpated and may be visible with no palpable fat. Tops of lumbar vertebrae visible; pelvic bones becoming prominent. Obvious waist and abdominal tuck.



4. Ribs easily palpable, with minimal fat covering. Waist easily noted, viewed from above. Abdominal tuck evident.
5. Ribs palpable, without excess fat covering. Waist observed behind ribs when viewed from above. Abdomen tucked up when viewed from side.



6. Ribs palpable with slight excess fat covering. Waist is discernible viewed from above but is not prominent. Abdominal tuck apparent.
7. Ribs palpable with difficulty; heavy fat cover. Noticeable fat deposits over lumbar area and base of tail. Waist absent or barely visible. Abdominal tuck may be present.
8. Ribs not palpable under very heavy fat cover, or palpable only with significant pressure. Heavy fat deposits over lumbar area and base of tail. Waist absent. No abdominal tuck. Obvious abdominal distention may be present.
9. Massive fat deposits over thorax, spine and base of tail. Waist and abdominal tuck absent. Fat deposits on neck and limbs. Obvious abdominal distention.



## INTERNAL PARASITES

There are several types of internal parasites that your puppy may acquire. Your puppy is proactively treated for the most common types of parasites while he or she is a youngster here in our breeding facility. We ask that you bring a fecal sample in with the puppy when you come in for his 12-week vaccine boosters. This gives us a chance to check for any parasites that may have been missed with the puppy deworming or that the puppy may have picked up in his new adventures. During this fecal examination, several types of parasites can be identified, and treated if need be.

One common internal parasite is the tapeworm. You will be able to observe these tiny worms on a fresh bowel movement. They appear as very small grains of rice in the feces. The intermediate host of tapeworms is the common flea. This means that your puppy must ingest a flea, which is carrying an immature form of the tapeworm, in order to develop adult tapeworms. So, if your puppy has tapeworms, there are fleas in the environment. In addition to treating the tapeworm infection, flea control must be performed at home. It is very important to periodically check a fresh bowel movement for these parasites because the eggs are not easily picked up on a microscopic examination.

## FLEA AND TICK CONTROL

One of the most frustrating problems facing all of us who have dogs or cats is flea control. In Southern California, fleas are a year-round problem. Fleas are especially prevalent during the summer months and anytime we experience a sudden spike in weather temperature. Flea control is incredibly important because, not only are they a nuisance, but they can transmit disease to both animals and humans and cause allergic dermatitis.



One adult flea can start biting your pup within seconds of landing on him. Within 24 hours of its first blood meal, this one flea can begin laying eggs at a rate of 40 to 50 per day, which is 1,500 eggs in one month just from one adult flea. That's why it's critical to kill fleas quickly, before they can lay eggs.

Unfortunately, merely treating the puppy is not the answer, since most of the flea's life cycle occurs off the animal. Even if a flea-infested area is vacated by humans and animals, the pupae remain unhatched until vibrations of an animal or person entering the environment activates the hatching. Body heat and exhaled carbon dioxide then attract hungry fleas.

Another external parasite that may prey on animals and humans are ticks. Ticks are responsible for transmitting a variety of diseases including Lyme disease. Though ticks are more common in wet environments, they are present in all states.

If you plan on taking your puppy out for a hike in an area with ticks, examine your puppy carefully when you return home, and remove any ticks you may find.

### GDA|TLC STANDARD FLEA AND TICK PRODUCTS

Puppies leave GDA|TLC with two doses of Frontline Gold, a once-a-month topical solution applied directly to the skin at the shoulder blades. Part fur and apply entire contents of tube in one spot. These products are absorbed and distributed through the oil glands onto the dog's skin. When fleas bite your dog (yes, they still bite), the fleas ingest the product and die. Wait 48 hours after a bath to apply. Do not bathe dog or allow dog to swim for 48 hours after application.

After using the first two doses of topical Frontline Gold, puppies are switched to NexGard, a chewable given orally once every three months. When fleas and ticks feed, they ingest the preventative product and die. There are no restrictions on bathing or swimming when administering this product.

Flea and tick preventative should be applied/given on the 1<sup>st</sup> of the month, unless otherwise directed.

### HEARTWORM DISEASE AND PREVENTION

Heartworm disease is a serious and potentially fatal infection in dogs that can also rarely affect humans. The cause of the disease is a worm (transmitted by mosquitos), which, as an adult, lives in the right side of the heart and adjacent blood vessels. Most dog owners don't realize their pet has a problem until the disease is well advanced. It is only in the later stages, when the disease is difficult to treat, that animals show the typical signs of advanced heartworm disease. These signs include a chronic cough, labored breathing, listlessness, fatigue, and loss of condition.

---

***THE BEST WAY TO CONTROL  
HEARTWORM DISEASE IS TO PREVENT IT.***

---

Your puppy will be sent home with a supply of heartworm preventative called Triheart Plus. You will be given a starter pack with your puppy go home kit with enough medication for the first six months you have your puppy. It is clearly written on the envelopes which day of the month, and which tablet you will need to give your puppy. When your puppy comes into the kennels at six months, you will get the heartworm for the remaining months you have your puppy. If you should forget to give a dose, please contact the Vet Department immediately for instructions. If you should run out before your puppy comes in for training, please call the Vet Department and we will send you more.

It's important that this medication be given on-schedule. Set an appointment reminder on your phone or mobile device, or make a note on your mobile calendar so you are sure to remember.

## HEALTH MAINTENANCE

All puppies should get used to thorough grooming procedures at a young age. Begin to establish a grooming routine as soon as you bring your puppy home. Please reference Chapter 6 of this guide for information on getting your puppy comfortable with body handling and grooming.

### EARS

After grooming your dog's coat, examine his ears. The pinna is the outermost portion of the dog's ear. Each pinna should be free of dirt and wax and there should be no mats at the base. The ear canal has two parts: the vertical canal, which you can look down into, and the horizontal canal, which leads to the tympanic membrane (ear drum). Checking the ears frequently for redness, built up debris and/or bad odor will catch a problem early and prevent a severe infection.

\*\*Do not put anything in the ears or attempt to clean or flush ears without prior instruction from the veterinary department. We always recommend that a veterinarian examine the ear canals and ear drums PRIOR to instilling any liquids or ointments into the ear. Many seemingly safe substances may cause hearing loss if they are administered on a damaged or compromised eardrum.

### NAILS

Your puppy's nails are very tender, especially the quick, which supplies blood to the nail. The quick is the V-shaped blood supply that runs along the center of the nail. If your puppy's nails are cut incorrectly, he could be hurt unnecessarily and probably won't want his nails clipped again. A puppy that is well exercised on hard ground may not need his nails clipped, since they may naturally wear down on their own. Nails that are too long can impede the way your dog walks and can cause pain if they curl under the pad. The easiest way to determine if they are too long is by listening to your dog walk. If your dog's nails click on the ground when he walks, they need to be trimmed.

Dewclaws are nails that are higher up on the inner portion of the dog's wrist. These nails cannot be naturally worn down and require trimming. Be careful that they do not get so long that they curl under into the dog's skin. Your puppy should be brought into GDA|TLC for regular nail trimming.



## TEETH

Your puppy will lose his deciduous (baby) teeth anytime between 4 and 6 months old. Cutting his new teeth rarely causes any difficulty, but you should check for any malformation of the new teeth. Sometimes the adult teeth start to come in before the puppy teeth have fallen out. If left untreated, this can cause infections or malformations of the puppy's bite. Please report any unusual findings to GDA|TLC.

Checking your puppy's teeth should be part of your routine grooming regimen. All tooth surfaces should be white and smooth. Plaque buildup leads to tartar, so any plaque buildup should be removed before tartar forms. Doggie toothbrushes work quite well, but remember to use only dog toothpaste. All of these procedures should be well tolerated by your puppy with patience and practice.

## COMMON MEDICAL CONCERNS

### KENNEL COUGH

Infectious Canine Tracheobronchitis (“kennel cough”) is a highly contagious airborne disease and causes inflammation of the trachea and bronchi and can affect dogs of any age. This infection spreads rapidly among animals that are closely confined, as in a hospital or kennel setting (thus the name kennel cough). Causative factors include viral and bacterial agents, and the typical incubation period is 5 to 10 days.



The primary sign is a harsh, dry cough, which is aggravated by activity or excitement. The sound is similar to that of clearing one’s throat as if something were stuck in it. The cough leads to retching or gagging in attempts to clear small amounts of mucus from the throat. The cough is easily induced by gentle pressure over the larynx or trachea.

Symptoms typically last anywhere from 1 - 2 weeks, or longer. During this time, we ask that you keep your dog away from other GDA|TLC dogs and that you do not bring your dog to puppy class, the kennel, or other GDA|TLC events. Since our puppies-in-training are all vaccinated for kennel cough, the cough usually resolves on its own and rarely requires cough suppressants and/or antibiotics. If you notice extreme lethargy, lack of appetite, and/or green-yellow nasal discharge, please notify the veterinary department immediately as these might be signs of canine influenza which requires medical intervention and possibly hospitalization.

### VOMITING/DIARRHEA

If your puppy is vomiting or has diarrhea, please contact the Vet Department so they can advise you how best to move forward. Vomiting and/or diarrhea can sometimes be symptoms of an intestinal blockage or serious viral infections such as parvo. If your puppy has diarrhea or is vomiting, he should not be around other GDA|TLC dogs (including boarding in the kennel), and not attend GDA|TLC events until the puppy has been medically cleared to do so by the Vet Department.

## FOREIGN BODY INGESTION

Any object a dog ingests other than dog food is considered a foreign body. Some dogs pass these with little to no ill effects, while others can become obstructed which, if not medically or surgically treated in a timely manner, can result in death.

Symptoms can include:

- Sudden loss of appetite
- Repeated vomiting
- Drooling
- Abnormal bowel movements
- Extreme lethargy
- Hunched stance or reluctance to lie down

The best way to prevent ingestion of a foreign body is to prevent access to objects that can be swallowed. Allow your dog to only chew on toys that cannot be swallowed, shredded, or chewed up. In other words... **supervise, supervise, supervise!**

---

*If you notice that your puppy has eaten something foreign such as a toy, clothing, rug, a large chunk of a Nylabone, rat bait, fertilizer, anti-freeze, coins, chocolate, human food that may be toxic, gum, medication, etc. **PLEASE notify the Vet Department immediately.** Swift medical intervention might prevent the need for surgery.*

---

Unless prior authorization has been given by a GDA|TLC staff member, you are expected to bring your puppy to GDA|TLC for all medical care.

**Please do not administer any medications to your puppy without specific instructions from GDA|TLC.**

## **BITES AND STINGS**

Many times young puppies are just a little too curious and investigate the tiniest things such as insects and spiders. A bite or sting from one of these creatures can result in an allergic reaction, ranging from mild to severe. A mild reaction can cause localized swelling, while a more severe reaction can cause hives and anaphylaxis, a rapid and severe “whole body” allergic reaction that can lead to death. If you suspect your puppy was stung or ate an insect, please call GDA|TLC and we will advise you as to treatment.

## **BLADDER INFECTIONS/URINARY TRACT INFECTIONS (UTI)**

Bladder infections have several causes, but the symptoms are usually as follows: frequent urination, difficulty controlling urination, blood tinged urine, straining to urinate and increased thirst. If your puppy is older than 12 weeks, and has been successfully housebroken and suddenly begins to have “accidents,” or he doesn’t seem aware of when he needs to urinate, contact GDA|TLC and we will obtain a urine sample for testing.

If your puppy in training is less than 12 weeks old and is peeing frequently and/or having accidents, please contact the Puppy Department to rule out any potty training or behavioral issues as a cause. If the Puppy Department determines that medical testing may be indicated, you may be referred to the Veterinary Department for a physical exam and testing.

## **ORAL PAPILOMAS**

Oral papillomas are caused by canine papillomavirus type 1 and are most often seen in dogs under 2 years of age. Dogs can be exposed to the virus through direct contact such as oral play or by indirect contact such as sharing toys and bowls. After exposure, the oral papillomas, aka “warts”, appear within 1-2 months. They first appear as small eraser sized cauliflower-like raised pink growths on the lips, gums, tongue and roof of mouth. Occasionally the warts can be seen in other locations such as the limbs, feet or neck. There may be as few as one or two warts or as many as a dozen or more. Over the next 1-2 months, the bumps will lighten and turn a gray color before eventually falling off on their own. Since the growths are benign and the immune system most often clears the virus within a couple months, medical and surgical intervention is usually not indicated. However, in severe cases antibiotics and other treatments might be warranted.

While the virus is contagious to dogs, it is not contagious to humans or other species. The GDA|TLC kennel department has a “no boarding” policy while dogs have visible papillomas. If you already had a boarding reservation scheduled or planned to be out of town and your dog suddenly develops papillomas, please contact the boarding and puppy departments to work together to find a solution. Whether or not a GDA|TLC dog may attend puppy class with visible papillomas is up to the discretion of the class instructor, though most classes will not allow a dog to attend class.

Diagnosis is usually made by a physical examination. The most common treatment is benign neglect aka “do nothing”.

## HOT SPOTS

The medical term for a “hot spot” is pyotraumatic dermatitis. This term indicates inflamed painful moist skin resulting from excessive scratching. The inciting incident may be bug bites (especially fleas), allergies, rough housing and chewing on skin by other dogs, retained shampoo under the fur, and/or hypothyroidism. Hot spot lesions usually appear as large, raw, moist, inflamed and sometimes bleeding areas of skin. A hot spot may be easily confused with a superficial skin infection and the treatments for the two conditions differ, so if you suspect either a hot spot and/or a skin infection, please schedule an appointment with the GDA|TLC Veterinary Department so that the proper diagnosis may be made.



While you are waiting for your vet appointment, do your best to discourage licking and chewing at the lesion. Some helpful suggestions are putting on an E-collar, putting on a loose t-shirt to cover the lesion, offer a distraction such as a bone to chew on or a play toy. It is important to keep the area dry. Please do not apply any shampoos or ointments prior to your vet visit as these might interfere with proper diagnosis.

If the veterinarian determines that a hot spot is present, the area will be shaved and cleaned and antibiotic ointment will most likely be prescribed.

## POISONS

Many common house and garden plants may be poisonous to both people and pets. Virtually all plants, if ingested, may cause some degree of gastrointestinal signs such as drooling, vomiting, and diarrhea. Some may cause more serious signs such as skin rashes, allergic reactions, disorientation, seizures, and sudden death.

Steps to follow if you suspect your pet has been poisoned:

- Quickly determine the amount and type of poison the animal contacted.
- Call the GDA|TLC veterinary department or emergency line IMMEDIATELY. \*\*\*If your puppy is actively seizing or has collapsed, please head to your nearest emergency clinic and call GDA|TLC on your way.
- Carefully follow the instructions given to you by GDA|TLC or your veterinarian.



---

***This is not a complete list of potentially fatal plants. For a complete list of poisonous plants, visit the [ASPCA.org](http://ASPCA.org)***

---

- Common potentially fatal plants: oleander, azalea, sago palm, aloe, castor bean, lilies, marijuana, tulip bulbs, narcissus bulbs, autumn crocus, kalanchoe, yew, amaryllis, angel's trumpet, common foxglove, and cyclamen.

We recommend that you identify the plants on your property and refer to GDA|TLC to find out if any plants on your property are hazardous to animals. Or take a clipping of any questionable plants to your local garden or nursery store for identification.

**Pet Poison Helpline:** 1-855-764-7661 (free if you mention you have a service dog in-training)

**ASPCA Poison Control:** 1-888-426-4435

**California Poison Control:** 1-800-222-1222

## EMERGENCIES

The best way to recognize an emergency with your dog is to know how he usually looks and acts. Knowing what is normal for your dog will help you recognize when something is “not right.” The next step is to be able to assess when the situation is really an emergency.

The following are some examples of emergencies:

- Bleeding that will not stop within a few minutes of applying pressure
- Head trauma
- Seizures, altered mental state
- Collapse or loss of consciousness
- Choking or difficulty breathing
- Snake bite
- Heat stroke or burns
- Trauma – hit by a car, dog fight
- Broken limb or inability to move legs
- Eye injury – very painful, severe squinting, cloudiness of the eye, bleeding within the eye
- Inability to pass urine for more than 12 hours
- Possible poisoning – fertilizer, rat bait, anti-freeze, chocolate, xylitol, medications, etc.
- Severe cough accompanied by severe lethargy, refusal to eat and green-yellow nasal discharge
- Profuse and/or acute vomiting/diarrhea



GDA|TLC provides emergency assistance from a GDA|TLC staff member via telephone 24 hours a day. If you suspect earlier in the day that your dog is having a medical issue, it is best that you contact the Veterinary Department BEFORE they close at 4:30pm. If your dog is in crisis and it is in the dog's best interest to be taken immediately to a veterinarian, please do this and call us immediately (on the way to the emergency clinic).

---

***PLEASE contact GDA with all non-emergency situations before taking your dog to an outside veterinarian.***

---

Ear infections, limping (with no visible injury or swelling), hot spots, itching, chewing at paws, eye discharge (without squinting), skin lesions, urinating frequently, urinary accidents, soft stool etc. are not considered emergencies.

## HOLIDAY CAUTION

Jingle bells, chocolate candy, turkey and tinsel all bring merry thoughts of the holiday season, but for our curious canine friends, holiday tidings can be dangerous. Puppies are naturally curious and explore everything by tasting. Ingesting small items such as bells, tinsel, ornament hooks, etc., can cause foreign body intestinal obstruction, which is extremely serious and life threatening. Remove all such enticing items from your puppy's reach (you'd be surprised what they can get!).



Chocolate candy poses a risk to dogs because they lack the ability to break down a substance in chocolate, which can be toxic to them. If your puppy ingests a large quantity of chocolate, contact the Veterinary Department or GDA|TLC emergency line IMMEDIATELY.

Turkey with its soft, splintering bones can also cause serious damage to the stomach or intestinal linings or obstruct the digestive tract. Holiday garbage with all of its tasty food scraps should be safely stored out of reach. Eating a large quantity of garbage can cause severe digestive problems including life-threatening pancreatic inflammation.

Strings of electric lights should be hung out of reach. Chewing on wires can cause painful burns to the mouth, as well as result in electrical shock. Celebrate the holidays by giving your puppy safe toys



(Kong toys, hard rubber balls or toys). Enjoy the holidays, but be aware of the extra dangers that exist.

Independence Day is another holiday to approach with caution. While fireworks offer a dazzling display for people, they can be unsettling to dogs. **DO NOT TAKE ANY PUPPY TO A FIREWORKS DISPLAY.**

If you can hear fireworks from your home, take the opportunity to create a positive association in your puppy's mind by cheerfully celebrating the unusual noise. Set aside some of his dinner and happily offer a piece or two with each "BOOM!" Play his favorite game as fireworks crack in the distance. If he seems worried, offer confident reassurance, but don't coddle him.

If your family plans include attending a fireworks display, so you must leave the puppy home alone, confine him to a crate. Insulate the house from outside noise as much as possible. Close the windows, kick-up the air conditioning, and leave the radio or television on at a higher-than-normal volume. You can even leave the puppy something fun to do - like work to extract a portion of his dinner from a well-packed, stuffed KONG toy.

## VACCINES

GDA|TLC's vaccination schedule is subject to change based on research findings and developments in veterinary medicine. Always refer to the vaccine schedule given when you picked up your foster puppy. In general, our puppies under 1 year of age are vaccinated as follows:

<b>AGE</b>	<b>VACCINE</b>
6-weeks	DA2PP and Corona
8-weeks	Corona + Bordetella (Bordetella is boosted annually at GDA TLC.)
9-weeks	DA2PP
12-weeks	DA2PP and Influenza
15-weeks	DA2PP and Influenza
16-week	Rabies (If not given with 15-week DA2PP.)

## Adult Vaccine Schedule

(Dogs over 1 year of age.)

- **DAPP**
  - Due 1 year from the date of the last DA2PP
  - Location: under the skin in the RIGHT FRONT shoulder/leg
  - Booster again in 3 years
  
- **Bordetella**
  - Location: in the nose
  - Boostered annually.
  
- **Rabies**
  - Due one year from the date of the 16 week rabies
  - Location: under the skin in the RIGHT REAR hip/leg
  - Booster again in 3 years

## Vaccine Reactions

Copied and adapted from <https://www.avma.org>

It is common for dogs to experience some or all of the following mild side effects after receiving a vaccine, usually starting within hours of the vaccination. **If these side effects last for more than a day or two**, or appear to cause the puppy significant discomfort, please contact the Veterinary Department. Signs to watch for include:

- Discomfort and local swelling at the vaccination site
  
- Mild fever
  
- Decreased appetite and activity

- Sneezing, mild coughing, “snotty nose” or other respiratory signs may occur 2-5 days after your pet receives an intranasal vaccine

More serious, but less common side effects, such as allergic reactions, may occur within minutes to hours after vaccination. These reactions can be life threatening and are medical emergencies.

---

*If the puppy experiences any of the “rare” symptoms listed below, please contact the Vet Department or GDA emergency line **immediately** as your puppy may require medical intervention.*

---

- Persistent vomiting or diarrhea
- Itchy skin that may seem bumpy (“hives”)
- Swelling of the muzzle and around the face, neck, or eyes
- Severe coughing or difficulty breathing
- Collapse

# CHAPTER 11

## RETURN FOR FORMAL TRAINING



---

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

---

# RETURN FOR “FORMAL TRAINING”

## GDA|TLC Formal Guidework Training Phases

In an effort to keep puppy raisers and area leaders informed about the progress of dogs in formal training, Guide Dog of America (GDA|TLC) provides its raising community with an outline of the course the dogs work through to eventually become a qualified guide dog.

In the early stages of training, the dogs are patterned for a variety of responses. Guide Dog Mobility Instructors (GDMIs) use a high rate of positive reinforcement to shape desirable behaviors. Our dogs are trained with a well-balanced blend of reinforcement designed to promote the optimal relationship with their future partner. Guide dog training is a systematic and often seamless process. Each dog is treated as an individual and progresses at his own pace from one phase to the next as skills are learned.

Phases can last 2-4 weeks (or more), depending on the individual dog. At times, it may seem like some dogs advance quickly through phases and others linger. Neither situation necessarily indicates success or failure in their development. If a dog remains in a certain phase longer than average, it may mean that the dog is working on proficiency in one area, or training or veterinary staff are investigating a potential behavioral or health issue that needs extra time. Puppy raisers are encouraged to be flexible and refrain from being discouraged if progress seems slow or overly optimistic if progress seems quick.

Puppy raisers are also advised against plotting out on a calendar an anticipated graduation date. Once a dog begins formal training, it can last three to six months, and some dogs may be at GDA|TLC longer if a suitable match is not available for them.

GDA|TLC’s training model allows GDMIs and/or kennel staff to spend comprehensive, one-on-one time, every day, developing each dog.

In the following phase descriptions, GDA|TLC shares training exercises and verbal cues that are not taught in the raiser homes. The success of the GDA|TLC program depends on all raisers’ support. Raisers are expected to *only* teach the behaviors outlined by their area leader, Canine Development, and GDA|TLC puppy raising materials.

---

*It is important for puppy raisers to refrain from using these words and teaching these exercises in their home. Raisers who attempt to give their dog “a head start” by teaching verbal or physical cues discussed in these phases may, in fact, negatively impact the dog’s potential to become a guide.*

---

GDA|TLC is successful due in large part to its puppy raising volunteers. Puppy raisers socialize and teach very important fundamental aspects that lay the foundation for a compatible guide dog. Mature puppies come into formal training reliable in the home, relieving on cue, responsive to obedience verbal cues, are comfortable in the environment, and loving and trusting of people. GDA|TLC is extremely appreciative of the valuable role puppy raisers play in enabling us to fulfill our mission.

## PHASE ZERO: ARRIVAL PERIOD

Before formal training begins, the dogs are introduced to training staff, campus walks, and the formal training program.

### **Health Screening**

During this important transitional period, each dog receives a preliminary physical exam, performed by our veterinarian. Most dogs that enter training are in excellent condition, although some may require medication for minor ailments such as an ear or eye infection.

During the first week on campus, dogs receive the following:

- Orthopedic x-rays (if not already completed)
- An eye exam by a veterinary ophthalmology specialist (if not already completed)
- An accurate weight
- Vaccines, if necessary based on the veterinary records

Once physical examinations are finished, each guide dog candidate is assigned to a group of dogs, called a “string.” Instructors work with 5-10 dogs at a time, which enables them to get the dogs out daily, Monday through Friday. A string can range from 20 to 30 dogs, depending on staffing capabilities and the upcoming class schedule.

During this introductory period, each dog’s personality, manageability and general temperament is assessed to help prepare instructors how to motivate and teach each dog most effectively.

### **Week Zero Activities**

- Walks on campus and playtime in an enclosed free run area
- Doubling kennelmates that play well together

- Daily grooming
- Medication administration, as needed
- Human and dog interactive play or relationship building sessions
- Introduction to group community run
- Kennel enrichment activities

## Kennel Socialization

A primary focus of our kennel staff is to care for and provide kennel enrichment for the dogs. Some enrichment activities take place daily for every dog. Other activities occur intermittently, and certain activities are targeted toward specific dogs, e.g. dogs

that are slow to adjust to kennel life;

boarding or retired guides; career change dogs, etc.

---

*Kennel enrichment activities are continuously evolving and the kennel staff is always coming up with ways to entertain and stimulate the dogs while they stay at the kennels.*

---

Enrichment activities include:

- Bones, chewable toys, food-stuffed Kongs and pupsicles
- Baby pools filled with water, a toy, or playground equipment
- Behavior training for dogs that need additional socialization
- Exercise: walks and play time in enclosed areas
- Cuddle time

Training staff carefully observes each new string of dogs to make sure that each dog makes as smooth an adjustment to the kennels as possible. Selected dogs may receive any additional attention in the following areas as needed:

- Extra play sessions in community run
- Additional walks on campus
- Supervised time in offices



- Any specialized programs specific to the needs of that dog

## PHASE ONE: FORMAL TRAINING BEGINS – ON CAMPUS AND IN TOWN

### **Obedience Responses and Teaching Focus Around Distractions**

In order to successfully teach guidework, and for a client to easily manage their guide, collar response is important. Collar response means that a dog readily follows or yields to even slight tension on the collar. For example, it is a useful tool that allows the instructor to physically cue the dog from its following position to move left or right in guidework. Alternatively, it discourages a guide from pulling in the collar on leash with a client.

### **Formal Obedience**

The verbal cues “sit,” “down,” “heel,” “come” and “stay” are introduced as precise positions in relation to the handler. Precision is important so the dog does not interfere with or disorient the client. The “come” recall is practiced on leash in a variety of areas and off leash in enclosed areas.

Focus is taught before and during basic obedience work. Distractions are used to teach focus and concentration toward the job. Distractions may include: other dogs, food, solicitous people, scents and toys. Any dog that demonstrates below average ability to progress around distractions may receive additional attention in the following areas: different types of play sessions; higher value food reward to increase the dog’s motivation to work for the handler; extra time relaxing with their instructor to develop a closer relationship or additional abbreviated obedience sessions without distractions to improve collar response.

### **Socialization**

All dogs are introduced to loading and unloading from crates in the training van. They get experience jumping in and out of the crates in the van before going on rides. Dogs then experience riding comfortably and quietly, and waiting quietly in the van for their turn at a training route. If a dog makes a slow adjustment to the van crates, he/she is given additional or specialized socialization to help him/her transition.

### **Body Handling Acceptance**

Dogs are exposed to comprehensive, hands-on body handling, which includes grooming and paw handling, pilling, bathing, ear and teeth cleaning, feeding, and play sessions that are conducive to interaction with a handler who is vision- impaired (e.g. no excessive vocalization, no jumping up or running into a person). Any

issues with body handling are evaluated and programs developed to improve issues are implemented as needed.

## **Introduction to the Harness**

Dogs are given a calm introduction to being harnessed. They initially stand, then walk around in harness as well as wear it in relaxed settings. Dogs with above average sensitivity to wearing the harness are put on a socialization program to improve their response and comfort level while wearing the harness.

## **Pattern Training**

Pattern training is a method of introducing guidework behaviors to the young dog in a very positive manner. The instructor cues the correct guiding behavior to the dog, allowing the dog to complete the exercise without any mistakes. In this way the instructor keeps all guidework-related learning very upbeat for the dog. Obedience is used during guidework to regain attention on the work as needed. Once the dog is attentive, guidework pattern training resumes. Pattern training lasts for several sessions (approximately two to three weeks) and is gradually weaned off as the dog gains a better understanding of its responsibility. During pattern training, dogs are worked in a variety of environments, sometimes even challenging areas. However, advanced environments, such as heavy urban area with crowds, loud noise, etc., are avoided.

Dogs are introduced to the following guidework behaviors during patterning:

- Stopping at up-curbs and down-curbs, regardless of the type of curb or wheelchair ramp.
- Clearing for the handler on the right and left sides as well as above dog's head.
- Crossing streets on a line that efficiently reaches the up curb on the other side.
- Maintaining consistent pace and drive with the verbal cue "forward."
- How to respond to the various uses of the 'hop-up' verbal cue – resuming or increasing pace; moving closer to a stopping point or for re-focus.
- Stopping and standing calmly after the verbal cue "halt."
- Leading the handler in a 90-degree turn to the right and picking up the new travel line on "right."
- Leading the handler in a 90-degree turn to the left and picking up the new travel line on "left."

## **Developing Physical Agility**

- **Back Up Chute** - Dogs do not know how to naturally move backwards. Coordination training in how to physically back up is introduced at this time and continues for several weeks to prepare the dogs for future traffic avoidance training. In traffic avoidance, dogs are taught to stop, hold, and back up (if needed) in a straight line while facing the oncoming vehicle. The backup chute activity teaches dogs the mechanics of backing up in a very positive and fun way.
- **Obstacle Course** - On campus obstacle courses are convenient opportunities for the dog to learn how to safely navigate past objects. The instructor patterns the dog to move past the obstacles with caution. Dogs are encouraged to walk slightly ahead of the instructor. Early on, the courses are designed so that new dogs do not need to stop on the course.

## **PHASE TWO: IN TOWN AND RESPONSIBLE LEAD**

### **Obedience and Distraction Training**

General collar responses and formal obedience responses continue to develop. More challenging distractions are introduced at a closer proximity, including various dog breeds, food, solicitous people, and unusual scents.

The verbal cue “over here” is introduced. This cues the dog to move from heel position, behind the handler’s back, to the right side of the handler in order to walk safely through a door that opens to the left (hinge on left). This is also helpful when going through revolving doors and store turnstiles.

### **Body Handling Acceptance**

Body handling acceptance continues to be developed and improved. Grooming, pilling, bathing, ear cleaning, teeth cleaning, feeding, and playing are done to simulate client handling. The dog is taught to lie down and roll over in a variety of settings for inspection and care as needed.

### **Kennel Adjustment and Routine**

Kennel staff continue to focus on kennel enrichment activities, relaxing time in community run, grooming and campus walks. Specialized programs continue such as harness socialization, etc.

### **Wearing the Harness**

By now, the dogs are comfortable wearing and working in the harness. Any dogs with sensitivity to wearing the harness are put on specialized programs.

## **Pattern Training Progression**

Instructors now allow the dog more freedom to make decisions and make some mistakes. When errors begin to occur, instructors show the dog the correct answer before the dog gets confused. Basic level guidework responses are directed as a client might do. The dog experiences all guidework behaviors and the instructor still patterns any advanced responses.

Guidework responses progress to the extent that the dog can respond to each verbal cue consistently with minimal leash gestures or leash use and maintain a straight line of travel with the instructor under blindfold. The dog learns to ignore the handler's body position or movements and to compensate for some as needed.

## **Physical Agility**

Programs continue as in Phase 1.

## **Responsible Lead Session**

In order to reinforce what the dog has learned, responsible lead lessons for each dog occur at the end of pattern training. This session occurs on a long straight path. As in the planned distraction route, responsible lead involves "set-ups" as a means to reinforce a dog's good focus past distractions or remind a dog how to achieve the same.

## **Obstacle Course Progression**

Most dogs are ready to guide through the obstacle course, and are collar cued by the instructor to move as a finished guide might move. If not ready to work in harness, dogs continue to walk through the obstacle course on leash. Course design becomes more difficult, requiring more angled clearance moves by the dogs, but not requiring a stop.

## **PHASE THREE: PRELIMINARY TESTING**

### **Preliminary Obedience Testing**

Focus and responses of the following are assessed:

- Dogs are expected to understand and consistently respond to "sit," "down," "heel," "come" and "stay" amid mild distractions with a single verbal cue.
- Understanding of "close," and the ability to settle.

- Appropriate response to collar cues.
- Walking in harness when handler is using a cane.
- Appropriate greetings with dogs and people.
- Demonstration of food refusal.
- General ease of body handling.

## **Obedience and Distraction Training**

Collar and praise responses continue to develop. Reliable responses and focus continue to develop in various environments (formal, informal and during guidework). Dogs generally require minimal repeat verbal or leash cues. Instructor starts to mimic client handling more.

## **Preliminary Guidework Testing**

An instructor works the dog under blindfold on an urban/suburban area route, a distance of approximately 8-10 blocks. Dogs must demonstrate a basic understanding of safe, reliable guidework skills.

- Dogs are expected to respond appropriately at up-curbs and down-curbs, maintain focus with a consistent lead and pace, and show an initial awareness to obstacle avoidance.
- Demonstrate reliable response to basic guidework verbal cues, handler body position and gestures.

Dogs that pass preliminary blindfold testing progress to advanced guidework training. Dogs that do not pass or demonstrate weaknesses in the basic fundamentals are given additional training time and are re-tested when ready.

## **Body Handling Acceptance**

Continues as in Phase 1 & 2.

## **Guidework Training**

The dogs are comfortable wearing and working in the harness. Individual dogs that still have problems wearing a harness would be a concern, but may still be kept on socialization programs if there is continued improvement.

## **Pattern Training**

Most dogs assume the majority of the basic responsibilities of guidework at this point and no longer need patterning. The dogs generally respond to “forward,” and lead out and maintain drive on their own or with an occasional leash or verbal prompt as needed. They respond to turn cues; pivot and drive out of turns; and they maintain line during movement. Responsibility in work responses is gradually increased and verified.

## **Physical Agility Programs**

Continues as in Phase 1 & 2.

## **Obstacle Course Progression**

Dogs guide in harness through the obstacle course with leash/collar cues as necessary. Course design becomes more difficult, requiring even more angled clearance moves by the dogs.

Kennel staff continue to focus on kennel enrichment, relaxing time in community run, grooming and campus walks.

## **PHASE FOUR: INTELLIGENT DISOBEDIENCE INTRODUCTION**

### **Guidework Training**

The dogs now have full freedom to make decisions and some mistakes with normal guidework responses. When errors occur, instructors continue to show the dog the correct answer before confusion sets in. Instructors still pattern challenging and advanced guiding decisions and responses. Working past challenging animal and food distractions continues.

Instructors often “spot” each other (for safety) and practice short blindfold sessions with their respective dogs. This gives them valuable information regarding what guidework behaviors are strong and what need further development in an individual dog. Practice routes that follow these blindfold sessions focus on development of needed areas and reinforcement of established responses.

### **Intelligent Disobedience Training Begins**

Some clearances now require a stop. Intelligent disobedience responses are introduced after successful preliminary testing. Intelligent disobedience is when a guide dog purposely does not respond to a handler’s guidework verbal cues or physical gestures because it is either unsafe or impossible to follow through with the response.

Addressing errors is now introduced for basic clearance work. Dogs are given an opportunity to re-work the area after being shown the error.

## **Obstacle Course Progression Continues**

An overhead clearance is any obstacle that is above the dog's head. Dogs are initially taught to target this type of clearance. The dogs are then taught to look up for overhead clearances through a graduated approach (teaching bar starts low and is gradually raised as dog gains proficiency).

## **Socialization**

Extra socialization assignments are done with individual dogs as needed. Some examples: harness or surface sensitive dogs, dogs that are reluctant to relieve on leash, etc.

Kennel techs focus on additional relaxation sessions for all dogs as training progresses. These sessions may include one or several of the following activities: community run time, kennel enrichment programs, grooming, individual play sessions, office time at staff desks, and relaxing campus walks.

## **PHASE FIVE –TRAFFIC TRAINING & INITIAL BUILDING WORK**

### **Advanced Obedience and Distraction Training**

New animal and common dog interest distractions (e.g. scent, cat, etc.) are sought out and responses are evaluated.

Distraction interests for individual dogs are worked on separately (e.g. squirrels, birds, etc.).

### **Guidework Training**

Routes continue in suburban areas and may progress to downtown urban areas. Building exposure is introduced (e.g. stair work, elevators, tight clearance work on slick floors, etc.),

Focus on improving any weak responses noted at preliminary blindfold testing and working the dogs at a pace and pull that is appropriate for a client.

### **Indoor Mall and Store Training**

- Slower pace for more cautious work past store displays and shoppers.
- Crowded aisles.

- Elevators.
- Multiple stairways (up and down).
- Various colors and textures of slick, shiny floors.
- Patience is reinforced for standing in line, working with a cashier, etc.
- Work past food held low, on seats/benches, or on ground (food court).

## **Traffic Introduction and Training**

First, during an exposure lesson, dogs are introduced to traffic safety problems and shown how to respond to them via leash and collar cues. Dogs learn to stop, hold their line when stopped, and back up on their line when a vehicle gets too close.

During a subsequent lesson, dogs are given more responsibility in making emergency decisions with traffic problems. Dogs learn to decide when to stop, hold their line, and back up on their travel line for safety of the team. Dogs learn to maintain position, face the vehicle, and to proceed on the original line when danger has passed.

Lots of support, praise and food reward are provided on these routes to reinforce the decisions and instill confidence in the dogs.

## **Total Barricade Training**

Dogs are taught to show the handler any objects (most often parked vehicles in driveways) that completely block the travel path (sidewalk) and are then taught how to work safely around them.

## **Escalator Introductions and Training – Approach, Board, Ride & Exit**

Dogs are taught how to safely approach the moving handrails, step onto moving stairs (escalator), maintain a safe stance, ride the escalator, and exit safely the moving stairs with the appropriate energy.

**NOTE: Puppies are NOT to ride escalators.**

## **Platform Edge Intro and Exposure Work**

Dogs learn to avoid significant drop-offs that mimic subway and rail platform edges.

## **Obstacle Course Progression**



Dogs guide through challenging clearance courses as more finished guides. Course design becomes increasingly more difficult and requires continued development of problem solving skills and intelligent disobedience responses.

Advanced clearance problems that were first introduced to the dogs on the campus obstacle course are now sought out on real environment routes. Situations continue to be set up to reinforce both cautious navigation and intelligent disobedience.

### **Body Handling Acceptance**

New handlers are regularly added to body handling sessions. Any issues that are still present at this stage are concerning and may interfere with a dog's viability as a guide dog.

### **Socialization Programs**

As training progresses, individual dogs may require supervisor-directed specialized socialization programs to overcome any fear, distractive, or other type of reaction, as needed.

Kennel techs continue to focus on kennel enrichment, relaxing time in community run, grooming and campus walks during the progressively more challenging stages of formal guide dog training.

### **Review of Health**

Each dog's health history to date is reviewed by the staff vet. Viability for care by a client is assessed. Health release decisions may be made for individual cases on some dogs; however, most dogs have timelines for improvement or other medical procedures/testing prior to such a decision.

## **PHASE SIX – CITY WORK**

### **Obedience and Distraction Training**

Continues as in phase 5. Obedience testing is similar to that in Phase 3, but the instructor is now under blindfold.

### **Guidework Training**

Dogs work in residential areas without sidewalks and downtown urban areas with challenging environments. Focus on working the dogs at a pace and pull that is appropriate for a client.

### **City Routes (Burbank/Pasadena/Northridge)**

New work areas include difficult crossings, clearances, challenging lines and curb approaches, animal distractions, surface issues, and pedestrian islands.

- Heavy urban environment: crowded sidewalks, heavy/close traffic, different pedestrian climates.
- Large government and business building work.
- City bus ride.

### **Light Rail, Subway systems**

Dogs practice edge avoidance when train is absent and boarding/riding on available trains.

### **Obstacle Course Progression**

Continues as in phase 5.

### **Pre-Matches for Select Clients**

Dogs are identified for applicants with special needs or requirements in a guide.

### **Socialization Programs**

Kennel techs continue to focus on kennel enrichment and relaxing time away from guidework lessons (community run, grooming, play sessions, campus walks, and dog massage).

### **Sidewalk-less Technique Introduction**

Dogs learn how to work in areas without sidewalks or a reasonable shoulder on which to walk. The travel line is the left side of the street facing oncoming traffic. Dogs learn how to respond to intersecting streets and parked cars along their travel line.

## **PHASE SEVEN – ADVANCED TRAINING**

### **Obedience and Distraction Training**

Continues as in phase 6.

### **Guidework Training**

Advanced training includes work in both suburban and urban areas that requires decision-making and initiative. These routes can consist of:

- City traffic patterns.
- Difficult crossings.
- Difficult clearance situations.
- Areas with a challenging line.
- Animal distractions.
- Surface issues.
- Curb approach challenges.
- Pedestrian islands.
- Crowded sidewalks.
- Different pedestrian climates.
- Additional city bus exposure.
- Additional rapid transit ride exposure.
- Additional and multiple escalators.
- Rounded corners.



## **Escalator Training Continues**

Dogs now independently approach, board, ride and exit.

## **Platform Training Continues**

Avoidance of drop-off edges on pedestrian platforms of subway and rail systems and boarding and exiting trains.

## **Overhead Obstacle Clearance Training**

Advanced overhead training occurs both on campus and in town, when available.

## **Socialization**

Continue as in previous phases, as needed.

## PHASE EIGHT – FINAL TESTING

### **Final Obedience Test**

The instructor is under blindfold and performs a series of obedience exercises with the dog that demonstrates the dog's patience, collar response, impulse control, and off-leash recall in an enclosed indoor setting.

### **Final Guidework Test**

Instructor works a route under blindfold on an urban street and sidewalk route of approximately 30 to 45 minutes in a challenging work area.

### **Final Building Test**

Instructor works a dog under blindfold through a mall setting. Each dog is tested on his/her overall caution and work on escalators, elevators, stairs and focus past food court areas.

### **Final Traffic Test**

Instructor works the dog under blindfold on a guidework route and encounters several staged (choreographed) traffic checks that require the dog to demonstrate all types of traffic avoidance responses.

**NOTE:** Dogs that pass these tests are considered "class ready." These dogs are fully qualified and ready to be issued to a client.

## PHASE NINE – FINISHING

### **"Finishing" Routes**

Dogs are worked in a variety of areas including relaxing residential or country road routes, areas without sidewalks and any other straightforward routes for confidence building before class. Obedience responses are maintained and practiced in a variety of areas.

### **Practice with Less Experienced Handlers**

Occasionally, with either supervisory or instructor oversight, unfamiliar (and often novice) handlers (O&M seminar or lifestyle workshop participants, mock student instruction practice for apprentices, etc.) work dogs that are (or nearly) at class ready status. This serves two purposes: it gives the handler an opportunity to experience what it feels like to work a guide dog and it gives staff a chance to assess the dog's abilities to successfully and reliably transfer to a new handler, from both a work performance and manageability perspective.

## **Specialized Training**

If needed, select dogs may do custom work for identified clients (e.g. slower or faster pace, compromised balance -- client who travels with a support cane, toed-out gait, etc.).

## **Pre-Class Physicals**

All class ready dogs receive pre-class vet physical exam.

## **Final Class Preparations**

Instructors size all dogs for new class collars, boots and harnesses.

## **Dorm Exposure**

Dogs are walked through the dormitory building in preparation for their in-residence training.

## **Socialization**

All specialized programs are complete for class ready dogs. Kennel techs focus primarily on relaxing walks, kennel enrichment and play sessions for the dogs.

## **Class**

Instructors conduct pre-class phone meetings to confirm the pre-matches between client and dog. Matches are finalized once students arrive at campus and class training has begun. To make the best matches possible, GDA|TLC has more dogs than clients. This means that there are always a handful of dogs remaining for placement in a future class. These dogs continue in training with the next group of instructors and dogs.

There are different class-training program options available to clients. GDA|TLC offers a three-week class for in-residence client training. Occasionally, for either health or other compelling personal reasons, some clients do best with training in their own home area. In these instances, the client does not train at the GDA|TLC campus. This is called an in-home training. Most in-home training clients do not participate in a formal graduation ceremony, unless they live close enough to campus to attend. Whenever possible, the raisers are

given the opportunity to visit with the dog they raised prior to the in-home training if the client is unable to attend the corresponding graduation ceremony.

## **GDA|TLC Formal Service Training**

GDA|TLC service dog candidates follow a different training path than guide dog candidates. All of our service dogs are trained by incarcerated trainers in one of our prison programs. Each program is slightly different, but all dogs in all programs follow similar training plans and learn the same behaviors and cues. Formal service dog training takes approximately 12 months, with specific behaviors assigned for each month of training.

### **Adjustment Period**

When dogs first enter the prison environment, they are given the opportunity to adjust to the new environment and get to know their trainers and routine. This adjustment period usually lasts for about a month. During this time, the focus is on teaching the dog to relax in various locations around a wide range of distractions. This is a very important skill for service dogs, who will typically spend most of each day accompanying their partners to a variety of different locations. Each dog is assigned to a primary trainer, who is supported, in most cases, by a secondary handler and additional teammates. Incarcerated trainers are housed together, and only members of our program are ever allowed to be housed with or to handle any of our dogs. When dogs first enter the prison, they are housed in the cell with their primary trainers and sleep in crates in the cells. In some of our programs, once they have acclimated to the environment and demonstrated independence training, dogs may begin to sleep at night in crates in a kennel room inside the prison housing unit. During the day, dogs in training are usually with their primary or secondary trainers, training or accompanying their trainers on daily routines. All dogs are given ample rest breaks during the day, both in and out of their crates.

### **Learning how to be a service dog**

Once a service dog candidate has adjusted to the new environment and begun bonding with its trainer, it will begin learning the training curriculum. During the next months, the dogs are all learning a series of foundation cues that will allow a person with limited mobility to maintain control of the dog with only verbal cues. These verbal cues make it possible for a person who has limited physical ability to cue their dog to get into a specific position or to get on or under something when necessary. Additionally, the dogs are learning to walk besides their handler and match the pace of the handler when they slow down, speed up, or change directions, all while avoiding various levels of high distractions.

### **Learning the components to build upon**

Once the dog has the basics down, it will begin to learn the building blocks that can be chained together later for more complex behaviors. An example of a building block behavior is the dog learning to hold any type of object firmly in its mouth until given a release cue. This behavior can be turned into an advanced retrieval to retrieve a prosthetic limb or holding a door open for someone in a wheelchair.

## The really helpful stuff

The final phase of the dog's training is learning all the assistive tasks that will specifically help a person with a disability. These behaviors will mitigate the symptoms of the client's disability.

Performing behaviors a child with autism can model in therapy sessions.

- Behaviors dog can perform may include secondary leash or handle led walking in public.

Interrupting or alerting to early signs of hypervigilant, maladaptive or repetitive behavior, escalation in stress or anxiety, or other responses to triggers.

- Behaviors dog can perform may include chin rest, nose nudge. Nightmare interruption and recovery assistance (with DPT).

Providing grounding or sensory input to decrease physiological symptoms of stress/anxiety.

- Behaviors dog can perform may include applying weight or pressure by leaning into child or lying down on child's lap or feet.

Assisting with mobility limitations.

- Behaviors dog can perform may include retrieval, delivery or carrying of items, assisting with balance, tug or push things open/closed, on/off, etc.

Assisting with daily living skills.

- Behaviors dog can perform may include dressing, undressing, retrieval for motor skills support.

Providing occasion for social engagement by utilizing social stories for the child and corresponding behaviors of the dog can be developed to enhance social interaction.

- Behaviors dog can perform may include visit, wave, bow, fist bump, etc.

Positioning its body in various ways relative to the veteran to support veteran's goals toward increased duration of participation in public and reducing isolation.

## Generalization and Assessment

Throughout the training period, our incarcerated trainers and staff work hard to generalize behaviors to different handlers, environments, and situations. Our incarcerated trainers practice trained behaviors with their dogs in a variety of different locations throughout the prison, with a wide range of different distractions. They also utilize the assistance of other members of the training team to proof behaviors with other handlers within the prison environment. Our staff takes dogs out on training outings outside the prison every week to generalize behaviors learned inside the prison to a range of environments similar to those our dogs will later experience with their clients: retail environments, restaurants, parks, neighborhoods, etc. This helps to ensure that our service dogs are learning to perform requested behaviors under a wide range of different circumstances. It also allows our incarcerated trainers and staff to continually assess each dog's performance on a daily, weekly, and monthly basis. Incarcerated trainers keep daily training logs, and staff prepare written assessments for every outing, which are given to the incarcerated trainers with suggestions for addressing any issues. What gets measured, gets improved!



## Placement

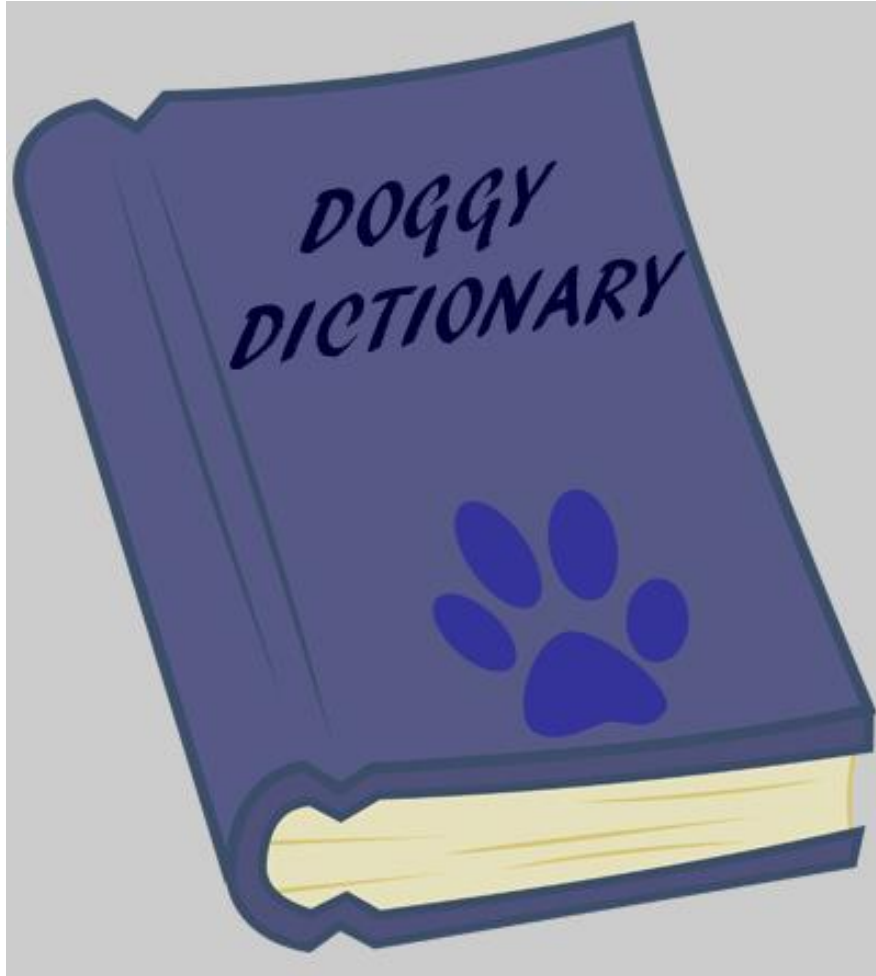
Once dogs have learned the entire curriculum and passed all tests & evaluations, they are considered *class ready*. Because our service dogs go to populations with varying disabilities & symptoms, we match them based on a formula that looks first at the strengths, skills, and personality traits of the dog, then within our pool of approved clients, we look for clients whose needs, lifestyle, and environment are the best match for those dogs.

Once matched and invited to class, our students start their team training journey by participating in a 3-week online foundations training class. The class consists of live weekly video courses with a GDA|TLC instructor and a series of self-paced videos, presentations, and quizzes on our web-based education platform. Once students' complete foundation training, they come to our Sylmar campus for the in-resident portion of class, where they stay in the dorms on campus for 9 days of hands-on education, practice & graduation. Once students leave campus, they continue at home during their adjustment & bonding period meeting with GDA|TLC instructor over weekly video check-in calls.

Our follow-up support for service dog graduates adheres with Assistance Dogs International (ADI) standards. We currently follow-up with students monthly for the first six months of placement and annually for the working life of the dog.

# CHAPTER 12

## GDA | TLC GLOSSARY OF TERMS



---

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

---

## **PUPPY RAISING GLOSSARY OF TERMS**

Below is a list of terms that are relevant to your GDA|TLC puppy. It is important to note that GDA|TLC does not expect puppies to learn all of the \*critical skills\* in the first four weeks home with you. By the time your puppy is 9 months of age, he should have a good understanding of the \*critical skills\* and be able to demonstrate most of the cues in this glossary for anyone, with mild to moderate distractions present. As you go through this workbook, this glossary can help you better understand specific terminology. In addition, many of these concepts and terms are common in describing dog behavior and this section will help us be on the same page with the definition of, what can be subjective, terms and concepts.

Don't feel overwhelmed as you look over this list. You can reference it anytime!

---

*When I'm training a dog, I develop a relationship with that dog. He's my buddy, and I want to make training fun.*

*-Ian Dunbar*

---

## A

### **AROUSAL**

Refers to the physiological changes and emotional changes that occur in your dog. Arousal can be mild or extremely strong. Arousal can be caused by excitement, fun, confusion, uncertainty, fear, anxiety, relief, or any strong emotion.

Arousal is not necessarily bad unless it interferes with the pup's ability to think and learn. If this occurs, the pup's arousal level must be lowered before training continues.

### **ATTENTION**

The dog is giving you his attention when he is looking at you, or in other ways (tilt of head towards you, tail wag, body orientation) clearly tells you he is listening *and* ready to respond.

### **AWARENESS**

Both handler and dog need to maintain awareness of each other at all times whenever they are together. Either handler or dog may be engaged in something else while still maintaining awareness.

*Awareness is demonstrated by response to a change in the other.*

*Example:* Handler notices if dog moves or changes focus; dog notices if the handler moves or alters his actions.

---

## B

### **BIB**

The puppy cape that identifies the young dog prior to 6 months as "Guide Dogs of America | Tender Loving Canines Puppy in Training." This is not the official GDA|TLC *jacket*. (See Jacket) A puppy should not urinate or defecate while wearing a bib.

## BODY LANGUAGE

At all times, your body language provides important information for the dog. When offering feedback (praise or discouragement), be sure your entire body, voice and actions tell the dog how pleased (or displeased) you are with him.

## BODY HANDLING

### \*CRITICAL SKILL\*

Body handling has 3 aspects – touching any body part; handling and manipulating any body part, such as picking up a foot or an ear; and procedures with or on that body part, such as clipping nails.

## BRIBE

A bribe is offering an item that your puppy wants before a required behavior in an attempt to coerce the puppy to perform the desired task. It is often confused with luring, which is used initially to help a puppy learn the action associated with a specific cue. An example is showing a puppy that you have a piece of kibble prior to asking them to sit – knowing that you have already taught your puppy the action of sitting and paired the cue with that action.

It is also often confused with rewards but is very different as rewards reinforce a behavior by rewarding the dog after he has responded but bribes are offered or promised before the dog has done anything. We want to avoid using bribery or bribes in our training as the puppy can become dependent on them to perform a cue.

## BRIDGE

A bridge is a stream of verbal praise & body language that indicates you are pleased with the pup.

A bridge begins *after* you've said **YES!** to mark the behavior and *continues non-stop* as you move to **REWARD**.

Used with a **MARKER** word, the bridge connects *behavior* to *reward*. Bridging allows you to train without having any food rewards or toys on you.

*Example:* Dog sits perfectly – you **BRIDGE** by saying “YES! Wow, what a great dog, such an incredible pup you are, there’s never been a dog that great ever in the history of the world...” *while you are moving to the container of treats on the table.*

---

## C

### CLOSE

Tells the dog to sit between the seated handler’s legs, facing in the same direction as the handler, with the dog’s back against the handler. **CLOSE** is done primarily when the handler is seated but can also be done in standing (with the dog sitting in front of the handler’s legs)

The hand signal is a half circle hand motion tracing the inside of your legs from one knee to the other. Make the half circle in the direction you want the pup to follow. Either hand may be used to give the hand signal. Eventually all that is needed is usually a light pat on the leg along with the cue “close”.

### COME

#### **\*CRITICAL SKILL\***

Sometimes referred to as a “recall.” Dog comes from wherever she is to sit within easy reach facing the handler. If the handler is sitting, the dog should come and sit between the handler’s legs, making and holding contact.

If the handler is standing, the dog is to be very close, making toe-to-toe contact. The dog’s toes should be touching the handler’s toes. Straight orientation to the handler desired, but contact with handler should be given priority over straightness.

If dog is on leash and out in front of the handler, “come” can be used to bring the dog back to default position. This is called and on-leash recall.

### COMMUNICATION

Any signals – verbal or non-verbal. Dogs communicate with handlers through body language, behavior, and vocalizations. Handlers communicate with dogs through verbal signals, body language, behavior, and equipment.

## **CONNECTION**

Connection defines the relationship between dog and handler, a visible act of being together, connected, aware of and responsive to each other.

## **CONSEQUENCES**

Training is based on consequences. A dog can be given positive or pleasant consequences (**REWARD**) or negative or unpleasant consequences. Positive consequences encourage the dog to repeat a behavior. Negative consequences discourage the dog from repeating a behavior.

## **CRATE/CRATE TRAINING**

A crate (wire or plastic) confines the pup when he cannot be monitored. Crates are used for house training, sleeping, preventing problems and teaching proper house manners. Dogs in-for-training are crated during transport to training locations. It is essential that a puppy feels comfortable in a crate. Ideally, a puppy can settle quickly in the crate and not whine or bark.

## **CRITERIA**

The expectations you have for the dog and his behavior. Criteria may be very general or extremely specific; they may be long term or just for that moment. Successful training is built on clear criteria so you have a way of evaluating whether the dog was successful or not.

**\*CRITICAL SKILL\***

A **CRITICAL SKILL** is one that is crucially important to the future guide. If the future guide does not have the Critical Skills (housetraining, good house manners, walks on a loose lead, does not eliminate while on walks, thoroughly socialized), he may fail. A raiser must be 100% committed to teaching a pup the Critical Skills.

---

## D

### DEFAULT POSITION

Unless under some other specific direction, the dog's default position on leash is at the handler's left side, dog's head aligned with the handler's left leg, and the dog (from nose to tail) facing the same direction as the handler. The dog may be in a sit, down or stand.

### DISTRACTION

A distraction is *anything* that draws the pup's attention. This can be very mild, such as a bird flying over that the pup watches *without* forgetting what she's doing with you. Distractions can be intense, causing the dog to completely lose focus and connection.

### DOWN

#### **\*CRITICAL SKILL\***

Pup lies belly to ground, elbows on floor. Hind legs may be tightly tucked, spread to the side or behind her, or she may rest on one or the other hip.

During long stays or periods of inactivity, the dog may choose to stretch out on her side. Lying on her back or rolling around are not acceptable.

### DROP

Tells the dog to drop whatever he has in his mouth.



---

## E

### **ENGAGE**

To connect with the pup, and actively work with her, by moving, changing direction, changing pace, or directing her in some way.

### **EVALUATION**

An assessment done by GDA|TLC staff at multiple points in the dog's development and training.

---

## F

### **FLAT COLLAR**

Sometimes called a buckle collar. These collars are the most convenient to slip on and off and are handy because they can hold your dog's identification, rabies, and license tags. They are also used on small puppies for training.

---

## G

### **GET BUSY**

#### **\*CRITICAL SKILL\***

Tells the pup he should urinate and/or defecate in the designated area.

### **GET DRESSED**

Tells the pup to put his head through the puppy bib or jacket.

## **GIVE**

Tells the dog to release whatever he has in his mouth to your hand.

## **GO TO MAT/GO TO PLACE/GO TO BED**

Tells the pup to go to a designated target place, such as a bed or mat. Can be used when the pup is near the target place or from a distance.

## **GOOD! or GOOD DOG!**

This is **PRAISE**. Any phrase said in a pleased, happy, encouraging tone. Tells the dog what he is doing or has just done is good, that he should keep doing it. Praise does *not* mean the dog is done.

*Use praise generously!* Can be said calmly or with great excitement – choose your tone based on how you want to influence the dog.

*Example:* Dog is holding a stay 20' away and you would like to be able to tell him how wonderful he is. "Good" said in a pleased, drawn-out tone encourages the dog without exciting him and causing him to get up.

*Example:* You call him, and as he's coming to you, you excitedly tell him, "**Good boy! Good dog! Great job!**" with the intention of keeping him excited and encouraged.

---

## **H**

### **HEEL**

Discontinued terminology.

### **HOUSE MANNERS**

**\*CRITICAL SKILL\***

A dog with good house manners stays off furniture, does not beg for food at any time, does not jump on counters, does not steal objects from trash or anywhere else, chews only his toys and bones, can lie quietly at your feet during meals, and does not jump on guests.

## **HOUSETRAINED**

### **\*CRITICAL SKILL\***

A housetrained dog does not eliminate in the house (*exceptions*: medical problems, such as diarrhea, bladder infections, etc.)

“Accidents” are not acceptable – if they occur, quickly clean them up and adjust the supervision, schedule and/or situation that allowed the accident to occur.

---

I

## **IFT – IN FOR TRAINING**

**IFT** Is when the puppy raisers bring their dog back to GDA|TLC and the GDA|TLC Trainers begin their Guide Dog Training. During this period, the staff decide if the dog is suitable to be a Guide Dog.

## **IN-HOME**

An in-home is when a GDA|TLC staff performs a one-on-one training session with a puppy raiser either in their home or at another location.

---

J

## **JACKET**

When your puppy has grown out of his/her puppy bib, he will be issued an official GDA|TLC jacket to be worn in public places as identification that he is a guide dog in training.

## **JUMPING UP**

Jumping up on people, furniture, or counters is not permitted. Teach the dog that keeping “four on the floor” is what’s always expected and what will be rewarded, no matter what.

---

## **K**

### **KENNEL or KENNEL UP**

Tells the dog to go to and get into her crate. May be used when pup is near the crate, or from a distance, or from other rooms.

### **KENNEL STAYS / KENNEL TIME**

When your puppy comes into GDA|TLC to stay in our kennels. This begins at 6 months of age and helps the puppy acclimate to being in the kennel environment and eases the transition when they are IFT.

---

## **L**

### **LEAVE IT**

Informs the puppy that they should not interact with something (person or object).

## LEASH MANAGEMENT

Refers to a handler's use of the lead and collar to physically manage the dog, rather than directing the dog and working with the dog's mind/attention.

**LEASH MANAGMENT** creates many training problems, does not support the relationship, and does not teach the dog. To be used only in emergencies when there are no other options.

## LET'S GO!

### **\*CRITICAL SKILL\***

This signal is given in a clear, upbeat tone. **LET'S GO** notifies the dog that you and he are about to start moving. Give the cue *before* you actually move so the dog has time to process the request and respond. "Let's go" is also used to tell your puppy to get in the car.

## LONG LINE

A training lead of 10' or more. Be sure to keep the pup safe at all times, and avoid tangling yourself, your hands, or your feet/legs in the long line. Long lines are used to safely work in various locations on distance cues like stay and come.

## LOOSE LEASH WALKING (LLW)

### **\*CRITICAL SKILL\***

**LLW** means that the dog does not pull on lead, and can walk politely on a loose leash (any length) in any situation. **LLW** requires 100% commitment from you. Do not let your dog pull on his collar.

## LURE

A lure is an attention getter (food treat, toy) used to help guide the dog into a position or specific action. Only used in early stages of learning, should be faded quickly, and will be replaced by **REWARDS** that come *after* a behavior is done correctly.

---

## M

### MARKER

A marker is a word or sound that precisely marks a specific behavior. Markers can be **positive (YES!)** or **negative (No!)**. Positive markers are always followed by **REWARDS**. Negative markers are used *sparingly*, and only to let the dog know *exactly* where the mistake occurred.

*Example:* dog gets up from the sit – “No!” said as she gets up immediately lets her know where she made the mistake. As she sits again, “YES” says she made the right choice.

### MARTINGALE

A collar that will tighten slightly when pulled on, preventing the dog from backing out of the collar. Also known as a limited slip or half-choke.

---

## N

### NAME

#### **\*CRITICAL SKILL\***

Calling your pup’s name means that you want his attention.

- Be specific. “Bradley!” is not the same as “Bradley, sit!” Dogs are not mind readers. If you want the dog to do something, tell him what that is.
- Use your dog’s name to prepare him for **action**. “Bradley, let’s go!” is a good use.

- *Do not use your pup's name if you want him to stay or remain quietly in a position.*

## **NEGATIVE MARKER – “NO”**

Indicates precisely when a dog has made a mistake. Use this signal with a tone of disappointment or dismay. This does not need to be harsh, loud or angry.

A **NEGATIVE MARKER** can be as simple as a verbal **“No!”** or **“Eh-Eh”** Sometimes, just a sharp, shocked intake of breath is equally effective. *Use sparingly.*

---

O

## **OK**

This is your **RELEASE WORD** that tells the dog he is done, free to move. Always end a specific request with a formal release, spoken with a clear, happy tone.

Having a formal release – OK - means that **PRAISE** can be used during a behavior without ending it.

*Example:* a dog is doing a great **DOWN STAY** 6' away from you. You'd like to be able to go back, offer a food **REWARD** and tell her she's doing great, and have the dog continue to stay until she is released using your **RELEASE WORD**.

---

P

## **POSITIVE MARKER**

A clear concise **“YES”** that marks the precise moment a dog does a behavior correctly. It is always followed by a reward.

## PRAISE

Any words or phrase said in a pleasant, happy tone that tells the dog that he is good and right. Can be said with great excitement or in calm, soothing tones. It is sometimes accompanied with a reward such as food or petting/touch. Use **PRAISE** *generously*.

## PROGRESSIONS

Progressions are a series of steps that build logically on the previous successful step.

## PUPPY SITTING

During a puppy sit, the pup you are raising will go to another raiser's home for a brief period. This helps give the pup varied experiences and prepares him for working with many different people.

---

Q

---

R

## REAL-LIFE REWARDS

A real-life reward is anything that the dog finds valuable **and** needs you to make it possible or available. Real-life rewards are powerful -- use them wherever you can.

*Example:* Opening the door so she can go play in the yard is a real life reward. Throwing a toy is a real-life reward. Initiating a game of tug is a real-life reward.



## **RECALL – See COME**

## **REHOME**

Occasionally, dogs need to be moved to a new environment that suits the behavior, physical and/or training needs so that he can be as successful as possible in the program. Rehoming is not a reflection of the raiser's abilities or efforts, but is focused on the dog's needs.

## **RELEASE and RELEASE WORD**

A release tells the dog he is done with whatever he is doing for or with you. Once released, the dog is on his own time. Use specific release word "OK" said in a clear, happy tone.

## **REINFORCEMENT**

A **REINFORCEMENT** is anything that encourages the dog to do a specific behavior again. GDA|TLC uses "positive reinforcement" or **REWARDS** to encourage the dog.

## **REWARD**

A reward is **REINFORCEMENT**. Can be anything that the dog finds valuable: your attention, food treats, toys, play, **REAL LIFE REWARDS**, etc.

The value of the reward is dependent on each individual dog and it's important to know what your dog finds rewarding.

## **REWORK**

Rework is a term commonly used in training when a dog is given the opportunity to repeat a particular behavior that he did not complete successfully on the first attempt. Many times, the handler will make a change in the criteria to help the puppy succeed.

## ROLL OVER

Pup lays stretched out flat on his side, head on floor. Useful for grooming, examination, nail clipping, massage.

---

## S

### SELF CONTROL

#### **\*CRITICAL SKILL\***

Dogs need to learn to control their impulses even under intense distraction. There are various exercises to help teach your pup self-control.

### SETTLE

#### **\*CRITICAL SKILL\***

Dog lies down near the handler and remains quietly until released. Used specifically to indicate to the dog that nothing will happen in the near future.

During **SETTLE** the dog need not keep a high degree of attention on you, and thus can enjoy a chew toy, if available, or simply go to sleep. Use **SETTLE** for times when your pup needs to relax at your side for relatively long periods.

### SIT

#### **\*CRITICAL SKILL\***

Pup places rump on the ground and front paws are also on ground.

### SOCIALIZATION

#### **\*CRITICAL SKILL\***

Your pup learns through experience with, and exposure to, the real world and all it contains. This is **SOCIALIZATION**.

The future guide dog needs many varied, safe and pleasant experiences with many situations, types of people, other dogs, places, things, sensations, smells, sounds, and sights.

Guide dogs are expected to handle any situation with confidence. This begins with puppyhood experiences, and continues through the entire raising period.

## **STAND**

Pup stands with all four paws on ground, and remains still without moving.

## **STAY**

The pup needs to remain in a specific position in a specific place while the handler goes away. The handler may return to the dog, or call the dog from the **STAY**.

---

## **T**

## **TIE DOWN**

This is a sturdy, short length of cable or lead with a clip that is bolted or tied to a sturdy, immovable object (wall, tree, very heavy furniture). Approximately 2-3' long. Used to limit the pup's freedom to a small area while supervised.

**Your pup *must be taught* how to be on tie down. This is a management tool.**

## **TIMING**

Effective training relies on providing information and rewards or consequences at specific moments.

When using a **MARKER** word or giving **REWARDS**, you need to give them within 3 seconds of the desired behavior; otherwise, the dog will not connect it with what he did.

When giving information, be sure your timing allows sufficient time for the dog to get himself together and respond to you. This is particularly important for young pups and distracted or otherwise engaged dogs who may be aware but are not looking right at you.

## **TRAINING COLLAR**

Sometimes called a chain/choke collar. Used in training and delivers a quick/sharp jerk that is strong enough to make the dog stop what it's doing and do something else.

Corrections can vary in strength and should not be used repeatedly for the same behavior.

The dog should be taught an appropriate replacement behavior and rewarded for it immediately after delivering a correction from a training collar.

---

U

---

V

## **VERBAL SIGNAL**

Often called a cue or cue. A verbal signal is a word or phrase that tells the dog what is expected.

---

W

---

## X

### **X-PEN (ex-pen)**

A portable pen, usually metal and foldable, that can be used to create a safe place for a young pup when you cannot directly supervise him for short periods. Ideally the puppy learns not to jump up on the sides of the x-pen. You may need to brace the sides of the pen with a heavy object, as a jumping puppy can potentially move the pen. The x-pen does not replace a crate, and a puppy should not be left home alone in an x-pen.

---

## Y

### **YES!**

This is a **MARKER** word, used to mark precisely the moment of the dog's good behavior or choice. Said in a crisp, quick, enthusiastic tone. YES is *not* a **REWARD**. YES simply says, "That's right!" *and* that a reward is coming.

*Example:* your puppy is unsure about down, and hesitates before making the right choice. As his elbows hit the ground, say "YES!" then reward.

---

## Z

### **DISCONTINUED TERMINOLOGY**

Although you may have used these in the past, the GDA|TLC Training Department asks that you please not use these terms, signals, or teach these behaviors:

**HEEL** *No longer taught during puppy raising. The term for loose leash walking is, "LET'S GO."*

**HERE** *Instead, use COME.*

**FORMAL COME** *The behaviors are now taught separately as a recall/come and default position. Puppies SHOULD NOT be recalled directly into the default position when they are off leash. ON leash the puppy can be directed to the default position with a collar cue or pat on the left leg.*

**NOT YOURS** *No longer taught during puppy raising.*

**OUT** *Instead, use GIVE.*

**SPIN** *No longer taught or used, as it can be detrimental to the guide dog's training.*

# CHAPTER 13

## TRAINING SECTION



---

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

---

## **GROUP TRAINING CLASSES**

Training at GDA|TLC is catered to the individual dog and raiser. While there are some general rules and ways to teach the GDA|TLC approved cues, there is also a need to individualize training in order for it to be the most successful. The most important thing to remember as you are raising your puppy in training is that GDA|TLC offers full tech support! You should feel confident that the Canine Development Team has your back and is available to answer any questions and help you succeed in the puppy raising experience.

Throughout the time you have your puppy, you will likely receive handouts and links to videos about how to teach cues as well as problem solve specific behaviors. We recommend keeping class handouts together in a binder or folder you can easily reference throughout your time with the foster puppy.

## **PUPPY KINDERGARTEN**

You are required to partake in GDA|TLC Puppy Kindergarten classes with your puppy. In these classes you will learn the basic cues that GDA|TLC wants your puppy to know. You will also get feedback and instruction in leash manners, and learn how to use rewards in training. Each week you will get handouts and homework to help you stay on track with the training. You'll start teaching basic cues in Puppy Kindergarten to build a strong foundation as your puppy matures. Puppy Kindergarten classes typically last until your puppy is 6 to 7 months old.

## **OBEDIENCE CLASSES**

As your puppy matures, you will need to enroll him in an outside basic obedience class. You'll find that a class is helpful, not only in practicing basic cues, but in socializing your puppy to other dogs and in teaching him to listen to you in a distracting environment. Here are a few guidelines to keep in mind when looking for an obedience class.

- Classes should be weekly with a variety of different dog breeds. This will give your puppy an opportunity to see and work around dogs that he is not used to seeing. If you attend a skills class with all GDA|TLC dogs, this does not meet the criteria of an outside class.



- The class size should be well-managed, and you should have room to move away from other dogs, as needed. The number of dogs as well as the physical space should allow you to gain distance from the other dogs if your puppy is feeling overwhelmed.
- Signs that your puppy is overwhelmed include:
  - a tucked tail or low body posture
  - numerous yawns, excessive scratching, shaking off (as if after a bath/when wet)
  - pulling on leash to exit and looking away from the other dogs or people
  - excessively jumping on you for reassurance
  - hackling or barking
  - stiff body or lots of direct staring at the other dogs
  - slow or no response to familiar cue

### Training methods used in group classes

- Make sure to talk with the instructor ahead of time and tell them you are training a guide or service dog prospect who has specific training rules and cues. The instructor should be using primarily reward based training – likely using things like praise, petting and food rewards. They must also be able to work with you as a puppy raiser and make exceptions in specific areas if needed to conform to our policies.
- Be wary of an instructor who says they only use treats or don't use any treats in their training. You want a trainer who has balanced methods and can individualize the training based on the specific dog/student.
- You may not use clickers, whistles, throw chains, electric/shock collars, prong collars, Gentle Leaders or other training devices. If the class uses this equipment, the instructor needs to have alternative methods for you and/or allow you to opt out. This class should be primarily reward based and fun!!
- This link may be helpful in clarifying training methods and different types of trainers  
<https://apdt.com/pet-owners/choosing-a-trainer/>

### GDA|TLC Specific Rules

Please notify GDA|TLC or your area leader if you want to attend a puppy class and are not sure if it is

appropriate. Provide us with the name of the instructor/organization and the title of the class or have the instructor contact us.

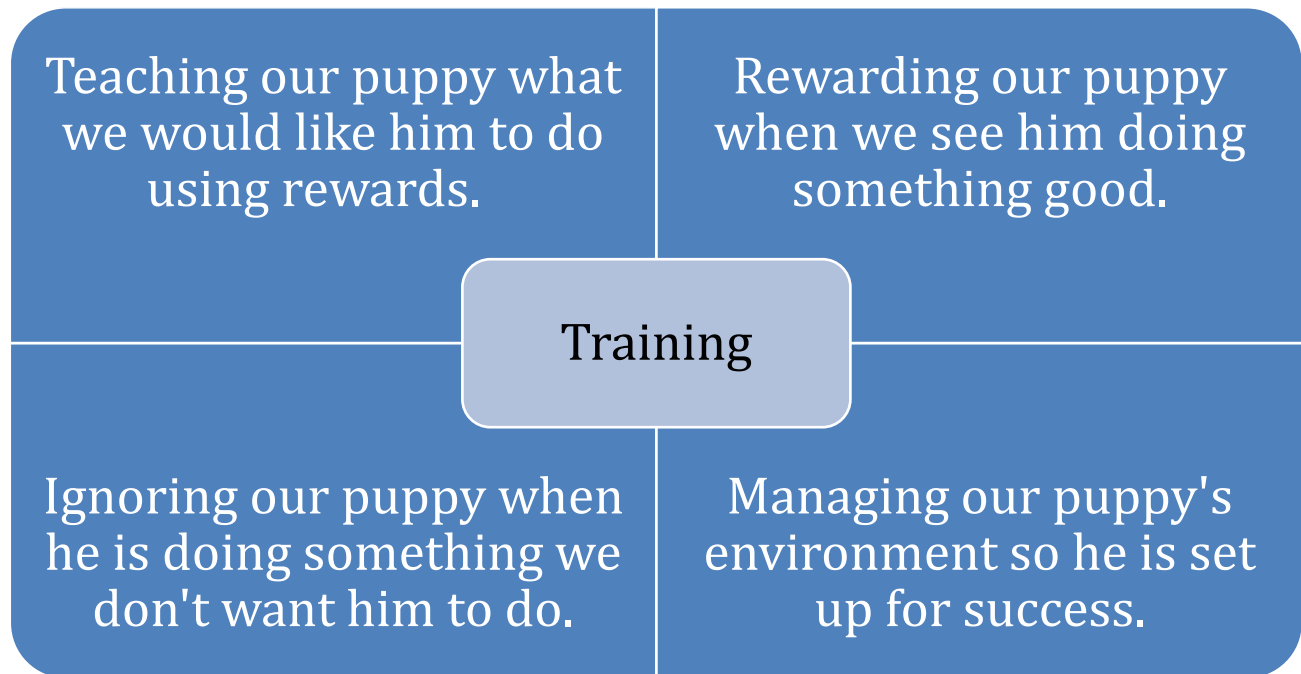
Here are a couple of rules specific to our GDA|TLC puppies:

- When you stop, your puppy should remain standing. GDA|TLC does not teach automatic sits.
- “Let’s Go” is a general behavior of the puppy walking on your left side on a loose leash. It is not a formal obedience heel, nor should the dog remain in perfect heel position. If the class teaches the cue, “Heel,” please use “Let’s Go” and do not enforce that your puppy walks in perfect heel position.
- GDA|TLC’s “default position” is often called “heel position” in other classes.
- “O.K.” is the only acceptable release word when releasing from a fixed position, such as a stay.
- “Come” is the only acceptable recall word.
- Make sure your puppy sits and lies down at your left side, facing forward, and not angled in a different direction.
- Do not teach tricks! Focus on reinforcing sit, down, stand, default position, come, close, stay, and loose leash walking around increasing distractions as your puppy matures. Contact us if you need advice about what to work on while the class is working on a skill that is inappropriate in guide dog training.

Please send us a copy of the certification of completion once you have completed this class (or any future classes). Make sure to follow the above guidelines.

## APPROVED METHODS OF TRAINING YOUR PUPPY

GDA|TLC's goal is to help you create a confident puppy who is connected with people, has a solid foundation of basic obedience cues and house manners, and who makes good choices while navigating the world. We want a puppy who not only does the work but enjoys it! A balanced approach to training makes this possible. In the beginning, we use primarily food rewards as a motivator to teach our puppy cues and good manners. Beyond food, it is important that we also use life rewards as compensation for our puppies for doing the right thing. Initially, we are:



As our puppy matures, we will expect more of him and we begin to enforce consequences if wrong choices are made. However, before this happens, we need to build a solid foundation and make sure the puppy understands the expectations in order to set him up for success.

### USING REWARDS

We use rewards in training for several reasons:

- They are humane and enjoyable for the dog (and for the handler!).
- Reward-based training helps establish a trusting relationship.
- Rewards help the dog learn faster; dogs learn faster when they're allowed to get it right.

- Physical force and scary or painful corrections are not necessary.

## WHAT EXACTLY ARE REWARDS?

Behaviors that are rewarded are statistically more likely to be repeated, so when we regularly reward our dogs for a job well done, they'll want to keep showing up for work! Not all rewards are created equal, and understanding what your dog finds rewarding is an important step in the training process.

A reward can be almost anything that the dog finds valuable:

### YOU

Your attention and praise are huge rewards for your dog.

- Verbal praise: Quiet tones help calm; excited tones will excite the dog.
- Eye contact, facial expression, body language: Look happy! Smile! Be soft, friendly and genuine.

### TOUCH

Find your pup's favorite places to be pet and use it to your advantage! Take time to learn what type of touch your dog enjoys most.

Touch can *excite* your pup – *Playful or rapid touch can over-stimulate the dog.*

Touch can *soothe* – use long slow strokes to help create calm.



### FOOD REWARDS

*Never* use food treats as your only reward. Use *in addition to* other things your puppy finds rewarding.

Food can be a very valuable reinforcer (paycheck!) for dogs during training. It's one of a very short list of things that dogs are born already knowing is good. While most dogs easily learn to enjoy praise, petting and play – all of which also make good rewards -- food still holds a special place in their mind due to its primal nature.

Some people express concern about using food in training, worried they will create a dog who will only work if he knows there's food. This is a valid concern, as it can happen if food is misused. The trick is to make sure that food is being used as a reward and not a bribe. There's a big difference! While sometimes in order to teach our puppy an action/cue, we enlist the help of food as a lure, this must be faded as the puppy becomes proficient.

## REWARD VERSUS BRIBE

If you ask the dog to do something, he does it, and you give him a treat, that treat is a reward. If you ask the dog to do something he knows how to do, a behavior that he has demonstrated repeatedly on request for a long period of time, and he doesn't do it, maybe you ask again. If he STILL doesn't do it, but as you reach into your pocket to get a treat, he suddenly springs into action to comply with your original request, THAT treat just became a bribe! You asked him to do it, he didn't, you got food, and he decided to get to work. Good training strives to avoid this.

### PREVENTING BRIBERY

The trick is to get the visual presence of the food out of the learning picture as soon as possible. For example, when lure-training (think cookie on the dog's nose and over his head to achieve a sit), you want to get the cookie off his nose just as soon as you see him grasp the physical mechanics of the behavior. At that point, start using the same gesture minus the cookie, and reward the dog with a treat from your opposite hand or pocket once his bottom is on the floor. This helps teach the dog the important lesson that he must successfully do the work before you're willing to dole out the reward.

Another important tip for preventing accidental bribery is to make sure you have your dog's attention before asking him to do something. Often, people resort to bribery because the dog didn't respond the first time they asked – but when they asked, the dog wasn't even paying attention or he was too distracted by the environment to listen. Try to avoid talking to your dog's tail! Before asking your dog to sit, lie down, or come when you call him, do your best to make sure he's looking at you. Teach him to respond quickly to his name, so that when he's distracted, using his name will prompt him to check in, at which point you can ask for the next behavior.

### LIFE REWARDS

Once your dog is reliably responding to your verbal cues or hand signals, begin to vary how he gets his rewards. Sometimes use a treat, but oftentimes, use something else he's telling you he wants – like his leash put on to go for a walk, his favorite toy to be thrown, or an invitation to join you on the floor for some snuggle time. By using these types of "life rewards," you're teaching your dog that keeping you happy by complying with your requests is the key to opening the door to everything good in his world – not just food treats! This also allows you to use food randomly – as a surprise – which is extremely exciting for dogs, and often motivates them to work even harder.

## ADDITIONAL TIPS

- In highly distracting environments, and as your puppy is beginning to discover the exciting world at-large, you may need to up the reward ante by using food rewards of a higher value than just kibble. Or make the kibble more enticing by letting it sit in a baggie overnight with a big chunk of meat or a whole hotdog. If using non-kibble treats make sure to make them small – about the size of a pea. Using small treats allows you to be generous without over-feeding your dog. Dogs don't care how big each cookie is; they're more impressed by how many they get. Remember that what's exciting at home may pale in comparison to the distracting sights and smells out in public. Save your "extra special" treats for training in distracting environments.
- Get into the habit of petting and praising your dog as you deliver the treat. Don't simply be a Pez dispenser. When you consistently pair petting and praise with treats, you raise the value of your touch and voice. Now you have another way to pay your dog!
- Don't overdo it! The goal is to achieve a trained dog – not a trained, yet pudgy dog! Consider cutting back a bit on what goes into your dog's food bowl and/or set aside a portion of his kibble and use that for training.

## CONSEQUENCES

In essence, every behavior comes with consequences. Good behavior brings about things the puppy will enjoy, and the use of rewards is a huge part of effective dog training. However, once the puppy has a strong foundation and truly understands what's expected of him, it's also important that he experience consequences for poor choices. We often think of "punishment" or "corrections" when we need to employ a consequence for a dog's poor choice. However, the words "punishment" and "correction" can be loaded terms in the dog training world, so let's explore how GDA|TLC uses punishment/corrections for unwanted behavior:

Punishment/corrections do not need to be scary or physical to be effective. Oftentimes, a stern, "No!" or "Eh-eh!" does the trick. Losing your attention, or withdrawing a reward, can also be punishing. While there are times when we might need to employ a leash or collar correction, the need to frequently issue physical corrections is an indication of holes in the puppy's learning. If you find yourself repeatedly correcting the same mistake with the puppy, it's time to reevaluate how well he really understands what you're asking of him. Also, sometimes the environment can be too arousing for your puppy to comprehend what you're telling him and needs more time or direction from you to get it right.

If we aren't careful, the use of repeated punishment/corrections can create a dog who is afraid to experiment with new behaviors and make independent choices – two skills that are imperative to a successful guide dog.

To sum it up: Yes, punishments/corrections are part of training, but it should be used judiciously, and we don't need to use a collar/leash correction when a simple, "Eh eh!" will do.

Also, remember that if you're stuck, the Canine Development Team is always available for problem solving and frustration relief! There are so many tools to use to help our dogs succeed, it's important to figure it out before you and the dog have lost all hope.

## DOs and DON'Ts OF OBEDIENCE TRAINING

### COMMANDS (Please refer to glossary of terms for more information on each term)

- CLOSE
- COME
- DOWN
- DROP/DROP IT
- GET BUSY
- GET DRESSED
- GIVE
- GO TO BED/MAT/PLACE
- KENNEL/KENNEL UP
- LEAVE IT
- LET'S GO
- OK (RELEASE WORD)
- SIT
- STAND
- STAY

### DO NOT USE/TEACH

- HEEL (use LET'S GO)
- ANY OTHER WORD OTHER THAN "COME" FOR A RECALL
- ANY OTHER RELEASE WORD OTHER THAN "OK"
- TRICKS
- AGILITY



## **TRAINING BENCHMARKS**

While each puppy matures and learns at a different speed, and we always want to keep in mind that our puppy is an individual (and different from other puppies we have had), there are certain milestones and benchmarks we can reference in order to ensure our puppy is on the right track.

The below are guidelines and benchmarks to strive for in your puppy's training. If you are having difficulty achieving these goals, it is vital you contact the Canine Development Team for further assistance. We are here to help you!

### **BY 4 MONTHS OF AGE, THE PUPPY SHOULD**

- Know the basics (and be reliable in low-distracting environments): Name recognition, sit, down, stand, come, and "let's go."
- Be settled in your home, having earned more freedom in the house without getting into trouble and still supervised for safety.
- Sleep through the night without having to relieve.
- Comfortable sleeping and lounging in a crate.
- Comfortable with beginning body handling
- Know how to play with toys, especially ones that are interactive with you.
- Be reliable waiting for the food bowl (and released with "OK" to eat).

### **BY 7 MONTHS OF AGE YOUR PUPPY SHOULD**

- Be reliable with the basic cues in familiar and mildly distracting environments (work, yard, etc.)
- Have a good foundation of leash manners and be responsive and attentive to you when out walking.
- Respond to "let's go" when out in the world and distracted.
- Be working for fewer food rewards and accepting of other life rewards (praise, pets, play, etc.)
- Have stayed in the kennels at least once (day stay, overnight, or both).
- Be able to settle nicely in a low key public place (i.e. library, quiet restaurant, work).
- Greet people he meets without jumping or mouthing.
- Have the ability to stay home alone in a crate for a few hours at a time.
- Have the ability to crate calmly when he knows you're home, but you choose to have him in the crate.

### **BY 10 MONTHS OF AGE YOUR PUPPY SHOULD**

- Have good house manners (no counter surfing, getting into trash, jumping on furniture, etc.).
- Not be scavenging or picking up things while walking and responding well to “leave it.”
- Respond to “let’s go” when distracted by a sight, sound, or smells most of the time.
- Respond to life rewards and human affection/praise for complying with a cue.
- Have stayed in the kennels at least once every month for a few days at a time.
- Be able to settle during the monthly meeting and when around other dogs and people he knows.
- Have either received or have scheduled his evaluation by the Canine Development Team.

### **BY 12 MONTHS OF AGE AND UP YOUR PUPPY SHOULD**

- Loose leash walk most of the time with distractions.
- Calmly meet other people doing a sit for greeting or “go say hi” without jumping or lunging.
- Demonstrate a good understanding of “leave it.”
- Have good house manners with no counter surfing or getting on furniture in your home and as a guest in someone else’s home.
- Be able to stay at home calmly in his crate for up to four hours at a time.
- Continue staying at the kennel at least one time per month until turn-in.

## ADOLESCENCE

Adolescence is a time of change for your puppy, just as it is for human teenagers. Hormones run amuck, puppies become more independent, and they begin testing their limits, and sometimes your patience! You may be thinking your puppy used to be so good, but now he sometimes ignores you. Your previously sweet puppy may be impossible one day and back to his sweet self the next. This is very normal, and usually happens around 6-8 months of age. Not all dogs do this, and not all to the same degree as others, but it can, and usually does, happen for a varying amount of time. At about 16-18 months puppies tend to grow out of adolescence - just about the time you will be turning them in for formal training.

### HOW DO WE GET THROUGH THIS?

**Try not to overreact.** This too shall pass. Remain consistent in your handling and follow through with all cues you give your puppy. Remain calm. Do not shout or use harsh physical corrections with your puppy. Don't worry if it takes some time to get the desired response, as long as it does get done in the end.



- Follow through with cues you've given. Don't give up and walk away (or let your puppy walk away), or your puppy will learn that he can ignore you, which will quickly become a habit.
- Only give cues when you intend to follow through, and are in a position to do so.
- Use a "learn to earn" protocol with your puppy, meaning, your puppy should be earning things he enjoys. Put a price on everything he wants. For example: Have him "sit" and do a brief "stay" for his dinner; call him to "come" across the room to you, away from the door, before letting him outside to play; have him "down" before you throw his Kong toy, and so on.
- Exercise, exercise, exercise! This includes physical and mental exercise. Mix obedience training into your daily walks. Make sure you are mentally working his brain just as much as you are physically keeping him fit. When your puppy is having a "good" day, go to different neighborhoods to walk, or mix up the route you take for your daily walks to keep them interesting.
- Give yourself and your puppy a break! It's OK to take a day off – just like us, sometimes our puppies just need a weekend to regroup, especially after a lot of activity or new experiences. If you notice your puppy is having a bad day, just do things he enjoys and don't expect as much from him (or you!).

## TRAINING SUGGESTIONS AS YOUR PUPPY MATURES

As your puppy ages, you will notice several different stages in his development. Some days your puppy will be spot-on with training, and you'll feel like he's sure to make it as a guide dog. Other days, you'll wonder if you've taught him anything at all!

Just like us, puppies have good and bad days. While it's hard to know what is causing us to have a challenging or perfect puppy on a particular day, it's more important to continue seeing progress in general. If you are consistent with what you expect from your puppy, he will continue to mature and develop good habits and respect for you.

Please refer to Chapter 8 of this guide to learn more about the stages of development.

It's easy for us to become more relaxed in our training as our puppy ages and develops his skills. However, this is when it is important to keep up the training so that your puppy doesn't slip back into some old bad habits or develop some new ones. Continue expecting good behavior from your puppy. Continue to build his overall house manners. Expose your puppy to new environments; make sure you are doing outings not only with your friends and family, but by yourselves as well. You'll want to make sure your training is a mixture of walking and settling. Remember guide dogs walk everywhere and often use public transportation. So they may walk to the bus stop, settle while waiting for the bus, settle on the bus, get off the bus and walk to their destination, and then settle again. Don't forget to sometimes leave him home alone, in a crate, so he maintains those vital skills as well.

### TRAINING CHECKLIST

- House manners - Are you able to leave your puppy off-leash in the house without him getting into trouble? Without, counter surfing, or digging in the trash? Will he play with his own toys or grab other unacceptable items around the house?
- Walking - Can your puppy walk at least one mile daily? Can he walk nicely in your familiar neighborhood? Downtown? In a more rural environment? Through a crowd? On trash pick-up day with noisy trucks nearby? In inclement weather?
- Public transportation - Has your puppy ridden the city bus, light rail, subway, and/ or train?
- Has your puppy spent adequate time in the kennel?

- Have you traded your puppy out with another puppy raiser to experience a different environment? Or had some play dates and outings with other GDA|TLC dogs?
- Can your puppy reliably come to his name when off leash? If he has it mastered, increase the distractions; just make sure you keep him safe by being in an enclosed area or on a long line.
- Can your puppy rest quietly under the table as you dine at a busy restaurant?
- Is your puppy sleeping all night in his crate?
- Can your puppy crate quietly during the day, “just because,” even when he knows you’re at home?
- Is your puppy successful in all the “Critical Skills” in the GDA|TLC Glossary?
- Is your puppy able to be examined and restrained by people other than you?

# APPENDIX

Social Media Guidelines

Puppy Sitting Guidelines

Links to Commonly Used Puppy Raiser Forms

Doggie Language Poster

---

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

---

## Social Media Guidelines

Many of our raisers are excited to share their journey with friends, family and the general public via social media. When used responsibly, social media can be a wonderful tool to help raise awareness of Guide Dogs of America | Tender Loving Canines and our ongoing need for dedicated puppy raisers such as yourself. At the same time, it's important to remember all posts related to raising a guide dog puppy-in-training also reflect directly on our organization. Please keep this in mind and post thoughtfully! When posting to social media, puppy raisers are required to abide by the following guidelines:

1. All puppy-specific pages designed to document the puppy raising experience must be pre-approved by GDA|TLC. If you wish to design such a page on Facebook or Instagram, please contact Stephanie via email at [smcolman@guidedogsofamerica.org](mailto:smcolman@guidedogsofamerica.org). If pages are private, you'll be asked to add various members of the GDA|TLC team.
2. You are responsible for knowing and following program rules. Be sure to carefully read the manual so as to not inadvertently post pictures of you/your program puppy breaking program rules. For example, posting a picture with a dropped leash (no dropped leashes outside of fully enclosed areas!) or a puppy eating a Pupuccino (no "people food" for puppies, thus, no Pupuccinos!).
3. While even the most well-supervised puppies occasionally manage to get themselves into trouble, please refrain from heavily documenting puppy mischief, especially on a page designed specifically to track the puppy's progress. Yes, puppies sometimes dig in the mud, chew through the Ethernet cable or displace an entire box of tissues, but we prefer our puppies maintain a more "professional" presence of social media. Remember: Your GDA|TLC puppy is a guide or service dog prospect in-training, not a pet. Further, should the puppy you're raising go on to become a working guide or service dog, it can be worrisome to our clients to discover a puppy's "troublemaking past."
4. Similarly, remember whenever you are in public with your GDA|TLC puppy, and especially when the puppy is in-jacket, you are a walking billboard for our organization. Remember that GDA|TLC is a family-friendly organization – all posts related to the life-and-times of our puppies-in-training should be family friendly as well!
5. Puppy raisers are free to post to their own, personal social media accounts without seeking prior approval from GDA|TLC. However, we ask you still follow the above guidelines and seek to represent GDA|TLC and our puppy raising program in a positive light.
6. If the puppy you're raising goes on to graduate as a working guide or service dog, you will have an opportunity to meet the client who has received your dog. Out of respect for our clients, please do not post pictures of the newly formed team without the client's explicit permission to do so.

7. We trust you'll make every effort to reflect our organization, and our puppies, in a positive light! We don't anticipate any problems. However, we DO reserve the right to ask that you remove posts or shut down a page if we feel its content is not an appropriate representation of Guide Dogs of America | Tender Loving Canines.

### **Recommended Hashtags and Best Practices for “@” Mentions:**

1. When using Instagram, please always include #guidedogsofamerica, even if/when you “@” tag the @guidedogsofamerica account. This makes your post searchable and easier for our marketing team to see and share. When using Instagram Stories, please tag us using the “mention” button.
2. When posting on Facebook pages, please tag our @Guide Dogs of America -Tender Loving Canines Account.



## Puppy Sitting Guidelines

As a puppy raiser, should you need to attend a function before your puppy is “street legal,” or an event that might be inappropriate for the puppy, you have the option of soliciting the help of a puppy sitter to care for the puppy in your absence. Puppy sitting is designed primarily for puppies under 6 months of age.

Puppies older than 6 months should be visiting the kennel on a monthly basis, first for short stays and working toward several days via random intervals. When possible, consider timing kennel visits to correspond with those times when you’ll be away or otherwise unable to bring the puppy with you. Kennel visits are an important part of a puppy’s adolescent experience. We need the kennel to feel like a puppy’s “second home” for an easier transition into formal training.

### **EFFECTIVE JAN. 1 2018: PUPPY RAISERS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR SOURCING THEIR OWN PUPPY SITTERS.**

As you attend monthly meetings, make an effort to get to know fellow raisers, as they are the people you will turn to for puppy sitting. If you’re new to the group, or aren’t sure who to ask, consult your group leader for suggestions. Once you’ve secured an appropriate puppy sitter (following the guidelines, below), email the Puppy Department manager and Cc: your group leader so we know who is caring for your puppy (and when) in your absence.

Requirements for puppy sitters: All puppy sitters must be experienced GDA|TLC puppy raisers. If a raiser is between puppies s/he must still be actively attending monthly group meetings. “Active attendance” is defined as attending at least six meetings per year. If a raiser has been on an extended break from attending meetings, s/he must attend at least three consecutive meetings in order to become eligible to puppy sit. Actively attending meetings allows group members to get to know fellow raisers who are between dogs, but who still wish to avail themselves as puppy sitters. It also ensures the prospective sitter is aware of program developments in order to provide consistency when caring for another group member’s puppy.

When looking for a puppy sitter, please remember the following:

Is a puppy sitter really necessary? Puppies-in-training can – and should – be left home alone for short periods of time. When given a chance to eliminate first, and when properly confined to a crate, a young puppy can hold its bladder approximately one hour per month of age. Creating opportunities for the puppy to be left home alone for short periods is an important step in guarding against separation distress. (On a similar note, be sure to practice teaching your puppy it’s OK to be crated or tethered, away from you, when you’re home, too!) In general, other than at night when sleeping, GDA|TLC puppies should not be left alone in a crate longer than four hours at a time.

If you'll be away from home longer than four hours and cannot take the puppy, either ask a member of your raiser group to stop by your home to relieve the puppy and offer a mid-day break from the crate or arrange for your puppy to be cared for by a puppy sitter.

### **Guidelines for puppy sitters**

Please limit the total number of dogs in the home, including resident dogs, to not more than four.

Puppy sitting with littermates is discouraged due to littermates' tendency to engage in rougher-than-usual play.

Be mindful of puppy sitting requests involving intact dogs, especially as they approach sexual maturity (approximately 6 months of age). If considering a puppy sitting arrangement involving intact dogs, please contact Canine Development for management tips and things to watch for.

In the case of multiple dog households, the puppy sitter should have adequate management strategies in place to give the dogs a break from each other. This is especially important when placing puppies 16 weeks and younger in raiser homes with adolescent dogs. A multiple-dog household should not feel like an ongoing, indoor dog park!

### **When seeking a puppy sitter**

Remember to plan ahead as much as possible and secure puppy sitters early, especially during high-demand times such as the holiday season and during the summer months. In an emergency, please notify the Puppy Department and your group leader and we will work together to secure a puppy sitter as soon as possible.

If you are currently working through an ongoing behavioral issue with your puppy, please consult Canine Development for recommendations regarding puppy sitters and share relevant information with the puppy sitter.

If your puppy will be in the care of a sitter on a Puppy Kindergarten class night, look for a sitter willing to attend class with the puppy on your behalf. (You'll still need to audit the session you missed for your own learning, but at least your puppy will have continuity in his early group training.)

If your puppy will be in the care of a fellow raiser on the 1st or 15th of the month, when medication is due, be sure to bring medication with you and alert the puppy sitter.

Supply adequate food with feeding instructions, a bowl, crate (if needed), etc.

Confirm the puppy sitter is familiar with GDA|TLC's after-hours emergency phone number.

Take care not to abuse a fellow raiser's willingness to puppy sit. Get to know several raisers in your group so you can recruit different puppy sitters, as needed. (Potential puppy sitters: It's OK to say, "No," if a puppy sitting request is not convenient or if the puppy in question is more than you can comfortably handle.)

When picking up your puppy, remind the sitter to complete a Puppy Sitting Report, even if the sitting assignment was only a few hours in duration. It's helpful for the Canine Development Team to know how the puppy handled the experience, responded to cues given by a different handler, etc. The Puppy Sitting Report is available online under "Raise a Puppy" > "Forms for Current Puppy Raisers."

**REMEMBER:** Puppies 6 months of age and older should be visiting the kennel on a monthly basis, first for short visits, then working toward several days via random intervals. Ideally, the puppy can visit the kennel for an afternoon, followed by a 1- or 2-night stay. This arrangement is considered to be in the best interest of the puppy. If a day stay is not logistically possible, initial stays of 1-2 nights are acceptable, unless otherwise advised on a case-by-case basis. When scheduling kennel visits, plan to work up to a minimum of 7 consecutive days by the time the dog is 12 months old.

###

## Links to commonly used Puppy Raiser Forms

- Monthly Puppy Report 7 weeks to 5 months: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/FGCC2MB>
- Monthly Puppy Report 6 months to IFT: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/GJ27MZM>
- Puppy Sitting Report: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/VF7Q9M6>
- Group Class Survey: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/SXDVCLK>
- In Home Feedback/Survey: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/8YN7CCC>
- Boarding Drop-Off Form: <https://www.guidedogsofamerica.org/cms/assets/uploads/2018/04/DOG-DROP-OFF-FORM.pdf>
- Vet Care While Boarding Form:  
<https://www.guidedogsofamerica.org/cms/assets/uploads/2018/04/Vet-Dept-Questionnaire.pdf>
- Veterinary Reimbursement Form:  
<https://www.guidedogsofamerica.org/cms/assets/uploads/2018/04/Vet-Reimbursement-Form.pdf>

# DOGGIE LANGUAGE

starring Boogie the Boston Terrier



ALERT



SUSPICIOUS



ANXIOUS



THREATENED



ANGRY



"PEACE!"  
look away/head turn



STRESSED  
yawn



STRESSED  
nose lick



"PEACE!"  
sniff ground



"RESPECT!"  
turn & walk away



"NEED SPACE"  
whale eye



STALKING



STRESSED  
scratching



STRESS RELEASE  
shake off



RELAXED  
soft ears, blinky eyes



"RESPECT!"  
offer his back



FRIENDLY & POLITE  
curved body



FRIENDLY



"PRETTY PLEASE"  
round puppy face



"I'M YOUR LOVEBUG"  
belly-rub pose



"HELLO I LOVE YOU!"  
greeting stretch



"I'M FRIENDLY!"  
play bow



"READY!"  
prey bow



"YOU WILL FEED ME"



CURIOUS  
head tilt



HAPPY  
(or hot)



OVERJOYED  
wiggly



"MMMMM...."



"I LOVE YOU,  
DON'T STOP"

NOTES: