

You spoke,
we listened

Volunteers
making a difference

GUIDE
DOGS



Volunteer Boarder Development

Essential Dog Knowledge Handbook



Section A



Essential Dog Knowledge

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Essential Dog Knowledge

Introduction

Thank you for volunteering to board one of our adult dogs. We hope you will enjoy your new role and look forward to getting to know you over the next few weeks.

Our aim is to always provide well-trained and well-behaved dogs to our service users and we see volunteer boarders as an integral part of this process. We want to ensure the boarder training we provide to all our boarders enables you to help us consistently reach this goal with every dog.

Essential Dog Knowledge is the first of our training inputs for boarders. We consider this information to be essential preparation before caring for one of our dogs. Our dogs may have many different canine roles but they have one thing in common – they are all dogs.

We feel it is important that all our handlers (whether they are staff, service users or volunteers), should know both how dogs behave and also how they communicate their emotional state with other dogs and with people. Additionally it is important that we ensure all our volunteer boarders are clear regarding their legal responsibilities as a dog handler so that Guide Dogs' complies with legal, insurance and health and safety requirements.

We want to ensure we provide you with the very best training resources possible. Once you have successfully completed this training, we will provide you with all the practical skills and knowledge you will need before placing one of our dogs with you. This training is covered in the Essential Dog Care and Essential Dog Handling training inputs.

All training is supported by a handbook and there is always ongoing support from one of our qualified staff. Upon successful completion boarders are presented with a certificate of achievement as a token of our appreciation.

Finally, if you are interested in finding out more about any of the topics covered in Essential Dog Knowledge the following books have been recommended by our technical training team as further reading:

- Donaldson, J. (1996) *The Culture Clash*. Berkeley: James & Kenneth
- Fisher, J. (2001) *Think Dog*. London: Cassell & Co.
- Fogle, B. (1992) *The Dog's Mind*. London: Pelham



Essential Dog Knowledge

Origins of canine behaviour

To understand and communicate effectively with dogs that you come into contact with, it is essential that you have a basic understanding of why dogs behave as they do. This in turn will help you understand what your dog is communicating to you and help you to communicate more effectively with the dogs you are caring for.

Dog ancestry displayed in the modern dog

The domestic dog still displays many of the behaviours of its ancestor the wolf.

All breeds of dogs have a genetic link with the wolves currently living throughout the world. Like wolves, dogs remain social animals that enjoy and thrive when living in groups.

Man first domesticated wolves to capitalise on their abilities to hunt for food and to protect the people and families within their settlements. By breeding from the tamest wolves, more social and biddable dogs were developed. As you would expect, the first domesticated dogs looked very similar to wolves. However with selective breeding for size, colour, temperament and behaviour, man has created the multitude of dog breeds that exists today. The extent to which an individual's behaviour relates to that of its ancestry will vary from individual to individual and from breed to breed. Domestic dogs still exhibit a number of innate/instinctive behaviours and our Guide Dogs stock also exhibit these behaviours.

While these behaviours may be typical 'dog' behaviours, it is important to remember that our dogs will go on to live with, and guide, a person who is blind or partially sighted. For this reason some behaviour may make a dog unsuitable as a guide if the trait is too strongly developed within the dog's makeup.

Your understanding of how some of these behaviours may manifest themselves is essential if we are to maximise the numbers of dogs which will be suitable to go on to live with and guide their owners.





Essential Dog Knowledge

Instinctive behaviours

Bedding

This refers to the circling action carried out by some dogs before lying down and is an instinctive behaviour intended to flatten the surface before settling down. You may also see a dog rearrange its bedding before it settles. This is a natural and acceptable behaviour.

Carrying

Wild dogs will carry their food back to the family group or pack for sharing and storing. These carrying and retrieving behaviours have been selectively maintained by man and are evident in breeds such as Golden and Labrador Retrievers. In the home environment, dogs will display this behaviour by carrying their toys/bones/bedding and/or when bringing articles during greeting. This is a natural and acceptable behaviour, providing the dog limits this behaviour to its own belongings. Carrying items such as shoes, bags or cushions should be actively discouraged. For a guide dog owner this could prove to be very frustrating and challenging behaviour. Speak to the dog's handler if you recognise this behaviour in any of our dogs that you are boarding so that they can advise you.

Herding, chasing and stalking

These are basic behaviours required during hunting and are necessary for the survival of predatory animals. As a result, degrees of this behaviour will be exhibited by dogs that you will be boarding. Herding breeds, such as Collies and German Shepherds, show a stronger instinct to carry out these chase behaviours. However, all dogs run or chase to a degree and even shake toys during play; the basis for all this behaviour is hunting. These behaviours are acceptable in our dogs providing they are easily controlled. Any displays of herding, chasing or stalking behaviour should be noted and mentioned to the dog's handler.

Digging

Digging is a behaviour derived from the storage of food and/or the maternal need to create a den. This instinct is still present in domesticated dogs even though they are well fed and housed. You may witness this behaviour in dogs that try to hide food or toys, chew their beds or dig holes in the grass runs. Occasional digging is an acceptable behaviour providing this can be easily controlled (i.e. the dog stops when you tell it to) and it is infrequent. Prolonged or obsessive digging behaviour should be reported to the dog's handler.



Essential Dog Knowledge

Gorging

In the wild, dogs hunt and eat in groups and as a result, the faster they eat the more they eat. Therefore some dogs may bolt their food if there is a perceived threat of it being removed or stolen by another individual; this can explain why some dogs may eat faster in the presence of other dogs or members of the family. Tug of war games are also derived from eating and gorging, stemming from conflict over food. Gorging behaviour can usually be successfully managed and further training will be provided in level one. If you perceive a problem with gorging behaviour please speak to the dog's handler who will advise you further. Tug of war games are deemed to be acceptable behaviours and can provide great fun for both dog and handler, providing the game remains controlled by the handler. Again, please report any concerns to the dog's handler.

Guarding

In the wild, dogs' guarding behaviour is instinctive because as predators they need to protect resources that are crucial to their survival; the more valuable the resource, the stronger their guarding behaviour becomes. This behaviour can be displayed in the domestic dog in varying degrees and extremes, from alarm barking to showing aggression over food and toys. You are more likely to see this behaviour displayed in Guide Dogs stock during play when one dog will maintain possession of a toy by turning its head to prevent other dogs or people from taking it. Guarding behaviour is not acceptable behaviour for Guide Dogs stock to display. Please report any displays or incidents such as growling, lip curling, raised hackles or extreme barking to the dog's handler whether during a play session or another situation. It is common for some dogs to bark at the door (alarm barking). This is a permissible behaviour, providing the dog becomes quiet when you ask it to. This behaviour still needs to be reported to the dog's handler so that they can assess the dog's behaviour and advise accordingly.

Hunting

It is believed that the dog's ancestor, the wolf, was originally domesticated to take advantage of its hunting ability. Through thousands of years of selective breeding, a wide variety of domestic breeds has subsequently been developed. While most domestic dogs are less equipped to hunt than their ancestors, some still have innate traits and abilities which are specialised. These vary from dogs with highly developed senses of smell used for tracking a scent, to those with keen eyesight.

Undesirable hunting behaviour is most commonly observed in the domestic dog when they chase cats, squirrels and other small animals. In some herding breeds this can also be seen as car or bicycle chasing. Such overt displays of hunting behaviour, though natural, would render a dog unsuitable for Guide Dogs work. Please report any such behaviour to the dog's handler.



Essential Dog Knowledge

Licking

Licking is used instinctively by young puppies to encourage an adult dog to regurgitate food. Wild dogs are weaned onto solid food with the partly digested contents of an adult's stomach. Licking is also seen during social grooming. The more submissive dogs will groom the dominant ones when allowed. This is often displayed by Guide Dogs puppies when they lick their handlers or other people. Occasional licking is an acceptable behaviour. Displays of face or mouth licking are not acceptable and must not be encouraged. Speak to the dog's handler if your dog displays regular licking behaviour or insists on face/mouth licking.

Mouthing

Mouthing is a natural behaviour, and is especially prevalent in dogs that are bred to retrieve. Dogs like to hold or carry objects, especially when expressing excitement or pleasure. This behaviour is most commonly observed in younger adolescent dogs where they are still mentally and physically developing but this type of behaviour can also be indicative of a number of other behaviours. Sometimes the dog may try to hold, nibble or carry people's hands or clothing. Although this behaviour is rarely based on aggression, it can be misinterpreted as such and can also cause an injury. Mouthing is therefore not an acceptable behaviour for Guide Dog stock to display and must be consistently discouraged and managed appropriately.

For further information on mouthing please refer to the 'Mouthing' section in the Essential Dog Handling handbook

Mounting

This is a sexual activity but it can also be used to assert dominance over other canine pack members. It is a behaviour which can be displayed in both dogs and bitches. Incidents of mounting behaviour must be discouraged as this is not acceptable behaviour for potential guide dogs. If a boarding dog displays mounting behaviour please inform the dog's handler who will advise you accordingly.

Rolling

Some dogs will roll in the foulest smelling substances, including fox faeces and decaying animals. Others will roll in sand or long grass. The reason is likely to be as a result of instinctive behaviour originally carried out to disguise the dog's natural scent and improve success when hunting. Many of our dogs display this behaviour by rolling in the grass or on a rug or carpet. Rolling behaviour is deemed acceptable providing the dog is not regularly rolling in foul substances. If your dog rolls in something disgusting please inform the dog's handler who will advise you and monitor the regularity of the behaviour.



Essential Dog Knowledge

Scavenging

Wolves started the domestication process by scavenging around human settlements. The tamest wolves got closer and benefited from increased food scraps which meant they were healthier and subsequently had more litters. Scavenging is a strong innate behaviour that is still visible in the domestic dog today, ranging from dogs scavenging on the village dump in developing countries, to pets scavenging around waste bins in the local park. Scavenging behaviour may be observed in the house or whilst out with your dog. Scavenging behaviour within the house can often be managed and the trainer will advise you on how to address this. Scavenging behaviour whilst out on the lead is not an acceptable behaviour for guide dogs in training to display as it could have potentially serious consequences for the future guide dog owner. All incidents of scavenging must be reported to the dog's handler as it is a self-rewarding behaviour which can quickly increase if it is not addressed quickly.

Scent marking

This behaviour is carried out by a dog to emphasise its presence to other dogs within the environment by urinating and/or ground scratching. Dogs use this method in the wild to mark out their territory and that of their pack. This is most commonly seen in the domestic dog when adolescent males 'cock' their legs or when pre-season/in-season bitches 'mark' by spot urination. You may see this when you take a dog out to relieve itself. Scent marking is considered an acceptable behaviour in stud dogs and brood bitches and in all stock if the dog is off the lead in the garden or on a free run. It is not deemed to be an acceptable behaviour for training dogs to display whilst walking on the lead or within the house. Please report any incidents to the dog's handler.

Vocalisation

Dogs naturally live within groups or packs and as a result they need to communicate with one another over a variety of distances. A common vocalisation is howling and this can be heard in domestic dogs usually when they are left alone as they attempt to communicate with the distant pack. Dogs you come into contact with may well try to communicate in this way when initially settling into a new environment. This behaviour is usually short lived, however please report any incidents to the dog's handler who will advise you on how to manage this behaviour.

Chewing

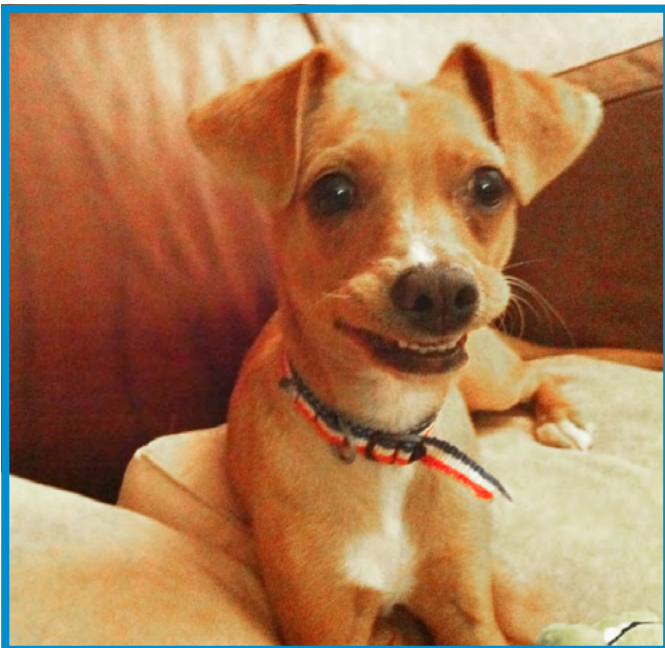
Chewing is a natural dog behaviour and is particularly noticeable in puppies and young adult dogs where their jaws are still developing. It is also a natural stress reliever for dogs. Chewing is an acceptable behaviour for Guide Dogs stock to exhibit providing the dog is chewing on suitable chew toys. Chewing of personal belongings, carpets, children's toys etc. is not acceptable and must be reported. Further information and training will be given in the Dog Care input about how to best use this behaviour for the benefit of the dog you are boarding.



Essential Dog Knowledge

Dog language – How do dogs communicate?

A dog will communicate through its body language, eye contact, gestures and postures, a range of vocal noises and through scent as the following photos indicate:



This dog is showing it's teeth in a non aggressive posture. 'Smiling' behaviour is a very common behaviour in many dogs.

commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3ASmiling_dog_2013-09-17_19-49.jpg



This dog is not 'smiling' but warning an attack is imminent if the photographer comes close to his bone.

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Do_not_take_his_bone.jpg?uselang=en-gb#file

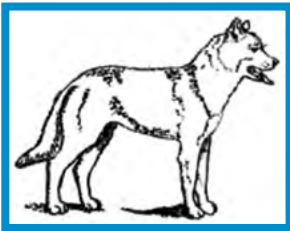
Many adult dogs 'smile'. In the two photographs above, both dogs are showing their teeth. In the first photograph the dog is likely to be showing its teeth in a submissive way as when greeting another dog or person. It is a behaviour which is often accompanied by other submissive canine signals such as flattened ears and a soft lowered body posture. In the second photograph the dog is baring its teeth to defend a bone. By comparing the two photos above it becomes clear that knowledge of communication is essential when handling dogs.



Essential Dog Knowledge

Body language signals

The following pictures illustrate a number of different physical and emotional states which are conveyed through the dog's posturing and body language.



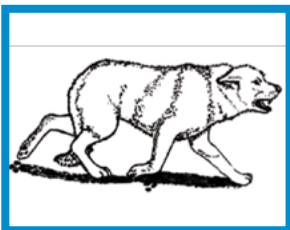
Relaxed posture

Relaxed tail posture and facial expression with a loose stance.



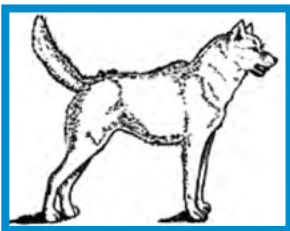
Stressed/anxious

Tail down, body lowered, ears back. Erratic movement. May pant and lick lips.



Submissive

Tail down (may wag quickly), soft lowered body posture. Ears flattened and back. Eye contact sought but not maintained. Smooth forehead. Lips taut (may appear to smile).



Confident/aggressive

Stiff tail, raised and bristled. Hackles raised. Ears upright and forward. Lips raised and teeth visible. Stiff-legged upright stance.

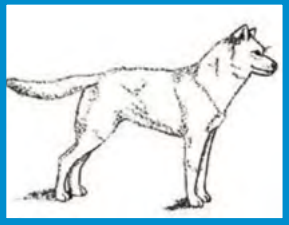


Submissive

Rolls on back to expose stomach and throat. Ears flat and back. Head turned to avoid eye contact. Tight lips. Usually remains still at times of threat.

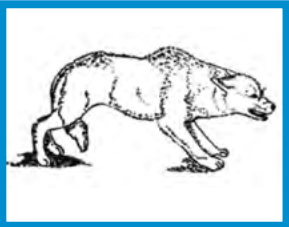


Essential Dog Knowledge



Alert and attentive

Horizontal tail carriage, may move slightly. Ears upright may move to detect sound source, upright body position. Mouth generally closed with head forward facing.



Fearful/aggressive

Tense lowered body, tail tucked. Hackles raised. Ears back, lips curled. Submissive stance yet ready to defend self.



Playful

Tail upright, yet not bristled, ears up. Front legs lowered with high back end. Face relaxed. Dogs use 'play bows' to incite play with one another. Dogs will use play sessions to assert themselves over one another, in a less formal way than confrontation. If you watch dogs playing, you may see dogs alternate between confident/playful/submissive signals frequently.



Essential Dog Knowledge

Facial expressions

A dog will also display a wide range of subtle facial expressions to enhance body posture communication. Again these signals should not be used in isolation to identify a dog's intentions but should be 'read' in conjunction with all the communication clues available at the time.



Fearful and aggressive

Teeth bared, ears flat and back.



Confident and aggressive

Teeth bared, ears upright and forward, direct eye contact.



Attentive

Upright ears, fixed gaze, forward facing yet expression relaxed.



Fearful or submissive

Tight lips, ears flattened and back, head position lowered.



Essential Dog Knowledge

Eye contact

This is an extremely important communication method between dogs. Direct eye contact is usually displayed by a confident dog and one that is threatening or challenging, whereas an averted gaze is usually displayed by submissive types.

Ear positioning

A dog's ears have a wide range of movement. Although this is primarily to assist with sound source detection, dogs also use them to convey intentions and feelings. As a general guide, flattened, pinned back ears can indicate fear, submission or intense concentration, whereas erect ears can suggest confidence, aggression or distraction.

Lip/muzzle position

The obvious signals given via the mouth are snarling, biting and snapping. This is usually an indication of aggression, either apprehensive or dominant. These behaviours should not be confused with mouthing which is usually displayed to seek attention. There are a number of other signals given by the mouth, including yawning or lip licking which can both indicate anxiety / stress, and 'smiling' which is usually intended to display a submissive greeting.

Head position

Closely linked with body posture, the way in which a dog holds its head can give a clear communication to others regarding its intentions. An upright position usually indicates interest, confidence or aggression, whereas a lowered head can indicate distraction (by scent), apprehension, submission or fear.

Dogs convey their intentions and feelings using a wide range of complex yet subtle body signals, facial expressions, scents and vocal expressions. A combination of all these signals is used during communication, so when assessing a dog's state of mind try to look at the dog as a whole, not at one specific aspect, e.g. tail position or posture. Signals vary from dog to dog, dependent on breed, age and experience, however similarities do also exist. It is important to understand that, unlike humans, dogs do not have the ability to disguise their feelings. The previous diagrams all highlight specific aspects of a dog's body language, however do remember every dog may communicate slightly differently and this will also vary according to the situation it is involved in.



Essential Dog Knowledge

Other methods of canine communication

Aside from posturing, dogs use a number of other methods to communicate. These are:

Sounds

As explained earlier, dogs have a high hearing ability. As a result dogs make a variety of sounds when communicating, including barking (a wide variety of barks exist and can convey protectiveness, surprise, excitement and much more), yelping, whining, howling, growling, whimpering etc. All individuals and breeds have a different array of sounds and as a result each dog must be assessed as an individual.

Scent

With such a highly developed sense of smell, it is of little surprise that dogs use scent to communicate in a number of ways. Dogs produce scent naturally, and this scent carries information to other dogs regarding sexual and social status. Likewise, dogs can detect pheromones given off by other living organisms, including us, which give information regarding general mood including fear and anger.

Physical contact

Dogs are tactile creatures and communicate with one another physically during greeting, play, attention seeking, grooming and fighting. This is evident when dogs give paws, nibble, mouth or bite each other. Naturally this behaviour can be extended to humans, although within guide dogs these behaviours are discouraged.

It takes experience to read any dog and fully understand what it is trying to communicate. The dog's handler will work with you to increase your understanding about what the dog is trying to communicate to you once you have started boarding for us.



Essential Dog Knowledge

How humans communicate with dogs

The relationship between a service dog and its owner is a close partnership, dependent on the ability to communicate effectively. The same should be true of all dog and handler relationships, as without effective communication between one another, confusion can result and undesired behaviours can be exhibited by the dog. Humans communicate primarily using language. Our language in written or spoken form contains a vast amount of information which dogs cannot comprehend.

Despite what some people believe, dogs do not understand every word we say. Instead they primarily use the following techniques to try and understand what a human is trying to communicate to them:

- **voice** – the tone and volume of the voice e.g. high pitched, deep, loud, soft etc.
- **words** – dogs are able to comprehend simple commands but not sentences
- **body language** – overall posture e.g. upright, stooped, eye contact, body gestures etc.
- **scent** – especially fear or anxiety
- **emotion** – happy, sad, confident, nervous

These communication techniques have to be used effectively when training or handling a dog, because this is how dogs understand us. Further information and practical training on how to communicate with dogs will be provided during the 'Essential Dog Handling' input.



Essential Dog Knowledge

Legal responsibilities of a handler

The final section in 'Essential Dog Knowledge' covers your legal responsibilities as the handler of the dog. The legislation is broadly similar throughout the UK but there are some important variations in the legal powers of each country and the wording used.

'Essential Dog Knowledge part B' provides country specific information and states all the relevant legislation for boarding activities in;

England

Wales

Scotland

Northern Ireland

You will be issued with the relevant section B as part of your training.

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