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**Volunteer Boarder Development**

**Essential Dog Handling Handbook**



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## Welcome

Thank you for agreeing to emergency board one of our dogs during the COVID-19 pandemic. We are truly grateful for your support at this time. We hope you will gain genuine pleasure from the experience this brings to you and your family. Your role as an emergency boarder provides critical support to mobility services staff in meeting the care and welfare needs of our dogs at this time. This will support Guide Dogs going forward in achieving our goal to enable increasing numbers of blind and partially sighted people to travel independently once this crisis is over.

### **Guide Dogs is committed to supporting you fully during this time.**

All our dogs go on to fulfil unique roles –either to enrich the life of a future blind or partially sighted owner or to become breeding stock. Our success comes from years of experience and ensuring consistency in everything we do. Your role as an emergency boarder and how you care for our dogs will be a vital

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component in our continued success. From a dog-care perspective, the most valuable service our boarders provide to Guide Dogs is a structured, calm and caring environment for our dogs.

We will provide you with all the support you need when placing a dog with you. All we ask from you is that all the training and advice provided is followed.

This handbook provides information and techniques on how to care for the dog that you board.

It is important to remember that all dogs are individuals and that if you have any questions or concerns, you must discuss them with the dog's handler. Problems can often be resolved quickly the sooner they are highlighted and we are here to help you every step of the way.

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**The dog's handler** - this is the person responsible for the particular dog you are boarding. This person will be responsible for the dog's welfare and depending on where the dog is on its journey through Guide Dogs, is likely to be responsible for the dog's training. You may always have the same dog handler every time you board, or this may change with every dog.

Throughout this handbook there are sections for you to record your own notes as you go through your training programme and we wish you every success in your role as a boarder.

## Qualities of a handler

Guide Dogs recognise that everyone is different and will bring different qualities with them to their volunteering role. To help you fully enjoy your role as a boarder and communicate effectively with the dog you are boarding, achieve high standards of behaviour and help the dog settle quickly, applying some the following characteristics will help:

**Consistency** – provides the dog with clear boundaries. Consistent handling minimises stress and provides clear messages to the dog as to what is acceptable behaviour.

**Patience** – dogs are individuals and can sometimes act unpredictably. Being able to remain calm, even when progress is slow will ensure the dog develops.

**Perseverance** – dogs can take time to settle and may present challenging behaviours which will need time and commitment to work through.

**Tolerance** – dogs can be noisy, smelly and can misbehave. They are also prone to behave in ways which can cause us a range of emotions from embarrassment, upset, enjoyment, laughter etc. A tolerant approach will help you get the most enjoyment from boarding

**Empathy** – all dogs need to be treated with consideration and kindness and this is the only way to ensure a happy healthy and relaxed dog.

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**Flexibility** – our dogs have special careers, so we may ask you to do something different from what you might do with a pet dog. We may also ask you to do different things with each dog. Being flexible will help us all get the best from each dog.

**Enthusiasm** – boarding a dog for us should be fun, and being ready to take on the challenge will really help you and the dogs you board.

Recognising that the dogs you board may need different handling approaches and will not all behave in the same way will ensure you are meeting the needs of the dog and help it reach its potential.

## Preparation for boarding checklist

The Essential Dog Care handbook contains a section on how prepare your home for a new dog. Please use the following checklist to ensure you are ready and prepared for the arrival of the first dog.

In general terms expect the new dog to investigate everything so you must be vigilant at all times. The safety of your home and garden will have been checked by one of our staff during your interview but please bear in mind that dogs are born explorers.

### In the house ensure the dog is kept safe by:

- keeping the collar and ID tag on the dog at all times
- putting the dog on the lead when opening the back/front door or ensuring the dog is secured behind a baby gate when answering the door
- ensuring the house and garden are secure and remembering that a new dog will investigate every part of a fence or boundary and will definitely find any weak points
- ensuring that doors and gates are kept closed, (If the dog does escape you must inform Guide Dogs immediately and either the local dog warden or the police as soon as you can)

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- being aware of and removing all potential hazards in the home which include: medicines, cleaning products, small items which the dog may chew or swallow and restricting access to rubbish bins

### In the garden

Your garden will have been checked for obvious hazards during your interview and recommendations made to make it as safe as possible for boarding. The dog's handler may ask you to limit access or not let the dog into the garden. Whether or not the dog is to be given access to the garden you need to ensure it is safe. More information on how to achieve this can be found in the Dog Care handbook.

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## Equipment issued by Guide Dogs

Guide Dogs will provide all necessary equipment for the dog you are boarding. This is generally a lead, collar with Guide Dogs ID disc, grooming equipment and a toy. Other equipment is supplied when there is a specific requirement for the dog you are boarding. The most common additional piece of equipment is the half check collar.

During your training you will be shown how and when to use the various pieces of equipment. If you have any concerns about how to use the equipment issued or if you need to request a replacement, please speak to either your boarder coordinator or the dog's handler.

### Flat/play collar

Flat collars come in a variety of sizes and are either leather with a buckle fastening or webbing with plastic 'snap' fastening and sliders for adjusting the size to fit the dog.

### The collars are used:

- in the house/ in the spending area/anytime the dog is not on a lead
- for lead walking for dogs that do not require a half check for control

The Guide Dogs ID tag should always be attached to the collar. This is a legal requirement and helps quickly return a lost dog.

**Note:** Guide Dogs recommend that boarders add an additional ID tag to the collar containing their surname and a contact telephone number. This does not form part of the standard issue.



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### To correctly fit the collar:

- ensure the collar is in good order
- when fitting and removing the collar, it should be undone at the buckle or clip. Removing the collar by slipping it on or off whilst it is done up should be avoided as this may cause the dog discomfort. It could also result in the dog becoming hand shy or learn to back quickly out of the collar. 'Backing out' of the collar as a working guide dog could be difficult for a service user to deal with and may lead to them being pulled over, or the dog escaping
- the collar should be tight enough to prevent it being pulled off over the dog's head, but with enough slack to allow two or three fingers to be fitted underneath the collar alongside the dog's neck
- periodic checks should be made to ensure the collar is still fitting and not simply fastened by habit at a particular hole

### To correctly fit the collar:

- the snap fastener enables the handler to put on the half check like a collar thereby reducing the possible negative effects of slipping the half check on and off over the dog's head
- when correctly fitted the two rings at the ends of the webbing should be approx. 2cm apart when the chain is pulled tight by the 'free' ring; this enables the corrective action of the half check to operate correctly
- the half check should be loose at all times
- the half check should not be left on a dog at any time other than when it is on a lead as it could become caught in something, which in turn could cause discomfort, frighten the dog or in an extreme situation injure the dog
- always put the flat collar on the dog before removing the half check

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### Lead

The lead is made of brown leather. It can be adjusted by transferring the 'G' clip between the two 'D' rings to create different lengths of lead. When walking the dog on the lead, the lead must be doubled up. A longer lead can be created with a 'hand loop' at one end for leash relief or when the dog is in a social situation and needs to remain on the lead.

When fitting the lead to the collar check ensure the lead is connected to the D ring and not the ID tag. The thinner ID tag ring is easily pulled apart and a dog could easily pull this away from the collar.

The sight of the lead can often be exciting for a dog who is anticipating a walk. However when fitting all equipment, especially the lead, it is important that your dog remains well-mannered and patient. Ensure that the dog always sits quietly before and whilst you fit the lead. Behaviour such as mouthing and jumping up not only makes fitting the lead difficult, but can also be dangerous.

If the dog gets excited, quietly wait for the dog to sit calmly before continuing to fit the lead. If you are finding this difficult with any dog you board please speak to the dog's main handler for further advice.

### Lead flash

Lead flashes are issued to boarders when a specific need is identified.

### Whistle

The whistle is small and plastic and can be attached to string or ribbon to avoid it getting lost. It is used for feeding and recalling the dog when free running.

The use of the whistle for feeding is covered in the Dog Care handbook and free running is explained in the Dog Free Running handbook.

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### Grooming equipment

Grooming equipment will be issued appropriate to the dog's needs. The types of grooming equipment provided and instruction on how to use any equipment is covered in the Dog Care handbook.

### Toys

Each dog is provided with a suitable toy when staying with a boarder. Boarders are welcome to provide further toys in line with the advice provided in the Dog Care handbook.

### Safety and condition of equipment

Please ensure that all equipment is checked regularly to ensure that it is:

- fit for use and works correctly
- not damaged - e.g. missing rivets/stitches, sharp edges which may cause injury to the handler/dog/public
- robust - to make sure it does not become loose/break whilst being used

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## Additional equipment

The following equipment is not routinely issued by Guide Dogs as many boarders prefer to purchase their own products. If you require assistance or advice regarding the provision of any of the equipment listed below please speak to the boarder co-ordinator.

### **Dog bowl**

A dog bowl is required for feeding and to ensure the dog has access to clean, fresh water at all times. This must be washed out regularly and rinsed to remove any remaining soap suds. For hygiene reasons always use a separate cloth or brush to clean dog bowls separately from human dishes.

### **Dog bedding**

This can be an old duvet or blanket, a basket or other dog bed. All dogs enjoy a soft surface to lie on so if using a plastic dog bed please ensure there is sufficient bedding for the dog to be comfortable.

### **Baby gate**

A baby gate can be helpful to limit access for the dog around the home. It can also be used to help a dog settle away from a busy environment.

### **Dog waste bags**

To abide by local bylaws, all handlers must 'pick up' after dogs that have spent in public places. Dog waste bags should be carried at all times when out with a dog and any mess disposed of in an appropriate container.

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### Cleaning equipment

It is your responsibility to ensure that your allocated spending area is maintained. Typical equipment for this task can include shovel, hose, bucket, and dog waste bags. Old towels can also be very useful for drying off wet dogs and wiping muddy paws. They can also be useful to help tidy where muddy wet paws have been!

### Car harness/dog guard

All dogs are required to be transported safely when in a vehicle by provision of a suitable dog guard or car harness.

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## The first 48 hours

### Making the dog feel at home

As soon as you start boarding a new dog, everything and everyone in your environment is new to the dog. This can be an unsettling experience for some dogs and may result in the dog not showing its true self – appearing either very excitable or withdrawn. You cannot explain what is happening to the dog, so it will be up to you to help make the dog feel secure in its new environment. Try not to expect too much of the dog during the first couple of days until it has settled into your home and has started to form a bond with you.

A quiet first few days is crucial to limit any potential problems. The dog should be allowed to settle and relax into the household, getting to know the immediate family only. Visitors should be avoided in the first few days – more information on how to manage the dog and visitors can be found in the Social behaviour section of this handbook. Family members should be calm and neutral in their approach to the dog.

During these first few days the dog should not be left without adult company. Plan to spend the first few days settling the dog in, getting to know each other and establishing a spending routine. This can require some forward planning as you may need to rearrange social activities in order to prioritise this time at home with a new dog. If you do have to go out please discuss this with the dog's main handler prior to receiving the dog into your home.

### Sleeping areas

Every dog needs its own space and during your interview this will have discussed and a suitable area identified for the dog to sleep in. A quiet, warm, draught free spot is ideal.

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### Establishing a spending routine

Establishing a spending routine for a boarding dog is one of the most important tasks during the first few days. The dog needs to know where it can spend, and it needs to feel comfortable using that area. If a good spending routine is not established then a dog in training may begin to spend whilst working in harness. This can become habit-forming, making it more difficult to get the dog used to using the identified allocated spending area at home. It can also affect the dog's ability to learn during training sessions and if it becomes a habit can be very embarrassing for a service user and can affect the working relationship.

Further advice on how to establish a spending routine is provided in the Dog Care handbook. If you are having problems with spending, please speak to the dog's handler.

### Establishing a Feeding Routine

Please remember that dogs are creatures of habit and prefer a predictable routine. To help settle a new dog into your home try to keep as close to its agreed feeding time as possible. This will also help to establish a predictable and appropriate spending routine.

There is rarely a problem with the dog's feeding, although some more sensitive dogs may lose their appetite for the first couple of days in a new environment. As long as the dog appears normal in every other way there should be nothing to worry about.

Feeding and weight management is covered more fully in the Dog Care handbook.

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## Meeting other pets

It is important that Guide Dogs stock live happily and harmoniously with any existing pets for the benefit and welfare of all concerned. Always ensure that other pets are introduced gradually to Guide Dogs stock and monitor the interactions closely until you are comfortable that the animals are settled with each other.

### Dogs

Ideally pet dogs should be introduced to the boarding dog in a neutral environment with both dogs on lead for the initial greeting.

In the home be aware that toys or bones could cause guarding behaviour in all dogs, regardless of how gentle and accommodating the dog normal is, so remove all toys and bones and reintroduce them slowly. Feed the dogs separately to ensure each dog can enjoy its food.

As all dogs are individuals, the dog's handler will advise you specifically about how best to introduce and settle the boarding dog with your pet dog/s. Please speak to the dog's handler if you have another pet dog visiting your home so they can advise you how best to manage the introductions.

### Cats

Introduce the dog to the cat with the dog on a lead to control any initial chasing behaviour. Do not force the animals together in any way and ensure the cat has an area of the house which the dog cannot access using a baby gate if necessary.

Keep cat food in a room which the dog does not have access to and ensure the dog cannot eat the cat food. Also ensure the dog does not have access to any litter trays.

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### Small caged animals and birds

By initially putting the dog on the lead you will be able to assess the dog's level of interest. Remember that all dogs are predators and have the potential to cause harm to smaller animals. Ensure the dog never has access to cages or hutches and that these are securely fixed and cannot be knocked over. Do not allow the dog unsupervised access to any small animals or birds regardless of whether it is caged or loose.

Report any concerns to the dog's handler who will be able to help you with specific issues.

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## Leaving the dog

Once the dog has settled in your home, you can begin to leave it. It is common for dogs to demonstrate undesirable behaviours if they feel insecure or abandoned which can lead to 'separation anxiety' so please consider the following advice:

### Leaving a new dog during the day

- allow the dog to get used to being on its own in a new environment gradually. Begin by leaving it for 5 minutes and increase this time by a few minutes every time
- when leaving the dog the first few times, the following will help it to feel relaxed in its new environment:
  - leave a radio on
  - leave a light on (if it is dusk or will be dark by the time you get home)
  - leave quietly, without making a fuss
- allow the dog to spend before leaving (be aware that if you have already prepared to go out e.g. putting coat and shoes on, finding keys etc. the dog may not spend as it is anticipating you leaving)
- shut doors and baby gates to any rooms you do not want the dog access to
- put food away to prevent scavenging
- ensure the dog has access to fresh water
- ensure that windows are closed sufficiently so that the dog cannot escape
- ensure that appropriate toys are left with the dog
- ensure the dog is not left alone for longer than 4 hours during a 24 hour period
- on your return ignore the dog for the first few minutes until it settles

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### Settling a dog at night

When settling a dog at night, please ensure you have completed the following steps:

- allow the dog an opportunity to spend last thing
- ensure the area is safe and the dog does not have access to bins, food sources, medicines, chemicals etc.
- ensure the dog has access to fresh water
- encourage the dog to settle the dog on his bed
- quietly praise the dog
- leave the room quietly
- allow the dog time to settle - do not go straight back to the dog if it whines or barks

Many dogs find it stressful being left, especially if the environment is unfamiliar. If the dog continues to bark return to the dog and, quietly give it a further opportunity to relieve itself. Do this quietly and calmly and with a minimum of physical or verbal interaction. Try leaving a lamp on and putting the radio on quietly.

Please do not take the dog upstairs or into a bedroom with you.

Please report any incidents of unsettled behaviour to the dog's handler.

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## Commands and obedience

It is important to remember that all dogs are different and will need different handling techniques. Here you will find the basic information you require and you will learn more during your practical training. Please speak to the dog's handler if you have any questions.

### Basic commands

The table on the following page gives a list of basic commands which the dogs you board will be familiar with. However, it is important to never make assumptions about what the dog should be able to do and consideration must be given to the current circumstances as you ask them to do perform an action.

Whilst the dog will know the command, please be mindful that the dog's state of mind may affect how responsive it is to commands. A dog that is very excited, nervous, new to the environment, recently come from a stressful situation etc. may be less likely to respond to commands or instruction. It is also worth considering in what part of the dog's life you are boarding – a training dog may behave and understand very differently to an ill or elderly dog.

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Command	Use
<b>Sit</b>	Used when you want the dog to sit. Avoid using 'sit down' as this can confuse the dog.
<b>Down</b>	Used when you want the dog to lie down. This should not be used to stop the dog from getting onto furniture or jumping up.
<b>Stand</b>	Used to stop the dog whilst moving on lead and also to ask the dog to move up from a 'sit' position.
<b>Off</b>	Used to stop the dog getting on furniture or jumping up.
<b>Wait</b>	Used when the dog is required to remain stationary for a short period of time. Examples include during recall, when feeding and putting the lead on. This is a temporary "halt" prior to another command.
<b>Stay</b>	Used when the dog is to remain in position for a longer period of time, and usually when the dog can 'relax'. Usually this happens when the dog is in a "down" position.
<b>Go Free</b>	To release the dog from the last command given, this is most usually used when free running.
<b>Busy</b>	Used to encourage the dog to relieve itself. Remember this is not a 'command'.
<b>Come</b>	Used in conjunction with dog's name as a command for the dog to be with the handler i.e. recall or starting off from a stationary position.
<b>No</b>	Used to discourage any undesirable behaviour.
<b>Quiet</b>	Used to discourage dogs from barking.
<b>Leave</b>	Used when you want the dog to give something it has in its mouth.

When using commands, it is also important to think about the tone and volume of your voice and also what your body language is demonstrating to the dog. Try to always remain calm, and not repeat the command too many times. Try to fit your tone to the outcome you want e.g. positive and welcoming when using 'come' to call the dog back.

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The dog's handler will give you direction on how much obedience the dog you are boarding will need to practise. It is likely that this will be different for each dog so please ensure you have been given all the details you need in order to meet the needs of the dog.

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## Lead Work

During your training you will be shown how to walk the dog you are boarding on a lead, maintaining a basic level of control and using the correct commands. Unless otherwise advised the dog should always be walked on the left and you should be able to walk the dog in the 'heel' position (dog by your side) with a loose and relaxed lead.

How and when you can walk the dog on the lead will be determined by the dog's handler, who will understand the current needs of the dog. We ask that you follow this advice carefully as it will have an impact on the dog's progress.

You will have learnt in the Essential Dog Knowledge module that it is an offence under The Road Traffic Act (1988) to allow a dog on a designated road without it being held on a lead. It is crucially important that you follow this legal requirement to be both compliant with the law and for the safety of the dog you are boarding.

All dogs are different and some will be more responsive and willing to walk 'nicely' on the lead than others. During your training you will be shown techniques to help improve and maintain dogs' lead obedience, and this can be covered again with the dog/s you go on to board. Generally the skills you will need are:

- use of voice - tone, volume
- appropriate level of control and praise – help the dog's understanding
- consistency – to prevent confusion for the dog and reduce stress
- Basic commands used when the dog is on the lead – ensure commands are consistently applied
- correct position in relation to handler – dog should remain in a 'heel' position at the handler's side
- maintaining speed and loose lead – dog should walk at handler's chosen speed without pulling on the lead



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- use of 'continental heel' – a figure of eight movement performed by the dog when asked to in order to bring the dog back to the 'heel' position
- destination – consideration to where the dog is walking to on the lead, as this may impact on behaviour, e.g. dog excited to get into the building to meet its trainer

Improving and maintaining lead behaviour can be challenging. Please ensure you discuss any concerns with the dog's handler and follow the guidelines they give on how and when to lead walk each dog you board.

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## Transporting a dog

During training you will be shown how to safely encourage the dog/s you board into your car and how best to secure them.

Under the Welfare of Animals (Transport) Order 1997, animals must not be transported in a way that causes, or is likely to cause, injury or unnecessary suffering. Equally the dog must also be suitably restrained in the car so that it does not distract the driver or injure him/her if the vehicle stops quickly (UK Highway Code).

In order to ensure compliance with legislation and ensure your welfare and that of the dog please make the following checks before travelling.

- visually check the vehicle, looking at tyres, windows, mirrors, fuel, oil etc. and the area around the car for anything hazardous to dogs
- check the system you are using to secure the dog while travelling is safe, secure, and working properly
- the dog's area should be clean, unsuitable objects removed, and there should be adequate room for the dog to travel comfortably. It is important that the dog can stand, stretch, lie down, sit up, and turn around
- the engine should be off and the handbrake on before getting the dog out to the car
- prior to the journey consider if the dog is ready to travel, it should have had an opportunity to spend and should not have recently been fed
- smoking with a dog in the car would have the same impact as it does on children. Please consider whether you could wait till you are out of the car before you start smoking

Maintaining a dog's confidence to travel in a car is really important and can be quickly effected if the dog hurts themselves getting in or out, falling off a seat etc. During your training there will be a discussion as to the best way to secure a dog in your car. If at any time you have to transport the dog you are barding in any other way than as advised, you must speak to the dog's

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handler first. For safety reasons if you have an estate or hatchback car the dog must travel either in the boot with the parcel shelf removed and a dog guard fitted, or secured safely on the back seat using a car harness. Once the dog is in the car, the lead should be removed but the collar and ID disc should remain on.

Before letting the dog out of the car, you must ensure you have control by attaching the lead to the collar. The dog should be told to sit and wait and not get out until asked. However, do not rely on the dog's good behaviour. It is particularly important if you drive the dog to a free run exercise area that you maintain control when taking the dog from the car.

Our preference is that dogs are not left unattended in cars. An unattended dog may bark or chew if they become anxious. In any weather condition there is the danger of the dog over-heating which can have critical consequences. There is also the danger of the dog being stolen. If you have to leave the dog in a car it must only be for a short time and never longer than 10 minutes. Consideration for security and wellbeing of the dog must be given by ensuring doors are locked, although fresh air must be available by partially opening the windows, and ensuring that items that may cause harm to the dog are not left in reach.

In warm or hot weather a dog must never be left. When it is 22°C outside, the temperature inside a car can reach 47°C within 60 minutes. Even with all the windows open there is significant danger of the dog over-heating which can quickly turn into heat stroke. This is an emergency situation and can be fatal.

### **Other forms of transport**

If it is a requirement that you need to take the dogs you board on any form of transport other than a car. This will be discussed with you prior to boarding. You may require additional training in order to be able to do this.

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## Social behaviour

Our dogs are expected to behave well in all social situations. This 'good' behaviour begins at puppy walk and continues to be developed throughout its training and working life. However, we must remember that all dogs are different and will not all behave in the same way. Dogs can also behave unexpectedly in different or unusual circumstances and understanding for the dog's comprehension and needs must be given at all times.

You and your family will play a large part in maintaining and improving the good behaviour of the dog in your care and keeping it at the highest possible standard for that individual dog. By being consistent and fair at all times you will get the best responses and help to encourage a relaxed dog in all situations.

Whilst all our dogs have been trained from puppyhood to achieve a high standard of social behaviour there will be occasions where you will have to deal with less than perfect social behaviour. On the following page is a table which identifies the desired social behaviour requirements from our dogs. Please remember that if you experience any concerns you must always discuss them with the dog's handler and follow the advice you are given.

## Standards of social behaviour

**The dog should exhibit a calm and relaxed demeanour in all social situations including:**

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Required behaviour	Unwanted behaviours
Quiet and calm behaviour around family and visitors settling when requested onto its bed	Attention seeking behaviour
Quiet and calm behaviour when greeting family members or friends	Jumping up or overly excitable
Dog is calm and relaxed in the presence of other household pets	Chasing or any other form of behaviour which may cause concern or suffering to either animal
Dog is quiet and relaxed around food when food is being eaten Dog does not steal food which is left on worktops placed in bins etc. <b>Note:</b> Dogs are not allowed to be fed tit bits as this encourages scavenging behaviours	Any form of scavenging or stealing e.g. bins, plates, worktops, food belonging to other pets Dog begging or drooling for titbits
Quiet behaviour. If the dog barks it quickly stops when requested by the handler	Regular or continuous barking/whining/howling
Dog is comfortable relaxed and quiet around all adults and children	Mouthing, licking or biting Dog is not comfortable/ concerned around children/adults
Clean, quiet and non-destructive overnight and when left for up to 4 hours without confinement in a home environment	Chewing or other destructive behaviour, noisy when left, barking for attention
Dog settles on its own bed or the floor <b>Note:</b> Dogs are not allowed onto furniture under any circumstances	Dog climbing onto furniture or beds
Dog is well behaved when out free running and reliably returns to the handler when requested	Dog chases other animals, jiggers, runs off, eats faeces, steals food, exhibits excessive rolling or water related behaviour Dog does not return when called or is slow to recall
Dog has developed a reliable spending pattern and is clean on all walks	Dog does not use spending area or spends on walks/ in the house

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## Managing undesirable social behaviour

This section provides general advice on dealing with the following inappropriate behaviours. Inform the dog's handler if the dog displays any of these behaviours.

### Attention-seeking behaviour

Attention-seeking behaviour is natural for most social animals. However, as a dog develops and matures, the need to demand attention for survival is no longer a requirement, yet the behaviour can be pleasurable for the individual and so becomes habit-forming. This can result in a range of inappropriate behaviours which can have an effect on the dog's social behaviour – and ultimately its ability to work as a guide dog.

**The behaviours typically seen when a dog is trying to get your attention include:**

- nudging / mouthing
- jumping up
- stealing
- barking and whining
- pawing

If the cause for these behaviours can be identified as attention-seeking, try the following techniques: NB: some techniques may be more appropriate than others depending on the temperament of the individual dog.

- walk away to another room and ignore the inappropriate behaviour
- avoid eye contact or other subtle interactions; do not react to prompting by the dog
- ensure that you initiate events in the house especially play and attention
- praise and give attention to the dog when it is not seeking attention

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- ensure the dog has a quiet bed area and encourage its use by giving the dog a toy it can settle with

### Nudging and mouthing

Nudging and mouthing are natural behaviours, especially for dogs which are bred to retrieve. Dogs like to hold or carry objects, especially when expressing excitement or pleasure, and can try to hold, nibble or carry people's hands or clothing.

This behaviour is not acceptable in a guide dog as it can be misinterpreted as aggressive behaviour and could cause accidental injury. It is important that dogs learn to discriminate between articles that they may and may not mouth.

### Measures to reduce mouthing include:

- ignoring the dog when it mouths. Stand up straight, fold arms and turn or walk away from the dog, so as not to reward or encourage the behaviour
- removing the item being mouthed and exchanging it with an item the dog can have, e.g. toys
- using the command 'No' if the dog mouths, followed by praise when the behaviour stops
- moving the dog elsewhere for a 'time out' if it remains excited and continues the behaviour

### Jumping up

As described in the visitors section of this handbook greeting can be a very pleasurable experience for our dogs. Ideally greetings should be calm, friendly, relaxed and confident, with the dog quickly settling. However there can be occasions when a dog gets over excited and tries to jump up. More information on how to manage this behaviour can be found in the visitors section but some general solutions are to:

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- educate family, friends and visitors on how to avoid paying the dog any attention when the dog is demonstrating the undesirable behaviours
- educating family, friends and visitors how to ignore the dog when entering the home or greeting the dog. If the dog still demonstrates the unwanted behaviours, it may be necessary to walk away and / or fold your arms
- putting the dog on a lead which can help to keep the dog calm and controlled. This is can be really beneficial way to introduce visitors to the house and will help prevent unwanted behaviours escalating
- ignoring bad behaviour which can often result in an improvement
- restricting the dog's access by using a baby-gate or by taking the dog into another room which can help calm or prevent a situation from starting
- giving the dog a toy or chew to keep it occupied before letting people in which can help distract the dog and keep it more relaxed

### Stealing

Stealing behaviour, or taking items without invitation, can be the result of a number of factors, such as boredom or anxiety but is often normal mischievous behaviour. It is important that this behaviour is discouraged as it is both dangerous for the dog, and could be extremely difficult for a blind or partially-sighted person to cope with.

Our dogs should not take any item in the house (including food) unless invited. This includes stealing from hands, tables, pockets, bags, etc.

The following advice should help prevent and discourage stealing, but please remember to inform the dog's handler if the dog steals anything whilst it is staying with you.

- ensure that any items that could be stolen are kept out of the dog's reach This could include items such as soft toys, food on the table or work surfaces, shoes etc.



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- reduce the amount of access the dog has around the home – this will reduce the opportunities to steal
- if the dog tries to take something, use the command 'no' and praise the dog when it leaves the item
- always reward good behaviour with positive praise, especially if a chance to steal has not been taken
- ensure the dog has plenty of access to items that it can have, e.g., toys, chews and bones (remembering the dog can only have items which have been agreed by the dog's handler). Please refer to the Dog Care handbook for more information

### Scavenging and scrounging behaviours

Taking food whenever the opportunity arises is very natural for a dog. Dogs are opportunist feeders and unless restricted will usually eat whenever there is an opportunity.

Dogs can also quickly learn when food is likely to be available and may try to influence getting food by begging or staying close when food is being prepared or eaten in the hope that some might fall or be put down in their reach. Both inside and outside the home the dog may try to pick up dropped food or litter and may even go through bins to find something to eat. Both scavenging and scrounging are unacceptable behaviours for our dogs as it can be both dangerous to the dog and can have a negative impact on the dog's work as a guide.

**In order to prevent this behaviour from developing, it is important that you consistently apply some of the following basic solutions:**

- ensure when you are eating, the dog is away from the table
- ensure family, friends or visitors do not feed the dog 'human food' and ignore any begging attempts. If the dog is trying to beg or scavenging put the dog on a lead so you have more control of the situation
- if you observe the dog trying to take food use the 'no' command' and quickly remove the item from the dog's reach, praise the dog if it leaves the food

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As this can be detrimental to the dog's welfare and training please inform the dog's handler if you have any incidence of scavenging or scrounging.

### **Barking / whining / whingeing**

Vocalising is also natural dog behaviour and they can use a wide range of sounds to communicate thoughts and intentions. Every dog has its own collection of vocal signals that are dependent on the individual and its breed. Different sounds can convey excitement, suspicion, aggression and loneliness.

Whilst it is natural behaviour for dogs to bark it is important we are able to control barking when it is happening in an inappropriate situation. It is considered particularly inappropriate in social situations, especially when greeting people at the door, when seeking attention and when used in a protective situation as an aggressive tool.

### **The following measures may prevent the dog barking through excitement or attention-seeking:**

- ask family, friends or visitors to ignore attention-seeking behaviour and walk away
- if the dog is barking, try to distract the dog with something else. You can also help control the behaviour through the vocal command 'be quiet'
- if the dog is excited when a visitor arrives, put the dog on a lead or move the dog to another area

If you are finding the dog you are boarding is barking excessively please inform the dog's handler who will be able to give you specific advice.

### **Pawing**

For a pet dog this behaviour is generally not thought to be a problem, indeed some people actively encourage the behaviour as they find the behaviour endearing. However, for our service users a paw on the lap can lead to a spilt

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cup of coffee which can result in burns, a scratched leg or arm or embarrassment when socialising. It is for this reason that this behaviour should be discouraged and, as with many of these behaviours, ignoring the dog is the best way to discourage its occurrence. The use of the word 'no' can be effective along with removing eye contact and any praise whenever the dog 'paws'.

By being consistent, remembering the dog is an individual, using positive reinforcement when the dog is behaving well and always being fair, you will be able to bring out the best behaviour and qualities in the dog you are boarding. If you have concerns please do take them to the dog's handler who will be able to advise you further.

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## Keeping children and dogs safe

It is the responsibility of all adults and especially parents/guardians/carers, to make sure that child/dog relationships are managed so that one understands the other, and both can live safely and harmoniously together.

The Kennel Club has produced a free training programme for children called 'Safe and Sound' which provides information and advice to children on how to behave appropriately with dogs. Guide Dogs strongly recommend that you access this information and undertake the on-line quiz with your child. The 'Safe and Sound' programme can be found on the Kennel Club website. [www.thekennelclub.org.uk/training/safe-and-sound/](http://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/training/safe-and-sound/)

### Responsibilities of parents and guardians

Young children and dogs should only interact when under adult supervision. Young children should never be left alone with a dog and they should be separated if one of them becomes over excited, boisterous or if the adult leaves the room, even for a short time. Baby gates are a useful tool to provide a "time out" facility for these situations.

Never let your child ambush or force themselves on the dog you are boarding. If the child wants to play with the dog, the dog should be invited over. If the dog does not wish to play at that time, ensure that your child does not try to force the dog into a play situation. Play should be supervised at all times.

Most dogs dislike close face-to-face contact unless they have instigated it themselves, so teach your child to keep his face away from the dog's face. Allowing a dog to lick faces should be discouraged at all times for hygiene reasons.

Teach your child to understand the importance of 'quiet time' for the dog. Ensure the dog has access to its own space at all times so that it can have peace and quiet when it wants it.

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Children and young people under the age of 16 are not permitted to handle Guide Dogs stock on a lead or supervise them on a free run. Young people between the age of 16 and 18 years of age must be accompanied by an adult if walking the dog on a lead or free running the dog.

Finally, always follow any specific advice given to you by the dog's handler and contact them to report and concerns or incidents.

### **Educating children about life with dogs**

It is important for all children to be taught that dogs are not toys and that there are certain 'rules' they need to follow. Below we have provided a list of 'rules' which we would like you to discuss with your children so they understand how to interact positively with the dogs you welcome into your home. By following these rules you will really help your children and the dogs develop a positive relationship.

Always praise the dog when he does what you ask him to.

Dogs are not allowed on the furniture or beds not even for a cuddle.

Only play with the dog when you have asked an adult if it is ok and the adult is in the same room.

Dogs like being stroked. Always use a long smoothing stroking movement from the dog's neck to the end of its back as he will enjoy this. Cuddling and hugging a dog may make it feel smothered and frightened as does pulling a dogs ears, tail or fur.

Teasing a dog by poking him, snatching toys away from him or chasing can frustrate and frighten him. This might make him retaliate and hurt you by knocking you over, jumping up or growling at you. Only play games with the dog which have been agreed by the dog's handler.

Games such as putting clothes on a dog or fighting games are not ok.

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The dog's bed is its special place and is only for the dog. Do not go onto the dog's bed as he may try to protect it from you. If the dog does not want to leave its bed, never try to make it do so.

If the dog is asleep leave him alone. If you touch a dog when he is sleeping you may startle and scare him. If you need to wake a dog up call his name gently giving him time to wake up properly and then call him to you.

If the dog is eating his food or has a chew leave him alone to enjoy it.

Keep quiet and calm around your dog otherwise you may scare him. Never make sudden movements or loud noises when close to any dog as this can be frightening. If a dog gets very excited when you are with him move away slowly and ignore the dog until he is calmer.

Staring at a dog can make it uncomfortable and scare it. Dogs don't like having faces near to theirs or being kissed around the face area. Both of these actions can frighten some dogs. Instead stroke the dog gently.

Always speak to a dog in a normal or quiet voice. Dogs do not like being shouted or screamed at as it can make them feel very scared and the dog may growl at you because it feels frightened. Shouting at a dog can over excite him and the dog may start running around which could knock you over and hurt you.

All dogs lick but they are not allowed to lick adults or children. If a dog licks you tell him "no" in a quiet firm voice and then praise him when he stops. Always wash your hands before eating and after touching your dog.

Human sweets, chocolate and other foods can make a dog very ill. The only food that the dog should eat is its own food. Always ask an adult before giving any treat to the dog.

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## Dog fights and attacks

Dogs will instinctively use a range of body postures, sounds and facial expressions to convey their intentions and moods to other dogs, animals and people. When faced with a perceived or actual threatening situation aggression is a natural reaction for any dog (adult or puppy) to display in order to communicate its emotional state. These displays can range from mild (grumbling and lip curling) to severe displays (attacking and biting) but are all very much part of this communication process.

Guide Dogs stock are no different and it is not always possible to recognise the signs of a possible dog on dog attack and nor is it always possible to prevent an incident.

If you suspect that either another dog or one of our dogs is starting to behave in a threatening manner ensure (if possible) that the dog in your care is on a lead and slowly walk away increasing the distance between the two dogs. The further away the two dogs are the less likely it is that the situation will escalate.

There is no truly safe way to intervene in a dog fight, and Guide Dogs insist that you never put yourself at risk of injury. Even though it may be hard, if you cannot break up the fight without putting yourself at serious risk, you must not intervene.

### **Following an incident it is important that:**

- if a dog or person is injured, or is at risk of injury this must be the priority
- take the dog to the vet for a check up (even if there do not appear to be any visible injuries)
- you give the dog's owner Guide Dogs contact details if the matter needs to be discussed further

If you believe that discussing the incident with the other dog's owner puts you or either dog at further risk please remove yourself from the situation.



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### Reporting an incident of a dog fight

If the dog is involved in an incident that causes an injury to you, itself, or any other person or animal, (including damage or injury to any member of the public's property or animal) it must be reported to the dog's handler or another member of Guide Dogs staff **within 24 hours**. Failure to do this may invalidate our insurance.

### Reporting accidents and incidents

If the dog is involved in an incident that causes an injury to you, itself, or any other person or animal, (including damage or injury to any member of the public's property or animal) it must be reported to the dog's handler or another member of Guide Dogs staff as soon as possible. Failure to do this may invalidate our insurance.

#### **If the dog is involved in an accident please follow these instructions;**

Do not admit to the Third Party that the accident was your (or the dog's) fault.

Advise the Third Party that Guide Dogs will report the incident to the Association's insurers.

Take as much information from the other party as possible, including their name, address, contact telephone number and any other information that is relevant. This allows Guide Dogs to follow up the incident with the third party.

Record details of any witnesses to the accident and pass them onto your local site, as soon as possible so that a member of staff may complete a Guide Dogs Incident Investigation Form.

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If the Third Party advises you that they intend to make a claim, ask them to put their intention in writing to the address below and advise Guide Dogs that this is their intention:

### **The Insurance Department**

Guide Dogs  
Central office  
Hillfields,  
Burghfield Common,  
Reading RG7 3YG

**Tel:** 0118 983 5555

**Email:** [InsuranceGeneral@guidedogs.org.uk](mailto:InsuranceGeneral@guidedogs.org.uk)

In the event that you receive any correspondence from a third party relating to the incident please forward the correspondence unanswered and without delay to the insurance department as outlined above.

### **Noisy, busy and overwhelming environments**

Dogs see the world differently from us and they will adjust their behaviour with even the slightest change in a familiar environment or to a situation which they have not come across before. As all dogs are different so an individual dog's behaviour will differ depending on that particular dog's comfort level to the new or different stimulus.

All dogs have excellent hearing and extremely noisy places can be quite distressing for them. Busy environments can also be overwhelming for a dog, particularly if they are being given lots of attention from strangers and have no options to remove themselves. From puppyhood our dogs have been very well exposed to lots of environments, but we must never assume that because of this exposure they will always be happy and relaxed.

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**Examples of situations which a dog may find overwhelming include:**

### **Busy environments**

- shopping malls, precincts and markets - especially at weekends or approaching Christmas or sales events
- country fairs and shows, fetes, carnivals
- concerts, large scale sporting events
- anywhere where there are concentrated numbers of people/crowds

### **Noisy environments**

- fair grounds
- concerts
- parades
- displays e.g. including gunshots, cannons, drumming, vuvuzelas, etc.

The dog's handler will inform you what activities you may undertake with the dog and where you can take it. If you have been given permission to take a dog to an environment other than your home or for a free run, you must continually assess how the dog is coping with the environment and be prepared to remove the dog from the situation if it becomes uncomfortable or distressed in any way, even if that means cutting short your own time at the event. It is for this reason that our usual advice is to leave the dog at home.

If you know there is going to be a busy occasion in which the dog may be exposed to noise, please speak to the dog's handler beforehand. They will be able to give you advice as to how best to manage the dog's behaviour and comfort, and maybe able to find an alternative temporary boarder.

**If you have to take or keep the dog in a noisy/busy or potentially overwhelming environment please consider the following:**

- if your home is going to be noisy and busy with guests, especially children, either ensure the dog has somewhere quiet to go, where it will not be disturbed, or put the dog in quiet area of the home. Think about

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what environment enrichment activities you can leave the dog with and ensure you can check on it regularly

- always ask guests to not overwhelm the dog with attention (please refer to social behaviour module)
- monitor the dog continuously to check for any signs of distress
- if the dog is beginning to demonstrate anxious behaviour, remove the dog from the situation as soon as possible
- try to limit the time the dog remains in that environment and keep it as short as possible

### **Some warning signs that a dog maybe becoming anxious are:**

- yawning and/or lip smacking
- panting heavily or trembling
- spending (in the house or on the spot)
- trying to get under tables, behind furniture etc.
- inability to respond to the handler
- increased sensitivity to other loud noises
- trying to get closer to you, by climbing on furniture
- unwillingness to go outside to spend

As the dog is frightened it may try and remove itself from the situation so be aware that the dog may try to escape from the house. Please take extra care when opening doors.

If the dog you are boarding becomes anxious in any environment you take it to, please inform the dog's handler as soon as possible.

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**T: 0118 9835555**

**E: [guidedogs@guidedogs.org.uk](mailto:guidedogs@guidedogs.org.uk)**

**W: [www.guidedogs.org.uk](http://www.guidedogs.org.uk)**

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