

GUIDE
DOGS



Poppy



Pupdate 4

The next chapter

Starting training school

**SPONSOR
A PUPPY**





Hello, I'm Kirsty, a trainer at Guide Dogs. I'm pleased to say Poppy has made it to training school!

I've been a guide dog trainer for around five years. The most rewarding aspect of my job is watching dogs overcome their challenges. The moment you hear that they have qualified is an amazing feeling and I'm so excited to be a part of Poppy's journey.

Playful pup

The way to Poppy's heart is through lots of tummy

scratches and a good game of tug of war! When she's out in the paddocks she will run around trying to get the other dogs to play with her as she loves nothing more than playing. Her favourite puppy pal is another trainee guide dog, a German shepherd cross retriever called Nugget.

Navigating obstacles

Poppy is everything that you want in a trainee guide dog. She is willing, enthusiastic, and enjoys learning new tasks. Her puppy walkers, Mary and Keith, did an amazing job at building her confidence and ensuring she mastered her basic obedience skills.

Poppy took to the training harness quickly and is a natural at guiding. When she isn't wearing her harness



she is a cheeky puppy, but the moment it goes on she becomes very sensible and focused. I've begun working Poppy on our obstacle course, made up of every day challenges she may come up against whilst guiding, such as traffic cones and road signs. We use this course to teach our dogs to navigate around obstacles and learn to give their handler space to get around them too.

I've also taught Poppy to recognise changes in ground height. We use specially built platforms to introduce our dogs to this skill, asking them to stop on the platform to get a reward.

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Guide Dogs is working to give people with sight loss the confidence and skills they need to live the life they choose.

We then ask them to perform the same action in a real-life situation, such as when they approach kerbs or stairs, so that they can signal them to their handler. Poppy is brilliant at this and I'm very proud of her progress.

A true test

Poppy is such a friendly girl and can lose focus if another dog approaches her whilst she is guiding. It's vital she can remain focused, despite any distractions that may come her way, and so I

will be spending time developing this over the coming weeks.

Soon I will be carrying out a blindfold walk with Poppy which will be a true test of her skills. As her handler, I give off subtle body language that gives her an indication of what to do next. However, if I am blindfolded, she will need to make decisions unaided.

Thank you for sponsoring Poppy. Look out for your next Pupdate in October!

The matching process

Every person and dog is unique, so matching a guide dog to an owner is a complex and carefully managed process. Our trainers take into account a person's needs including lifestyle, walking speed and height.

Once a match has been made, our trainers spend several weeks training the guide dog owner and dog together, learning their common routes and making sure their partnership is a success.



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