

Guide Dogs for the Visually Impaired in Canada

Some puppies are specially raised to be guide dogs as adults. When they are seven weeks old, these puppies are placed with foster families who introduce them to different environments, such as residential areas, stores, elevators and busy streets. Soon after they turn one year old, these puppies are brought to training centres to begin their formal guide-dog training. Professional trainers are partnered with dogs in the program. The dogs and their trainers must complete tests in traffic, shopping centres and other situations to show the dog is ready for school. In guide-dog schools, visually impaired people are paired with their new guide dogs, and together they attend classes to learn how to work as a team.

The most common guide-dog breeds are the golden retriever and Labrador retriever. Guide dogs must be able to concentrate on their jobs, be quiet and calm and have a desire to please their owners.

Guide dogs are trained to respond to simple commands, such as “Right,” “Left” and “Forward.” They will refuse only when obeying the command could lead their masters into a dangerous situation.



Official Symbol of Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind

People prepare for three years to be guide-dog trainers. They must take written exams and show their skill at handling the dogs. “Handling” means walking the dog, giving it commands and verbal rewards and testing the dog’s awareness.

When they are working, guide dogs should not be treated as pets. If you see a guide dog wearing its harness, always ask the owner for permission if you want to pet the dog. Otherwise, the dog may not be able to concentrate on its important task of guiding its owner.

- 1** Puppies that will be trained as guide dogs are placed with foster families when they are
- A ten weeks old.
 - B four weeks old.
 - C nine weeks old.
 - D seven weeks old.
- 2** Puppies are introduced to busy areas before going to guide-dog school to show that they can
- F remain calm.
 - G be good pets.
 - H learn quickly.
 - J wear a harness.
- 3** In paragraph 1, “residential areas” is another phrase for
- A factory districts.
 - B business districts.
 - C farming communities.
 - D housing communities.
- 4** Which of these is the most appropriate heading for the box to the left of the symbol of Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind?
- F “Basic Commands”
 - G “Guide-Dog Breeds”
 - H “Difficult Situations”
 - J “Obeying the Master”

5 Explain why being able to concentrate is important for a guide dog. Use information from the selection to support your answer.

6 Explain why a busy shopping centre is a good training area for guide dogs. Use information from the selection and your own ideas to support your answer.
