

## Is a Guide Dog Right for Me?

A guide dog provides enhanced mobility and renewed independence for someone who is blind or has low vision. Our goal is to match the right dog with the right person to help each individual live without boundaries.



The decision to partner with a guide dog is a momentous one. We have prepared this guide to help you answer the question: **“Is a guide dog right for me?”**



## **What can a guide dog do for me?**

Guide dogs are taught how to find and follow a clear path, maneuver around obstacles, and stop at curbs and other changes in elevation such as stairs. When faced with a potentially dangerous situation (e.g., oncoming traffic), a guide dog will practice intelligent disobedience to keep the team safe. A guide dog has also been taught to target specific objects such as a garbage can, elevators, stairs, doors, etc.

## **Why should I get a guide dog?**

Many people who are blind or have low vision feel safer and more confident while using a guide dog. Working with a guide dog provides enhanced mobility and greater independence. This allows a guide dog handler more freedom to travel in complex environments with ease.

## **Who is eligible for a guide dog?**

Anyone 16 years or older (younger may be considered on a case by case basis), who is legally blind, and can demonstrate their ability to independently travel practical and purposeful routes is welcome to apply. An applicant



must be in good physical and mental health, be willing and able to care for and financially support a guide dog, which includes food, veterinary care, and grooming. Lastly, the individual must be willing to agree to maintain the dog's training and commit to a long-term partnership.



### **What kinds of dogs do you use?**

We use Labrador and Golden Retrievers, and Labrador/Golden crosses. On a limited basis, we train Standard Poodles for people with documented allergies. We have currently suspended accepting new applications for Standard Poodles but can refer individuals to other programs and will continue to serve our returning graduates.



## **How old are the dogs when they are matched?**

Dogs are approximately 18 to 24 months old.

## **How much does it cost to get a guide dog?**

Students are provided their guide dogs, training, and aftercare support free of charge. We cover transportation (within the United States and Canada), housing, and meals during training. Once you return home, graduates are responsible for food and veterinary costs for their dog. We also provide a stipend for veterinary care, and financial assistance is available on a case-by-case basis.



## **If I have my own dog, can you train him to be a guide dog?**

No. We have extensive breeding, puppy raising, and training protocols to ensure that dogs in our programs have the best health, temperament, and ability to be guide dogs.

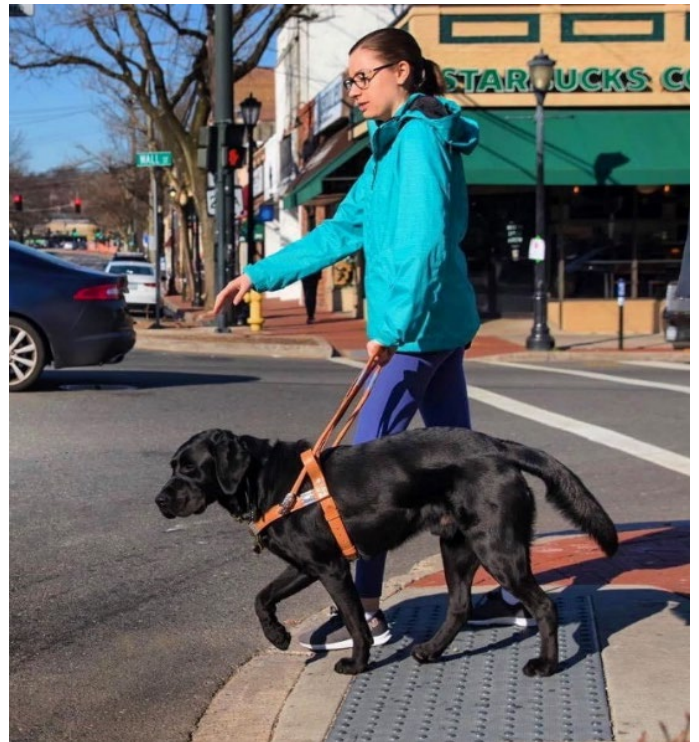


## **What if I have other pets in my home?**

Having other pets in the home does not disqualify an applicant. Instructors will evaluate on a case-by-case basis if it is feasible and safe to place a guide dog in a household with other pets.

## **How long is training?**

Most students attend an intensive two-week in-residence training program on our campus in Smithtown, NY. We have a student-to-trainer ratio of 2:1 so students have plenty of one-on-time with their instructor. Training locations range from rural to urban areas and are customized for each student's particular needs.





## **Is home training an option?**

We understand that there may be circumstances that prevent an individual from attending our residential training. Home placements can be an alternative for these individuals.

## **Where would I stay?**

During on campus classes, students stay in our student residence in private rooms, with attached bathrooms, individual climate control, and access to our secure Wi-Fi network. Each room has a mini refrigerator, a personal coffee maker, an Amazon Echo Dot, and a small portable safe for valuables. There is a communal dining hall; a lounge with cable TV; a snack room with vending machines; two laundry rooms; and an outdoor patio with picnic benches.





## **Am I responsible for meals?**

We provide three meals a day, prepared by our staff chefs. We take into consideration special dietary needs and will adjust your menu accordingly.

## **How long is the waiting list to get a guide dog?**

Our current waiting list is nine to eighteen months. During this time, we will work to identify the right match for you and train the dog to meet your specific needs. For people with special requirements or requests, the wait could be longer.

## **Where can I get more information about the admissions process?**

Please visit [www.GuideDog.org](http://www.GuideDog.org), sent an email to [Applications@GuideDog.org](mailto:Applications@GuideDog.org), or call us at 631-930-9072 for more information or to request assistance with an application. Our admissions team will answer any questions you might have about applying for a guide dog and share the characteristics that will help you to become a successful guide dog handler. If you do not meet the basic qualifications for our program at this time, we are happy to



provide you with additional resources. We want to help each individual establish the skills needed to be the most successful with a guide dog in the future.

## **What happens after I apply?**

As you work through our application process, you will provide us with the key information that will help our instructors to find the right dog and training



program for you. During the application process, we will arrange an interview and request a video so we can evaluate your Orientation and Mobility skills, pace, home environment, etc.

Please note, completion of the application does not automatically guarantee you a spot in our program. Upon full submission of your application packet, including professional references (medical report, eye report, etc.),





your application will be reviewed by our selection committee. If you are accepted into our program, we will begin looking for the right dog to suit your needs and lifestyle.

### **What happens after I graduate?**

Each team has access to and will be supported by our graduate support team for the entirety of their working career. We reach out to graduates annually, but we encourage teams to contact us as individual needs present themselves.

We can provide support if there are training or behavioral concerns regarding your dog, and we can provide resources if you encounter accessibility problems. This support can range from answering questions over the phone, virtual aftercare, or refresher training in your home community, to advice on when to retire your dog.





Guide Dog Foundation graduates also have access to our veterinary services team, who can assist in reviewing veterinary care concerns and ordering medication. Financial assistance may be available on a case-by-case basis.

### **What if I'm still not sure if a guide dog is right for me?**

Please call our Admissions Department at 631-930-9072. We can answer any additional questions you might have and help you start the application process with the Guide Dog Foundation.





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