



Guide Dogs for the Blind

Puppy Raising Department

Order of Training

A Quick Reference Guide

Every puppy progresses at a different rate and some raisers have more time to focus on training games than others. Some exercises, like housebreaking and crate training, are ongoing as you establish management techniques for living with your puppy. The different games should be practiced for no more than a few minutes at a time maximum and not all have to be played every day. Most raisers can find short breaks in their day to play a few games with the pup, which will not only adds to the puppy's behavior repertoire, but will also tire the pup mentally so that it is more likely to settle in between sessions.

There is no strict rule as to when a puppy should be fluent in a behavior. This is a general guide; some variation on timing and fluency is acceptable. The initial period the puppy is in the home is full of learning; gradually behaviors will reach the "maintenance" phase with more focus on socialization and learning outside of the home.

For full instructional details on training games and techniques, please reference the individual documents and videos listed in the online manual. Also see the chart "Order of Training"

Introduction of a behavior/skill: Puppy is acquiring the basics of the behavior; may take several days up to several weeks

Fluency/proficiency: Puppy is responding reliably but may need prompts/help in distracting environments

Maintenance: Regular practice to ensure the behavior stays at an acceptable level

Crate Behavior

- *Introduction:* 8-10 weeks

- *Fluency: 9-14 weeks*
- *Maintenance: until pup returns for training*
- Consult leader if pup not settled in crate after 2 weeks in the home
- Crate pup daily for short periods with people home/not home even when crating is no longer needed to manage house behavior
- Crate pup in vehicles some of the time. Trade pups so that they are comfortable riding in strange crates/different vehicles

Housebreaking/Relieving

- *Introduction: 8-12 weeks*
- *Fluency: 12-20 weeks*
- *Maintenance: until pup returns for training*
- Practice hard surface relieving as soon as the puppy arrives and maintain throughout raising
- Consult leader if pup is having frequent accidents in the home or on outings
- Consult leader if pup suddenly regresses in cleanliness

Polite Taking of Food

- *Introduction: 8-10 weeks*
- *Fluency: 9-14 weeks*
- *Maintenance: until pup returns for training*
- Slightly moisten kibble if pup is reluctant/takes a long time to chew at first
- Practice with focus just on how to take food from the hand before rewarding for behavior or luring to teach behaviors
- Consult leader if pup takes food with teeth rather than lips/tongue

Puppy Handling/Grooming

- *Introduction: 8-10 weeks*
- *Fluency: 10-14 weeks*
- *Maintenance: until pup returns for training*
- Consult leader if pup is mouthy/vocal/squirmy
- Work on foot handling/nails daily at first then at least once per week

- Have other raisers/trained volunteers do puppy body handling regularly

Head Collar Acceptance

- *Introduction: 8-10 weeks*
- *Fluency: 9-12 weeks*
- *Maintenance: until pup returns for training*
- Introduce within the first few days of arrival in home
- Should be walking with head collar unattached to leash within a few days
- Consult leader if not walking in head collar with leash attached within a week

Tether Games

- *Introduction: 8-10 weeks*
- *Fluency: 9-14 weeks*
- *Maintenance: ground tether is only needed initially. Hand tether exercises may remain helpful for teaching self-control around distractions*
- Use high rate of reinforcement (20 + kibbles per minute!) at first
- Utilize “real life” distractions
- Go back to technique if pup becomes distracted as it matures

Paw Pad Games 1 and 2

- *Introduction: 8-10 weeks*
- *Fluency: 9-14 weeks*
- *Maintenance: not needed but useful for impulse control games*
- Pups that tend to sit a lot will benefit from longer exposure to these games
- Introduces and reinforces stand and stay (holding position)
- Excellent opportunity for raiser to focus on food delivery technique

Collar Cues

- *Introduction: 10-12 weeks*
- *Fluency: 12-16 weeks*
- *Maintenance: until pup returns for training*

- Easier to start with a younger puppy
- Ensure pup will go in any direction cued
- Is pup following collar cue or movement of handler?

Loose Leash Walking

- *Introduction: 10-12 weeks*
- *Fluency: 12-20 weeks*
- *Maintenance: until pup returns for training*
- Use head collar when unable to focus on LLW and collar response
- Stop and practice collar cues if pup is pulling; back up if necessary
- Utilize head collar at least 50% of time until pup returns for training even if pup is fluent at LLW in flat collar

Sit, Down and Stand (Hand-placed or Paw Pad Method)

- *Introduction: 10-12 weeks*
- *Fluency: 12-20 weeks*
- *Maintenance: until pup returns for training (should no longer need physical prompts or Paw Pad after 20 weeks)*
- Choose which method raiser will utilize at introduction
- Consult leader if puppy is moving substantially out of “heel” position
- Document on “Final Report” which method utilized

Food Induced Recall

- *Introduction: 8-12 weeks*
- *Fluency: 3-6 months*
- *Maintenance: until pup returns for training*
- Don't call pup with cue “Come” for first few months unless it is either coming anyway or has a leash/line on to ensure compliance
- Always carry some kibble in pocket to reward around the house and yard when pup responds
- Consult leader if pup not responding reliably or playing “keep-away”

Go to Bed

- *Introduction: 16-20 weeks*
 - *Fluency: 5-8 months*
 - *Maintenance: until pup returns for training*
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- Can be introduced much earlier as a fun game if raiser has time
 - A shaping game primarily to teach raiser skills; not an essential puppy goal behavior
 - Increase difficulty gradually by adding “real life” situations (door bell rings - “Go to Bed”)