



Puppy Raising

Learning manners guidance

Version 1.2

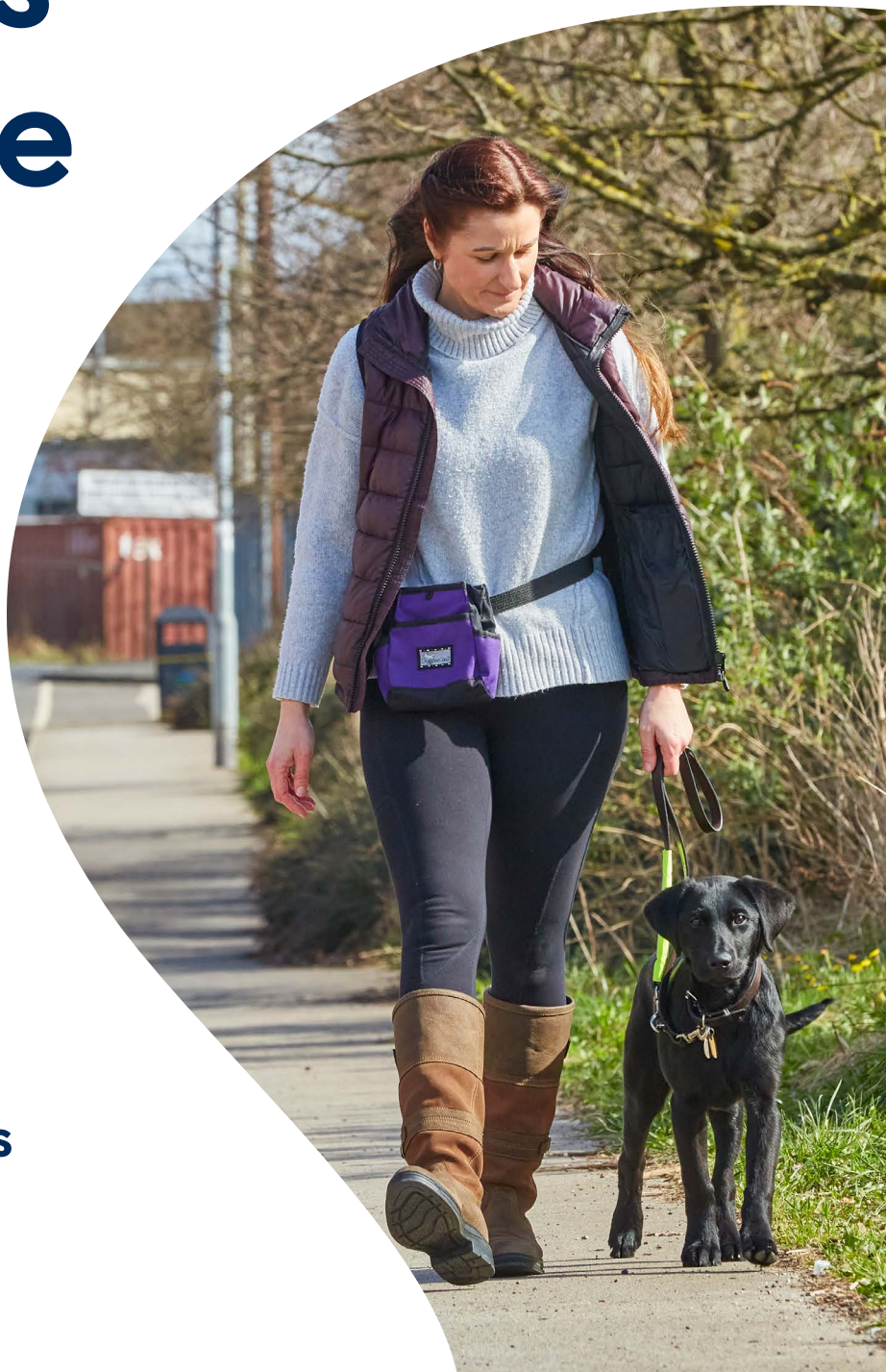
Updated September 2024

Sections

There are 2 topics within this document. By following each link below you will be directed straight to that area of guidance.

1. Learning manners

2. Food manners



1. Learning manners

In this section

In this section, you'll learn how to teach your puppy their name and learn how to cue your puppy to sit, down, down and stay, and stand. By the end of your puppy raising journey, we would ideally like your puppy to:

- Have a good understanding of and response to their name.
- Reliably and consistently demonstrate their understanding of the 'sit', 'down', and 'stand' cues, with occasional reinforcement in some environments and situations.
- Be able to take food in a calm and controlled manner.

Quick links

By following each link below, you will be directed to the area within this guidance to support that area of learning.



Why



Knowing your puppy



Managing for success



Teaching foundations



Being a partnership



Why

Why is this important for a guide dog?

Being able to ask your puppy to sit, down or stand on cue can be useful in all sorts of situations. Some situations that their future partner may use these positions are: health checks (particularly 'stand'), when fitting equipment, if they are chatting with other people, or on public transport if there isn't time for the dog to self-settle.



A guide dog owner will be more confident to venture into any environment with a dog that responds to these cues.



Knowing your puppy

Consider your puppy's physical health and development when working on these positions. When they are in peak growing periods, restrict the number of repetitions and ensure you select appropriate non-slip surfaces for your puppy to train on.



Managing for success

- Avoid practicing when the puppy is tired, prior to feeding or at times of excitement in and around the house.
- Toilet your puppy beforehand and provide a water bowl nearby.
- Have some toys available so they can choose to disengage easily if they've had enough of the exercise.
- Teach the positions one at a time so as not to confuse your puppy and once you start to do more of them, try not to fall into the trap of chaining them together, e.g. do not always teach sit followed immediately by down. You may find your puppy starts to skip out one position as they are predicting the next one you're going to ask them for.
- Make sure that the length of each session is appropriate to the concentration span of your puppy. This will depend on your puppy's age and prior learning experience.

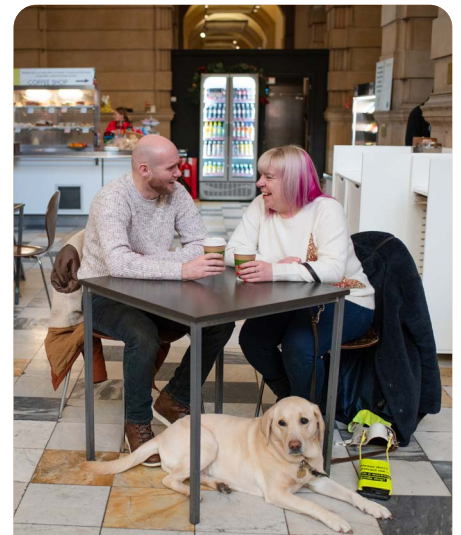


Photo: Guide dog comfortable settled under a table in café whilst their owner chats to a friend.



Stage 1: Teaching name recognition

Please read the document [Recall and off-lead guidance](#) for information on Teaching name recognition - off lead exercise.

Stage 2: Learning positions using a lure

Our aim is that your puppy will follow the food like a magnet and move into the position we want until given the release cue.

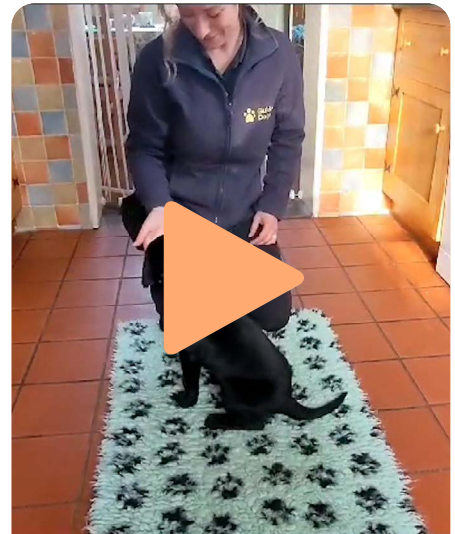
The cues you'll be using during these exercises are:

Positional cues: 'sit,' 'down' and 'stand.'

Release cue: **'Okay.'** Please read the document [Recall and off-lead guidance](#) for information on Teaching release cue okay - off lead.

'Sit'

- Get a food reward and let your puppy sniff it.
- Keeping the food reward close to your puppy's nose and lift it upwards and move it backwards over their head.
- As your puppy's nose follows the food reward, their back legs will sink, and their bottom will touch the ground.
- As soon as their bottom touches the ground give your puppy the food reward.
- Give your puppy a few more food rewards straight after to encourage them to keep their bottom on the floor. This is to avoid the puppy standing back up again.
- Just before you give your puppy the last food reward, give them the release cue, 'Okay.' Hold the food reward a little bit in front of your puppy so that they then break the sit position by standing up.
- Repeat this 3 times.
- See stage 3 on how to fade the lure.



[Video: Introducing sit.](#)

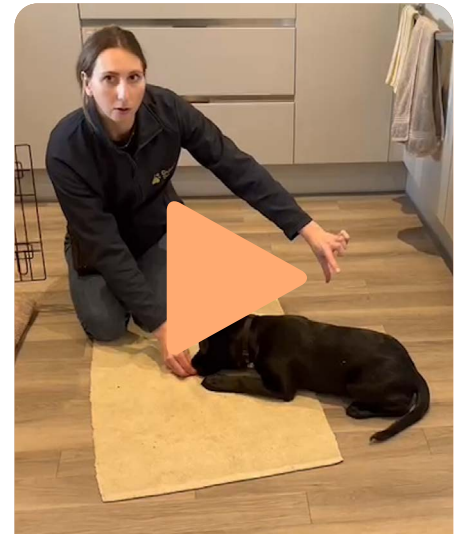
‘Down’

- Encourage your puppy into a ‘sit’ position.
- Holding a food reward at your puppy’s nose, slowly move your hand down in a straight line towards the floor, (the puppy should follow the food reward) then slowly move the food reward away from them and along the floor towards you, this should encourage a ‘down position’.
- Give them the food reward as soon as they are in the down position. Follow this up with one or two more food rewards to encourage your puppy to stay in the ‘down’ so they don’t learn to pop up as soon as they get the food reward.
- Just before you give them the last piece of food reward, give them the release cue ‘Okay,’ and give this to them in a slightly higher up position so that they break the down position.
- Repeat this 3 times.
- See stage 3 on how to fade the lure.

There are different ways to teach your puppy a down. Some puppies take time to work out what suits them. Speak to your Puppy Development Advisor (PDA) if your puppy isn’t keen to move into a down position.

‘Stand’

- With your puppy in the ‘down’ or ‘sit’, get a food reward in your hand and hold it just in front of their nose. Slowly, move your hand from in front of their nose up and away from them, causing them to move into a stand.
- As soon as they go into the stand position give them the food reward.
- Follow this up with one or two more pieces of food reward to maintain the stand position and build duration.



Video: Introducing down.

- Try to use your hand position and the food reward to keep them stationary as they stand. You don't want their feet to move, you only want them to stand up.
- When you give them the last piece of food reward, give them the release cue 'Okay,' and encourage them to move out of the stand position by clapping or encouraging them to follow your movements.
- Repeat this 3 times.

Stage 3: Fading the lure

Our aim is that your puppy moves into the position following a hand signal rather than being lured.

- Once your puppy is reliably following the food reward and responding every time, you can start to fade out the food lure.
- Repeat the same hand movements as you did above with the lure, but with an empty hand.
- When puppy performs the position give a piece of food reward from your treat pouch/pocket.
- Repeat 3 times and end the session.
- Repeat the sessions a few times. This can be on different days.

Stage 4: Adding the verbal cue

Once your puppy is reliably going into the position you want, every time you give them the hand signal you can start to add the verbal cue: 'sit,' 'down' or 'stand.'

The process for adding a cue is the same for all behaviours and you can apply this to all the positions. We will use 'sit' as the example below:

- Say the cue: 'sit'
- Pause for 2-3 seconds and then give the hand signal/cue.

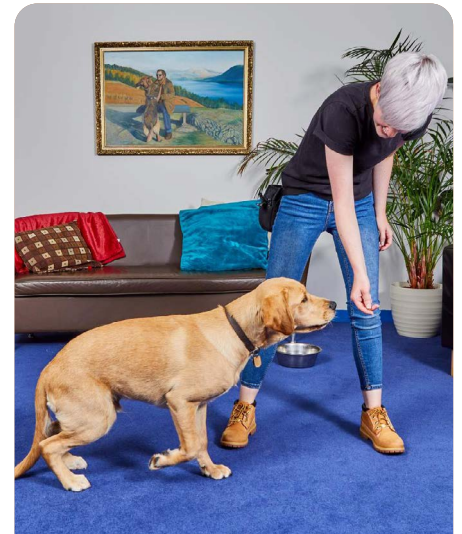


Photo: Dog moving into a stand position.

- When your puppy sits give them a piece of food reward followed by a few further food rewards.
- Just before you give them the last food reward, give them the release cue 'Okay', and feed a little bit away from them so they break the sit position.
- Repeat 3 times and end session.
- Repeat sessions over a few days.
- As your puppy moves into the position when the cue word is said, you can start to fade the hand gesture so that you can say the cue and give a food reward when the puppy is in position.



Your puppy may need more support when you move to a new environment to practice.

Progression

- Mix up the order you ask your puppy to do the positions.
- Generalise: Start to practice the positions in other environments and contexts. When you move to other locations, you may need to lower your expectations and go back a stage to begin with (using your hand signal). For example, start with low distraction locations and build up the distractions as your puppy becomes more practiced in doing the positions.
- Change your position: Usually, people teach and practice the positions when they are stood up. If you have done this, now practice it when you are sat down or if you have been teaching when sat down, now practice whilst stood.
- People also often teach positions in front and facing them, progress these exercises try to practice this with your puppy to the side of you. To encourage your puppy to remain by your side use your hand cue to let them know the food reward will still arrive in front of them.



Being a partnership

- Start teaching in a low distraction environment and build up to busier environments once your puppy's response to the cue word is reliable.
- Try to avoid teaching the positions in a certain order as you may find your puppy starts to skip out one position as they are predicting the next one you are going to ask them for.
- Stick to your one-word cues, such as "sit" and do not say them repetitively.
- Once you've taught the verbal cue, you may find that in some situations, and environments, your puppy needs a hand signal reminder.
- Keep your learning sessions fun for you and your puppy.

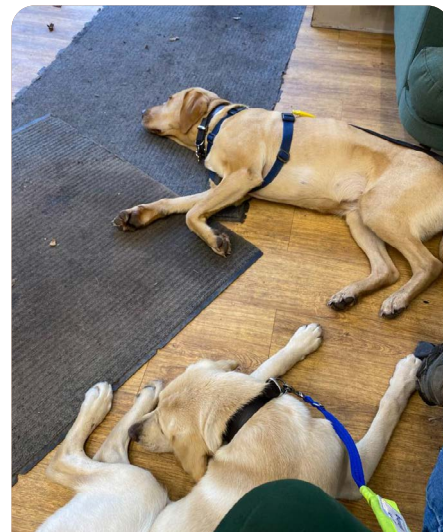


Photo: Guide dog lying down in a café.

2. Food manners

In this section

In this section you will learn how to teach your puppy to take food in a calm and controlled manner

Quick links

By following each link below, you will be directed to the area within this guidance to support that area of learning.



Why



Knowing your puppy



Managing for success



Teaching foundations



Being a partnership



Why

Why is this important for a guide dog?

This exercise teaches your puppy how to be calm around their food, interactive food toys, chews or toys. This is a safety exercise primarily as a fully-grown dog jumping up or lunging towards food or a toy before it's given could be very worrying for your puppy's future partner and could also cause injury. The exercise is a good way of teaching your puppy some self-control, good habits and problem-solving skills as part of their daily routine.



Puppies are not born knowing they should not take food from you.



Knowing your puppy

- It's natural for your puppy to be interested in food you are carrying or preparing, whether it's human food or their food. As you'll be using food to manage and reinforce your puppy's behaviour throughout your time together, it's important that you teach them how to behave appropriately around food.
- They aren't born knowing that they shouldn't try to take food from you; this is a human social construct, so behaviours such as snatching and jumping up for food are normal for a puppy.
- If your puppy suddenly starts jumping up or snatching their food from you, check their body condition score and general health, particularly if they're growing. If you've recently reduced your puppy's food and you've started to see this behaviour, or if you have any queries about your puppy's wellbeing, you should contact us.



Managing for success

- This exercise should be done outside of mealtimes as when you're feeding your puppy a meal, you're associating this with the whistle.
- If your puppy is very excited in the presence of the pot or treat pouch, interactive feeder, or toys, start this exercise with no food in it, and after they have had a meal rather than before. That way they will be less motivated to jump up for the food. If they do jump up, they also won't be reinforced with any food they knock out of the bowl.
- Once you start to introduce food into the food bowl or toy, make sure it's held at your chest height, so that they're less likely to jump up.
- As you lower the bowl, you may need to reinforce them more frequently for staying still, the closer the bowl or toy gets to the floor. You can do this by giving them food rewards from your other hand (without the bowl or toy) to encourage them to remain still.



Only reward when all four paws are on the floor.



Teaching foundations

Food manners exercise

(with their normal food)

- Stand with your puppy in front of you and hold a pot or treat bag of their normal food, high up, and close to your chest.
- When your puppy is relatively still and has all four paws on the floor (they can be sitting, lying, or standing), then reach into the pot and give them a food reward. You might want to hold the pot to the side or behind your back whilst rewarding.
- Give food rewards from a flat hand at your puppy's head height or lower, so that your puppy can take them without nibbling your fingers.
- Repeat this, watching your puppy's behaviour carefully. Only reward when you see that they are still and have all four paws on the floor.

Progression

- Practice food manners in your daily interactions, whenever you are giving your puppy individual food rewards, chews, or toys. Hold the item high in the air in front of them but well out of reach.
- Wait for them to be still. They don't have to sit, but they must be still and quiet (or as still as they can manage – a wagging tail is fine).
- Once they are still, calmly give them a food reward, chew, or toy. Do this quickly, so that they remain still while you give them the item.
- As your puppy learns to remain still and keep their paws on the floor, begin to make things more challenging. Try gradually lowering the pot, holding it closer to them, moving it around, and using different, higher value food rewards inside the pot to practice.



Being a partnership

- Instead of using a verbal cue to get the behaviour we want, this exercise requires your puppy to work out what they need to do in a situation when they want something. Life will be simpler and more reliable for a guide dog owner if their dog can choose the right behaviour, rather than being verbally cued all the time.
- If your puppy does jump up at the pouch, treat bag or toy, remain still (if they cannot reach them). Keep the food high and close to your chest (or out of sight) and wait until they keep four feet on the floor and follow this up with a reward.
- Also think about whether you need to increase the frequency of delivering food rewards, or if you need to ask someone else to lower the bowl or toy at a distance, whilst you stand next to them, delivering food rewards to reinforce them for staying still.
- Your puppy may find this exercise difficult at first. If they're struggling, you can usually make things easier for them by increasing the distance between your puppy and the item. Responding to them in this way will avoid them practising unwanted behaviours.
- It's far more enjoyable, for both of you, to work at a level at which your puppy can achieve the goals you are setting for them.



It is far more enjoyable for you and your puppy to work at a level where they can succeed.