



Puppy Raising

Being out and about

Version 1.2

Updated September 2024

Sections

There are 4 topics within this document. By following each link below you will be directed straight to that area of guidance.

- 1. Being out and about**
- 2. Sights and novelty**
- 3. Taking your puppy out and about**
- 4. Managing distractions**



1. Being out and about

In this section

You will learn how to build your puppy's confidence to be comfortable with all the different sights and sounds they will experience when working as a guide dog. This learning begins at home to build your puppy's confidence so that they are ready to take on their future adventures when they leave the front door.

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

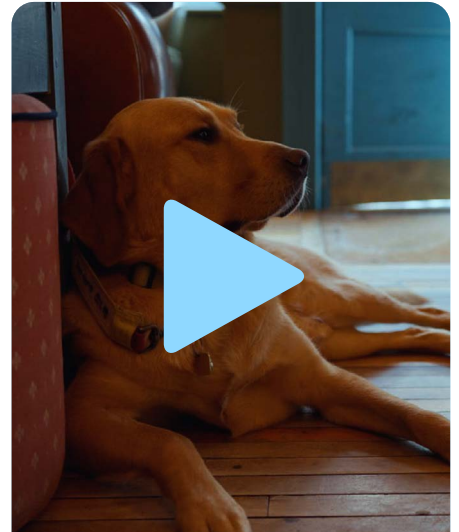


Why

Why is this important for a guide dog?

In their future role, your puppy will need to be calm and confident in a wide range of environments to enable their future partner to live the life they choose. A dog not being comfortable when out and about is consistently one of the highest reasons our dogs are withdrawn from the guide dog training programme.

It's therefore important to gradually provide your puppy with positive experiences at a pace that is right for them.

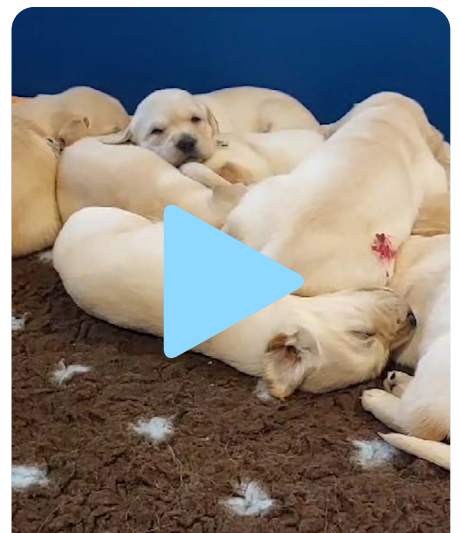


Video: Shows a guide dog owner working a dog in a busy area.



Knowing your puppy

- It's normal for your puppy to startle when a sudden noise happens. However, your puppy needs to learn to cope with sudden events, including noises and objects appearing in front of them. In fact, they need to be able to manage anything out of the ordinary that might make them jump, without it developing into a fear or anxiety response.
- Noises that dogs are commonly fearful of are fireworks or thunder. By introducing similar sounds to your puppy in a carefully controlled way, we can prepare puppies for when they will experience them in the future.
- There's a strong link between pain and the development of noise fears: dogs that are in pain show an increased concern to loud noises.
- If your puppy has shown an awareness to noises, or suddenly develops a sensitivity, consider if there is an underlying physical issue. You want to be confident your puppy will be able to cope with whatever it is you're exposing them to.

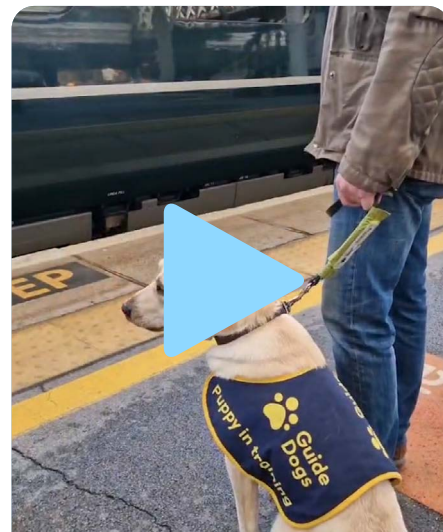


Video: Puppies in nest with background sounds.



Managing for success

- There are a lot of great online resources and recordings. [Dogs Trust has created sound clips](#) that replicate everyday noises that you can use to introduce separate noises or ranges of different noises to your puppy.
- The other everyday noises that will be useful to practice before going out and about include traffic, public transport, alarms, roadworks and sirens.
- Try to work on firework sounds in advance as much as possible for known noisy events or seasons such as November and New Year, so that your puppy has experienced many of the noises and startles during a training exercise before they occur in real life.
- When bangs, sirens, unexpected fireworks, or any loud things happen, remain calm and give your puppy a handful of food rewards or a fun game. If your puppy does not engage with this, if possible, safely remove them from the situation and please let us know.
- As we approach known firework seasons, we'll provide guidance on how to support your puppy through.



Video: Puppy at a train station.

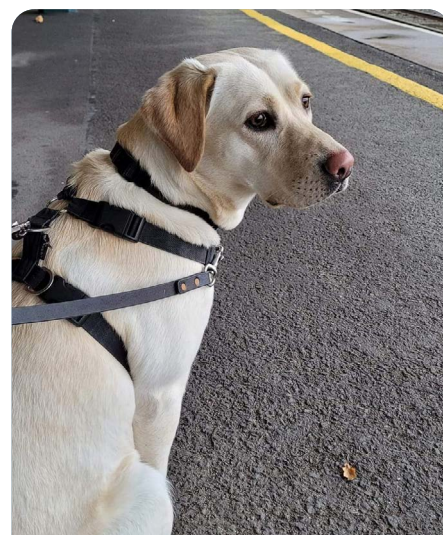


Photo. Puppy at train station.



Teaching foundations

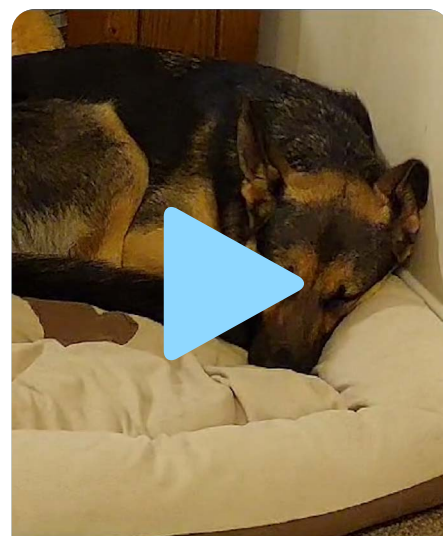
- In a room that's familiar to your puppy, load up the app or website
- Create some distance between your phone or computer and your puppy.
- Play the noise tracks at a low volume.
- Give your puppy something 'fun' (something you know they like a chew, KONG ® food rewards or play with them) while the noise occurs. When the noise stops, the 'fun' stops or stop the sound clip when the chew or KONG ® is finished or you have finished the game.
- Let your puppy move around as they want to, do not encourage or lure your puppy closer to the noise.
- Repeat several times (this can be over days or sessions).

Progression

- As your puppy gains experience, they are comfortable and not showing any awareness of the sound, start to increase the volume. Please note, you're not aiming to replicate a firework display or thunderstorm in your house, just for your puppy to make positive associations with the noise. Aim for a volume similar to when you listen to the radio.



Video: Settled young puppy with sound.



Video: Settled older puppy with sound app.



Being a partnership

- Introduce household items and noises in the home in the same way. Things like pan lids or keys dropping on the floor, doors slamming, smoke alarms, hairdryers, electric toothbrushes, shavers, washing machines and the vacuum cleaner or similar. It's often good to start the louder items in another room away from you and your puppy. Ask a helper or your Puppy Development Advisor (PDA) when they are visiting to switch them on for you so that you can watch your puppy's reaction.
- Other 'real life' noises they are likely to come across when they are out and about are children playing, motorbikes, rain, loud bangs, whistling sounds and dogs barking.
- Most puppies will initially pay some attention to the sounds but should return to the activity you've given them. If your puppy continues to show any signs of being uncomfortable after an initial interest or anxiety about noises let us know. Please read the document [Dog body language and communication in foundation knowledge](#).
- Remember, you are your puppy's safety net. They will look to you for support if they're worried by specific noises. During firework season plan to stay with them. If they look to you for reassurance, stay calm and sit with them. You don't need to act differently, just support them.



Having a helper allows you to see your puppies reaction, whilst they are introducing different noises at a distance.

2. Sights and novelty

In this section

In this section, you are aiming for your puppy to be comfortable with exploring novelty.

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?

Your puppy will come across lots of different surfaces, smells and sights when they're out and about with you and in their role as a guide dog. By providing them with the solid foundations and experiences of novelty at home, they will be better prepared and have more deposits in their positive life bank account to fall back on should they need them.

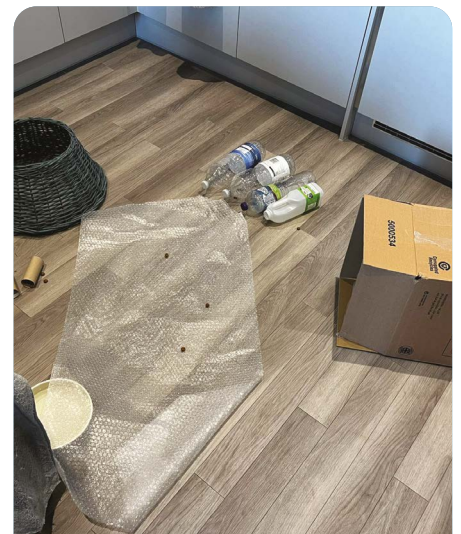
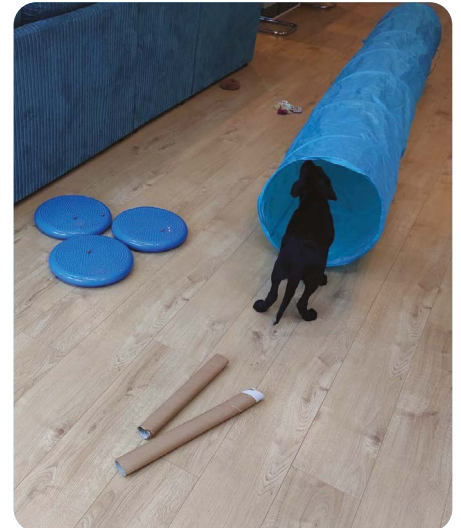


A guide dog will have to work past a huge variety of sights and sounds.



Knowing your puppy

- Puppies have differing interests and so will interact with the environment around them in different ways. Some will be more proactive exploring, whilst others will be more reserved.
- As your puppy develops, they'll need to be given the opportunity to explore a wide range of new and unfamiliar objects in a safe way, so they can learn about the world around them.
- A puppy's reaction when they discover something new is often different when they're on and off the lead. This is because when they're on the lead, they don't have the same freedom to approach or move away.
- You're not aiming to introduce your puppy to absolutely everything they may encounter in later life. Rather, you should try to give them a broad range of experiences, focusing on making sure these are positive. This should mean that when they encounter something new later in life, they can refer to these positive experiences and assume that this too will be positive for them.



Photos: Confidence course set up.



Managing for success

- Use what you have available at home, in the garden or garage e.g. open umbrellas, putting a sheet over a chair, or bikes to name a few.
- Think about the different surfaces you have, and your puppy may come across when out and about.
- You can lie brushes or mops down so they can practise stepping over them, or items that they can practise stepping on and off e.g. turn the bottom of the crate upside down to represent ramps or metal bridges.
- Let your puppy take as long as they want to investigate and become familiar with the items.

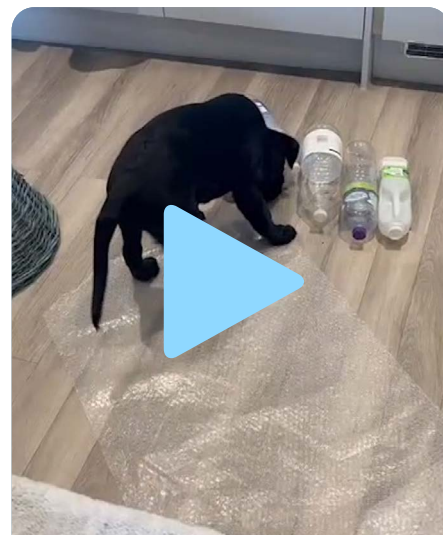


Teaching foundations

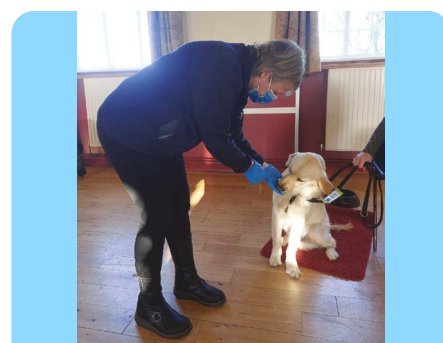
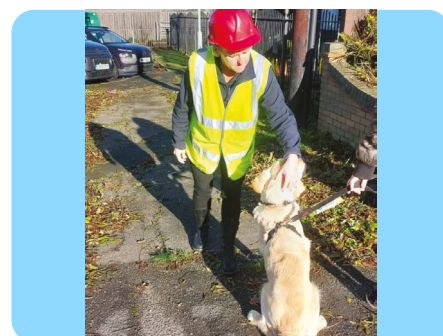
- Lay a selection of objects out on the floor in a familiar room, without your puppy seeing you place them.
- When you're ready, give your puppy the opportunity to explore at their own pace, off lead.
- Allow your puppy to engage with the items at their own pace. Don't lure your puppy with food towards items.
- Reinforce their explorations with praise.
- Let your puppy move in and out of the objects and take a break if they want to. If they come back to you, interact with them and you can even explore the objects together.

Progression

- After doing this with your puppy off the lead, you can repeat this exercise with your puppy on the lead. This replicates how they will experience most novel objects when out and about.
- When doing this, keep the lead loose so your puppy approaches calmly and without pulling. This exercise is also a good way of introducing your puppy to people who may look different from your family. Ask friends if they would be willing to help. Try to involve adults and children of different ages, genders and ethnic backgrounds, wheelchair users, people with beards, glasses, walking sticks, and hats.



Video: Confidence course setup.



Photos: Person in hat/Hi-Viz/mask.



Being a partnership

- Continually read your puppy's body language to find out what they are interested in or if they are uncomfortable.
- Along with the usual signs of being uncomfortable, other things to look for are, mouthing, jumping up at you, biting their lead, repeatedly scratching.
- If an object they stand on wobbles under them, make it a game, with happy noises and play. Allow them to recover and resume exploring when they're ready.
- If your puppy picks up and parades something, calmly walk over to something else and pay attention to that item instead.
- If your puppy is showing any reluctance to approach an object, then slow down or stop. Move forward only when they want to.



Let your puppy take as long as they want to investigate and become familiar with items.

3. Taking your puppy out and about


In this section

Our aim is that your puppy will be comfortable visiting everyday environments that they will experience as a guide dog.

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

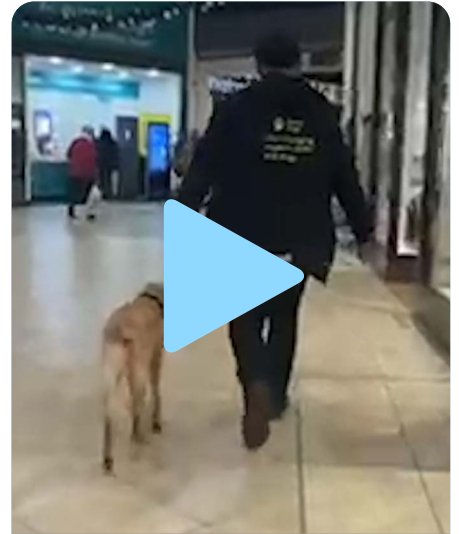
Why is this important for a guide dog?

Our guide dog owners have varied lifestyles and having a guide dog who is comfortable in different environments, helps them to live the life they choose.



Knowing your puppy

- There's no specified time as to when a guide dog puppy starts to see and explore the world outside the home. However, we ask that your puppy has chance to settle into their new home and therefore their first week with you is primarily spent at home.
- When they do start going out and about, young puppies often need to be carried and/or can only go on the floor in certain environments due to their vaccination status. Your PDA will advise you as to exactly where and when they can go out. This timing may be different to your last puppy or to other puppy raisers (even down the same road).
- When puppies still need to be carried, we ask that puppies are only carried in arms and not slings, back packs, bags, baskets or trolleys.
- Guide dog puppies grow quickly and become heavy. Please read the document Manual handling guidance in 'Essential information' guidance to keep yourself safe. Your health and safety is paramount, if you have any concerns about lifting one of our puppies, please stop doing this and speak to your PDA.
- Younger puppies or puppies who have been restricted to the home and garden should start with short and close to home experiences that extend over time. This gives more toileting opportunities and reduces the likelihood of being overwhelmed.



Video: Puppy in shopping centre.

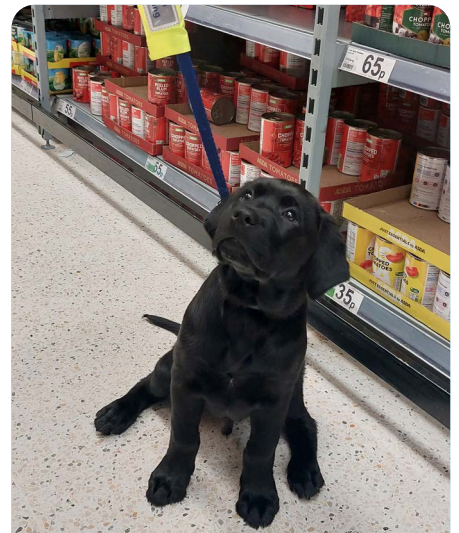


Photo: Puppy in shop.

- If at any point your puppy is unwell, or has an injury, avoid taking them to new places, as it increases their chances of making negative associations.
- When you start taking your puppy into public access areas, please remember that guide dog puppies don't have automatic public rights access, it's at the discretion of the premises owner.
- The Puppy Raising Access Letter can be shown to shop owners or members of the public as required.



Let your puppy take the time they need to stop and take in new sights and sounds.



Managing for success

- Start with quiet environments (quiet roads, corner shop) and very gradually, as your puppy develops, increase how busy or big the environments are that you take your puppy to. Your PDA will be able to advise.
- Plan ahead. Think about how you can make the experience as positive as possible for your puppy, e.g. What would be the best time/route to approach etc.
- It can help to have a puppy 'out and about' bag ready that includes;
 - A familiar blanket or towel
 - Water
 - Lightweight bowl/container
 - Poo bags
 - Wipes (in case toileting happens in an indoor area)
 - Hand sanitizer (for you)
 - Your Guide Dogs identification card
 - Puppy Raising Access Letter (in the puppy raiser info pack)
 - Rewards (toys, food rewards and chews)

- Only take your puppy out and about when you have the time and attention to meet their needs and can give them your full support. If you're in a rush, or your focus will be diverted, leave them at home. Learning to be home alone is also an equally important concept. Please read the document Home alone guidance for more information.
- Standing or sitting with your puppy in a new place is an experience. When puppies are moving, they have less time to learn what's around them, so don't be in a rush to walk them around in new places. Just being there will give them a solid foundation.

“

Practice carrying your puppy in the manner demonstrated in the picture below.



Teaching foundations

- You can start to introduce your puppy to the world in a few different ways based on your puppy's development stage and your needs.

In your arms

- Carry your puppy to quiet locations, let them take in the world as much as they want to. Pair the outing with rewards to add to their positive bank account.

From the car

- Park your car in a safe location (your safety is paramount) which is protected from people, other dogs and traffic passing closely e.g. the far corner of a supermarket car park.
- Depending on your car setup, let your puppy watch the world go by from the boot or backseat of your car. Please note your puppy must be always either on the lead or behind a barrier.
- Add to their positive life bank account by engaging with your pup.
- If they're comfortable, you can move your car closer to environments (if safe to do so).



Photo: Preparing to pick up a puppy correctly.

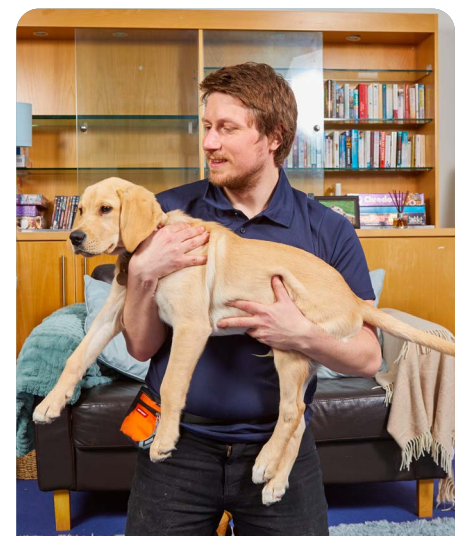


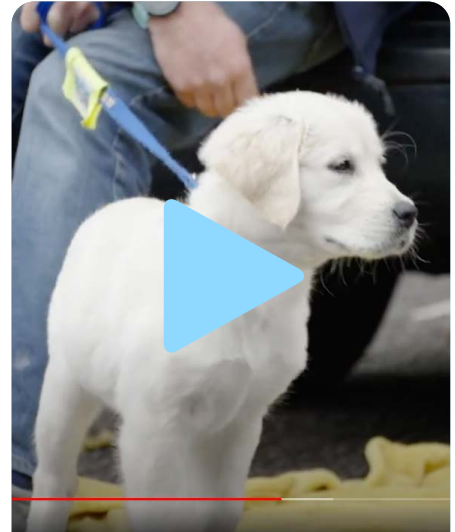
Photo: Holding a puppy correctly.

Base yourself somewhere

- Stand or sit in a position that's safe for both you and your puppy, either holding your puppy or, if suitable, with them on the ground.
- Give your puppy a chew or KONG ® whilst the world happens. They don't need to interact with it and can move around on their lead.
- Shortly after your puppy finishes their chew or KONG ® finish the session.

Progression

- As your puppy develops, let them explore new places at their pace using all their senses. Continue to build positive associations with things they come across.



Video: New environments.



Being a partnership

- If your puppy displays signs that they're uncomfortable in a new environment, including snatching food rewards, rushing or being unable to engage with you, give them space from anything that worries them and time to see if they can work through it. If they can, continue your visit.
- If they continue to show signs of being uncomfortable then move them away, end the session and let us know.
- The focus when visiting new places should be on letting your puppy take the environment in rather than on any specific training e.g. walking on a lead.
- Visiting new places should be enjoyable for both you and your puppy.

4. Managing distractions

In this section

Our aim is to be able to disengage or walk calmly past stimuli, e.g. people, other dogs, food or other animals while on a lead. We have broken this down into:

- How to interact with people and dogs.
- How to calmly pass dogs, animals and people or other stimulus on a lead.

Quick links

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Why



Knowing your puppy



Managing for success



Teaching foundations



Being a partnership

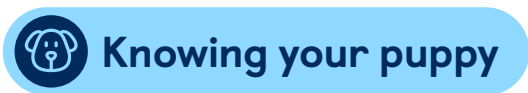


Why is this important for a guide dog?

This is a difficult skill for a puppy and will take lots of time and patience from you as their handler. It is, however, a really important skill. In their role as a guide dog, they will need to pass by many dogs, particularly in the street, and remain focused to keep their partner safe. Depending on their partners’ circumstances and lifestyle, they may also live or work in a rural environment where horse riders may pass by or where there is livestock in fields.



Every day the world is full of different distractions for your puppy.



Many puppies struggle to stay calm when they see another puppy, person, or other stimulus, and then explode with excitement, frustration or they can be worried. We don’t always know which emotion it is, but we do know we want to change their emotional state. Start at a distance where your puppy’s body language is showing they are comfortable and reward them for looking at the stimuli (engage) and remaining calm. We then reward them for looking away or back at you (disengage) and remaining calm. Over time your puppy will start to calmly look at stimuli and then look away without the need for reward.



Managing for success

- Pick quieter times of day to work on the behaviours so you can practice at a distance easily.
- Be aware of the likely dog population in the area you're going to practice in – going near a park is likely to increase the dog numbers, and the dogs themselves are potentially going to be more highly aroused as they are going to and from the park.
- When encountering a dog, person or other interesting item where we don't want to interact, you can use engage/disengage, magnet lure to the nose of your puppy to move past or increasing distance.
 - On approach hold the food close to your puppy's nose (your PDA will advise on which food is appropriate for your puppy)
 - Maintain interest in the treat as you pass the distraction, by allowing your puppy to sniff and nibble at the food.
 - You may need to create extra distance past the distraction even with the food support.
 - When at a safe distance, release the food reward to your puppy.

Whilst we mainly focus on ignoring dogs and people with this exercise, it's important that your puppy also has opportunities to interact and greet some people or dogs.

- Always check if it's OK for the puppy to greet people/dogs.
- Stop a few paces away from the stimulus.
- Continue to assess your puppy's body language, if at any point they appear apprehensive about the approach (not moving forward, tail tucked under, shaking, cowering), stop the interaction. Discuss this with your PDA.
- If appropriate cue 'Okay' and allow three seconds of interaction.
- After three seconds, encourage your puppy to move on.

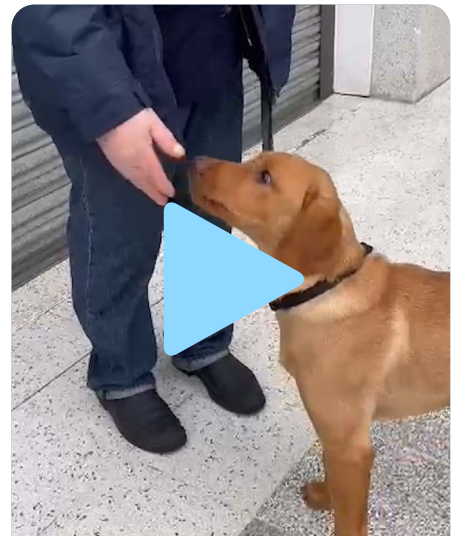


**Always remember,
distance is your friend.**



Stage 1: Engage

- Each time your puppy looks toward the stimulus (engage), praise and reward them.
- Repeat many times, with a variety of stimulus type (other dogs/people etc.) and in a variety of locations.
- If your puppy is staring at the stimulus try to get their attention e.g. by making a funny noise, saying their name or a light stroke on your puppy's back.
- If this does not work or your puppy becomes over aroused, such as becoming erratic on the lead or snatching the food reward, increase the distance between your stimuli.
- Once you start experiencing your puppy looking up to you after looking at the stimulus you can move to stage 2. This may be on the first experience or after lots of repetitions. It might be different on each occasion or different stimulus. You'll have to watch your puppy closely.



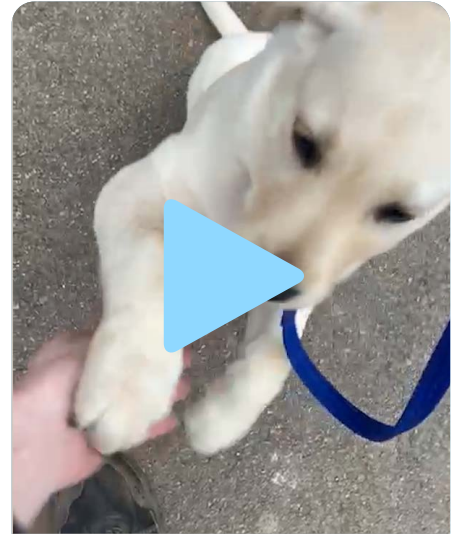
[Video: Engage/disengage.](#)

Stage 2: Disengage

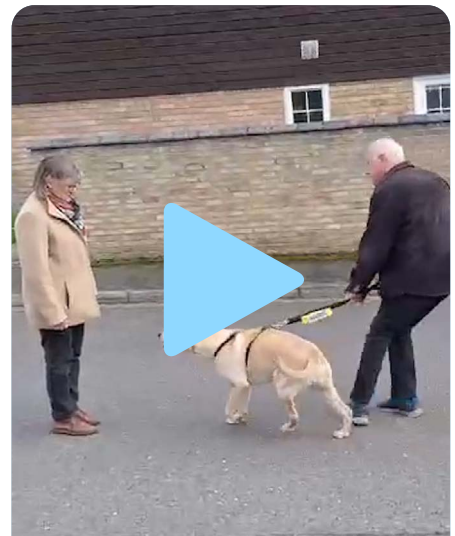
- Maintain a distance where your puppy is calm, and your lead is loose.
- When your pup looks toward the stimulus (engage), wait until your pup looks away from it (disengage), then reward. Complete this sequence for every repetition of their focus on you, or away from the stimulus (disengage).
- If your puppy is staring at the stimulus try to get their attention e.g. by making a funny noise, saying their name or a light stroke on your puppy's back.
- If your puppy fails to look away from the stimulus or at you within 3 seconds, increase distance as your puppy needs more space.
- At any point if your puppy becomes over aroused or your lead has tension, increase distance, distance is your friend.

Progression

- As your puppy shows consistency with being able to disengage, begin to sometimes use verbal praise as the reward rather than food.
- You can also start to decrease the distance from the stimulus with the puppy remaining calm.
- Remember it's ok for your puppy to engage with the stimulus first, provided they remain calm and are then able to disengage after no more than a few seconds.



Video: Young puppy greeting person on a lead.



Video: Older puppy greeting person on a lead.

Being a partnership

- Please remember it's normal during adolescent stages of your puppy's development for behaviours to change.
- As a rule, we wouldn't want the dogs to say 'hello' to more than 1 in 3 other dogs or people whilst on the lead. This will prevent your puppy from thinking they're able to approach every person or dog.
- To keep your puppy safe when introducing them to animals, other than dogs, such as large farm animals, use a barrier or have the animals handled by their owner. Never allow your puppy off the lead near livestock.
- When interacting with other dogs, protect your puppy from negative experiences by looking at the other dog's body language as well as your own puppy's. Move your puppy on or decline if their dog looks uncomfortable.
- If another dog frightens or intimidates your puppy, stay calm and remove your puppy from the situation.
- If you have any concerns relating to your puppy's behaviour around people, dogs or other animals, please let us know.