

## Puppy Raising

# Social behaviour and settling on lead guidance

Version 1.2

Updated September 2024

### Sections

There are 5 topics within this document. By following each link below you will be directed straight to that area of guidance.

- 1. Sleeping overnight**
- 2. Spending time home alone in the daytime**
- 3. Mine and yours**
- 4. Manners around the table and in the kitchen**
- 5. Settling on lead**



# 1. Sleeping overnight

## In this section

In this section, you'll learn how to develop appropriate social behaviours in your puppy. By the end of your puppy raising journey, we would ideally like your puppy to:

- Be calm and self-controlled around food, only chewing and playing with items they have been given, and not jumping up or stealing items with appropriate management.
- Have demonstrated the ability to be left alone, with minimal management, for periods of one to three hours.
- Be calm, relaxed and settle quietly in familiar social situations (e.g. cafes, shops) with appropriate management both in home and when out and about.
- Link to 1st week for Know, Manage, Teach and Partner in the early stages

Please also read the supporting document [Preparing for your first week.](#)

## Quick links

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



Why



## Why

# Why is this important for a guide dog?

As with any dog living within a household, a nighttime routine that fits in with the family is important for everyone's wellbeing. Different households will have their own preferences for the dog's sleeping area. There are more opportunities for matching a potential guide dog when a dog is happy to sleep independently from their handler in another area of the house.

## Progression

For puppies who have needed to sleep in the same room as you to begin with:

- Gradually make it so they are further away from you and nearer to where they will sleep long term.
- Be guided by your puppy as to how long this will take. If they become unsettled, then go back a stage.

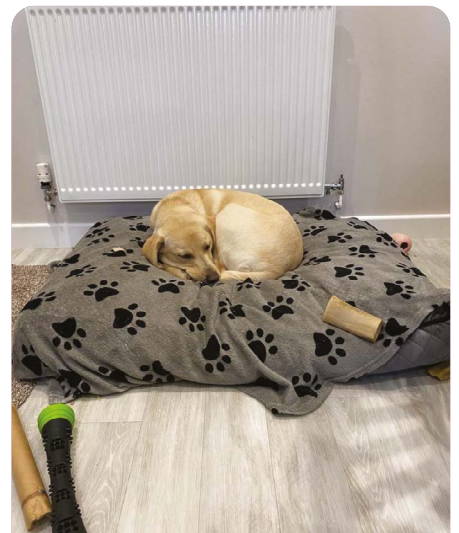
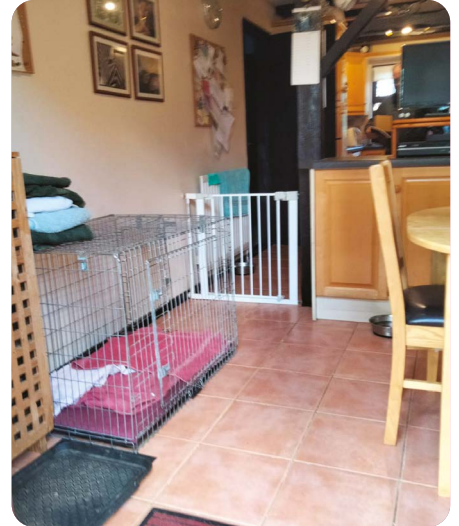


Photo: Overnight set up 1st week and progression.

## 2. Spending time home alone in the daytime

### In this section

In this exercise you'll learn to teach your puppy to be quiet, comfortable and non-destructive when left alone during the day.

### 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?

Teaching your puppy to be happy and confident when left alone is an important part of being a Puppy Raiser and has a significant effect on their progression towards a guiding career. Guide dogs should be able to be left alone with no other dogs or people around. Their early experiences of being home alone will have a significant impact on how they'll feel about being left throughout their life.



A puppy's early experiences of being home alone will have a significant impact on how they'll feel about being home alone throughout their life.



## Knowing your puppy

- Teaching your puppy to be content when left is a gradual process, and you'll need to create a strong bond with them first. Every puppy is different in how long this takes.
- When a puppy is uncomfortable with being left this is often due to anxiety or frustration.
- Remember, even as your puppy grows up, your puppy shouldn't be left home alone for more than three hours in any 24-hour period.



## Managing for success

- Don't rush through this.
- To help make this training as easy as possible for your puppy, choose training times when they are most likely to succeed. For instance, an excited or playful puppy may find it harder to be left.
- Consider whether turning the radio on low or having the lights on may also help your puppy settle.

- Once you start leaving your puppy out of earshot, consider recording them so you can see what they did and check they were comfortable. You could use a mobile phone, a video camera, an Alexa-style virtual home assistant or a baby monitor. This exercise can be practised as part of normal daily routines.



## Teaching foundations

Teach these stages over several sessions.

### Stage 1: Make positive associations with the crate/pen in the day

- When your puppy is naturally sleepy encourage them over to their sleeping area, give them an enrichment activity and sit next to them.
- Ignore your puppy and read a book or look at your phone.

### Closing the sleeping area door

- Repeat the above, but on this repetition close the sleeping area door.
- Calmly open the door before your puppy finishes the enrichment and do something else (that doesn't involve your puppy).

### Introduce movement away from your puppy

- This time, instead of sitting next to your puppy start to move within the room, open a cupboard door, make a cup of tea returning to your puppy before their enrichment is finished.

### Stage 2: Increasing the duration your puppy is left

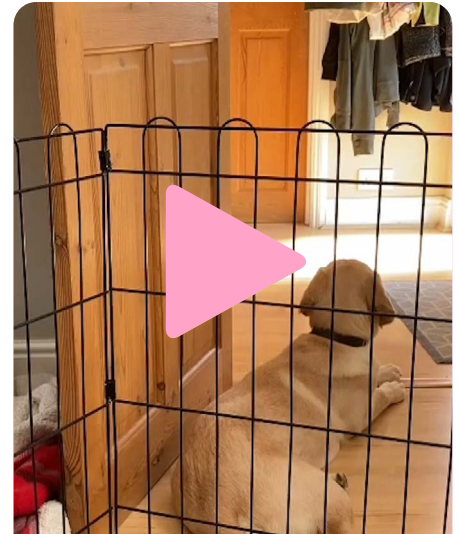
- Increase the time you can leave your puppy whilst you're in the house. Aim for 30 minutes so that you know your puppy finishes their chew/KONG ® and remains comfortable and relaxed. Once your puppy is used to short absences with you in another room, progress to stage 3.

## Stage 3: Leaving puppy alone at home

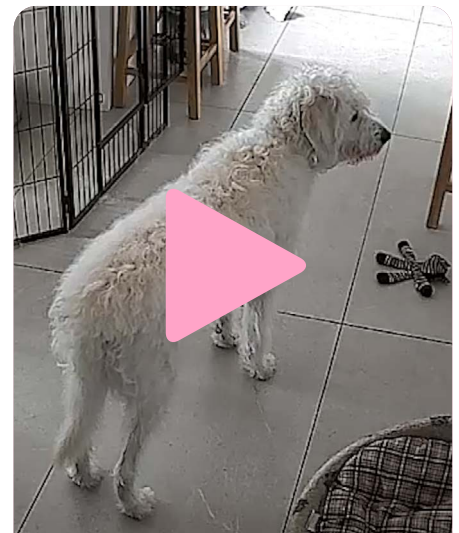
- Encourage your puppy into their sleeping area.
- Give them an enrichment item that you know your puppy has had safely before in there.
- Close the door and calmly leave your house.
- Leave your puppy for a shorter time than you have left them previously (when in your house but out of sight).
- On your return home, keep things natural and relaxed, e.g. take your coat and shoes off, talk to your puppy and turn the kettle on before letting your puppy out.

### Progression

- Gradually increase the time your puppy can be left home alone without other dogs slowly and in a way that matches and meets their physical development needs (short enough to allow for toileting and mealtimes).



Video: Settled puppy home alone.



Video: Slightly unsettled puppy home alone but ok



**Photo:** Home alone initial setup.



### Being a partnership

- While you're actively minimising the time your puppy is left alone in your early days together, it's also important that you come and go as normal around your house as much as you can. Think about how you can incorporate this training into your daily routine so that it's not adding much more to your daily list of things to do.
- Set your puppy up for success and follow their lead on when they are ready to progress to the next stage. If you see signs that they are struggling, go back to a stage of training they were comfortable with and build up more slowly.
- Try not to increase the time you leave your puppy every session, add in some shorter ones as well. At any stage if you are concerned your puppy is not comfortable with this process, please let us know.

## 3. Mine and yours

### 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 is particularly important for your puppy's future career once they are partnered with someone with sight loss. A guide dog owner may not see if their dog has grabbed something off a shelf, from a young child's hand, or off the pavement when out and about. Similarly, in the home, they may not know if their dog has taken something from the coffee table or picked something up that has fallen from the countertop. Stealing could be embarrassing for a guide dog owner and may also be dangerous for their guide dog, for example if they ingest something poisonous.



## Knowing your puppy

Puppies explore the world with their mouths, so it's natural for your puppy to want to investigate, carry, chew and pick-up items. They aren't born knowing which items they can pick up and which items they should not.

Our behaviour in response to them taking items can increase or decrease the interest they show in certain things in the future. For example, if stealing guarantees your full attention or a chase game whereas picking up one of their own toys gets no attention, they are more likely to repeat stealing.

As your puppy gets older, they generally have less natural desire to pick things up.



**Puppies are not born knowing what items they can pick up and which items they should not.**



## Managing for success

- Management and prevention are key to this exercise. If your puppy doesn't have the opportunity to pick up human belongings, they'll be much less likely to get into the habit of it.
- When your puppy is young, where possible ensure that any human belongings around the home and garden are in difficult to access places, for example keep TV remotes on a high shelf.
- Make sure your puppy has access to a variety of dog toys and chews of different textures. Please read the document [Preparing for your puppy](#) for more information on puppy proofing, toys and chews.
- Play with your puppy. This will teach them appropriate games rather than them finding their own fun. Please read the document [Learning to play](#).
- Rotate your puppy's toys so they stay varied and interesting.
- Be proactive! Don't wait for your puppy to pick up something you don't want them to have before giving them attention. Reinforce the behaviour you want. This means acknowledging times when they pick up and engage with their own toys and chews by giving them some calm praise.



## Teaching foundations

Our aim is for your puppy to learn to pick up, carry, and engage with appropriate items, such as dog toys, and to ignore to pick up human belongings.

- As your puppy gets older, introduce a few of your personal items into the environment discreetly without attracting your puppy's attention.
- Engage them in an activity (e.g. playing, chewing dog items or training with you), to give them the opportunity to learn to ignore the items.
- If they show interest in your belongings or, it looks like they would attempt to take the item, then distract them away onto one of their own chews or toys.



**Rotate your puppy's toys so they stay varied and interesting.**



## Being a partnership

- Be guided by your puppy's behaviour around human items as to how soon you can start removing management tools such as baby gates, pens, and closed doors. The stage at which you can start leaving more items around will be individual to your puppy.
- If your puppy has something that's not theirs think about how quickly you need to get the item back; Is it dangerous? Is it important?
- If it's something you would rather they didn't have (e.g. paper, tissues, cardboard), rather than giving your attention to them:
  - Go and pay intense and obvious attention to something else.
  - Don't talk to your puppy, or make eye contact with them, but pick up something else (a pen, a book, a set of keys, anything) and start talk in an excitable voice: "Wow! Look at this AMAZING pen etc, look what I have over here."
  - If your puppy shows interest in you, ignore them and the item. After a few seconds, act as if you are surprised to see them: "Oh, hello! Did you want something?".

- Ask them for a 'Sit', or another easy behaviour they know.
- Ask them to repeat the behaviour or play with them so they forget about the stolen item.
- Pick up the stolen item without your puppy noticing so that it doesn't become exciting again.
- If you have no option but to take an item out of your puppy's mouth, because the item is dangerous for them, or because the item is important and they may damage it, swap it for something else such as a food reward or toy that they love or, ask your puppy to 'drop' (if they know this).
- Be aware that if you regularly need to swap items or ask your puppy to 'Drop', they may start to think the best way to get your attention/play/get a food reward is to steal. If you notice the behaviour increasing let us know and look back at 'Managing for success' and 'Teaching foundations'.



**Reinforce the behaviour you want, calmly praise when your puppy interacts with their own toys.**

## 4. Manners around the table and in the kitchen

### In this section

In this section the aim is for your puppy to not show attention to people eating (Some puppies may naturally not show any interest in you eating and gentle reinforcement will be all that's needed) and, to automatically choose to go and lie calmly out of the way, on their bed, whilst food is being prepared.

### 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?

For guide dog owners, food preparation is a key time when they are moving in the kitchen with items such as sharp knives and boiling water or foods that are toxic to dogs. Most people will prefer for their guide dog to be safely positioned out of the kitchen or away from food preparation areas. For a guide dog owner, the ability to also visit restaurants or cafes without the embarrassment of a dog drooling, begging, or staring at other customers is extremely important and maintains the reputation of Guide Dogs.



It's natural for your puppy to be interested in food.



## Knowing your puppy

It's natural for your puppy to be interested in food. They're not born knowing how they should behave when humans are preparing meals, eating at the table or snacking on the sofa. Behaviours such as 'begging' and jumping up are normal for a puppy. Through good management and positive reinforcement training you can teach them to behave in a more appropriate way in these contexts.

If your puppy shows a sudden interest in food items, you should check their body condition score and general health, particularly if they are growing. If you have recently reduced your puppy's food and you have started to see this behaviour, or if you have any queries about your puppy's wellbeing, let us know.



## Managing for success

- To prevent your puppy from learning to 'counter surf,' always keep surfaces and tables free from food, used utensils and crockery. If this isn't possible, ensure your puppy is never left unattended in rooms where food is left out, or that food left out is well out of reach, (for example, pushed to the back of the countertop). This is especially important while they are young, and you're teaching them the behaviour that is wanted from them in this context.
- When you first get your puppy, place them in their crate/pen or behind a baby gate with a stuffed enrichment toy nearby whilst you're eating meals.
- When introducing this exercise train 'for the environment not in the environment', for example, not whilst eating a meal, start with a biscuit on a plate sat at a table.
- Keep sessions short.



**Keep sessions short and build up time in line with how your puppy is progressing.**



## Teaching foundations

When you are preparing food

### Stage 1: Closed door

- Place your puppy in a crate/pen or behind a stair gate.
- Provide an enrichment toy and close their door whilst you prepare food. This is a great time to link in with your home alone training. Please read the information on your puppy being 'Home alone' within the [Social behaviours and settling on lead - At home eLearning](#) lesson.
- Repeat this over several sessions.

### Stage 2: Open the crate/pen door

- Once you have given your puppy their enrichment toy, leave the crate/pen or baby gate door open.

### Stage 3: Reduce the distraction

- Once your puppy is reliably comfortable and settled when you're preparing food you can also gradually

reduce the amount of food in the enrichment toy, or size of chew, so that they learn to lie calmly on their bed the whole time you are preparing food.

## **Either separately or as stage 4: Teach your puppy to ignore you when you're eating**

- Get yourself a small snack.
- Sit down to eat the biscuit watching your puppy out of the corner of your eye.
- If your puppy looks overly interested place a chew or stuffed enrichment toy on your puppy's bed that will keep them occupied for the duration of you eating the biscuit.
- Ignore any attention to you eating, such as staring at you, whining. Avoid giving your puppy eye contact and pretend you haven't noticed them at all.
- As your puppy gets into the habit of being ignored every time you sit down to eat, you can gradually increase the time you are eating/what you are eating.



### **Being a partnership**

- Your puppy may struggle when they're first learning this behaviour. They will be naturally interested in your food and may also want your attention. This may be frustrating for them. If you see signs that they're struggling (for example, vocalisations, jumping up, salivating or pawing you), you can help make this easier for them by providing a higher value chew, KONG ® or distraction item to keep them occupied while you eat or providing more distance from you/the food (moving their bed further away).
- Resist the temptation to reduce your enrichment/ rewards too soon- you want to build a very solid habit first. It's likely to be months before you completely remove all use of reinforcers in this context, but be patient, it will pay off in the long run!

## 5. Settling on lead

### In this section

Our aim of this exercise is for your puppy to settle calmly and remain settled when not receiving attention, in a range of everyday situations, for a reasonable period.

### Quick links

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**Why**



**Knowing your puppy**



**Managing for success**



**Teaching foundations**



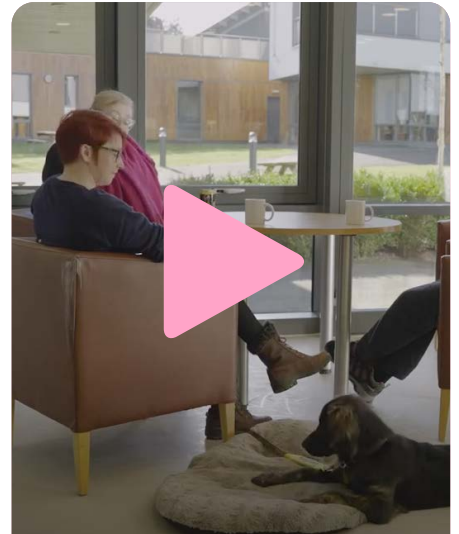
**Being a partnership**



## Why

# Why is this important for a guide dog?

Settling in a public place is particularly important for your puppy to learn. Guide dogs access areas that other dogs don't, like libraries and cafés. When your puppy is older, they'll need to be able to settle quickly and remain settled for lengthy periods of time, in various environments. Your puppy's future partner will want to relax and just enjoy the experience of going out; if your puppy doesn't know how to settle themselves this can be stressful for both partners.



[Video: Self-settle.](#)



## Knowing your puppy

- Some puppies appear to come pre-programmed with the ability to settle and observe the world around them, without joining in. Others really struggle to learn this key skill; this is part of their individual personality.
- Puppies progress differently, during adolescence dogs may take a step back and find settling troublesome because of the hormonal and physical changes they are experiencing. Always consider your puppy's developmental stage and adjust your expectations accordingly.



## Managing for success

- If you put your lead under your foot, please also still keep hold of it. Any puppy can lunge unexpectedly, and it's therefore important that you remain aware of what your puppy is doing and feel that you are physically prepared for this.
- Aim to do your sessions when your puppy is naturally tired and keep sessions short to start with and not before feeding times.

- Ensure your puppy understands the difference between when they are engaged and working with you, and when they're settled and occupying themselves. Consistency is key. Keep your focus on them when working, and actively ignore them when they're settling.
- When you're at the stage of going into public places, pick a location that will help your puppy settle e.g. has plenty of room, not many people pass, distance from other dogs. If this isn't possible, can you help your puppy out by draping your coat on the back of a chair to create a visual barrier between your puppy and some of the possible distractions.
- If you must take your puppy with you and you're unsure whether they have learnt the skills to do this, you'll need to manage this by providing them with enrichment. This will ensure their needs are met, give them an appropriate behaviour to engage in, and prevent them from learning to attention seek (for example, barking at you) in these contexts. Be sure to give the chew or food toy as soon as you want them to settle; don't wait until they struggle.



## Teaching foundations

The cue for this behaviour will be ignoring your puppy. However, you may also have your lead under your foot (as well as in your hand).

### Stage 1: Practise at home

- Pick a quiet, distraction free environment that your puppy is relaxed in and where you will not be interrupted, to practice this exercise, for example in a dining room set up.
- When you sit down, extend your lead, and put it under your foot but in a way that you can still hold it in your hand. Give your puppy enough lead so that they can stand, sit, or lie down, but not enough that they can

jump up at you or investigate things away from your feet. Don't worry about the position your puppy is in. They can be stood at the end of the lead, sat next to you or lay down. Ignore them. As time passes, they may move into a different position.

- After a few minutes, take your foot off the lead, and calmly engage with your puppy again, moving away from the area.
- For your next few sessions, you can return to the same place and repeat as before gradually extending the time you ask your puppy to settle for.

## Stage 2: Practise in other environments

- Start practicing this for longer or slightly more distracting environments such as a bench on the street or a quiet bus stop.
- Remember to set your puppy up so they can watch what is happening, without feeling the need to join in.

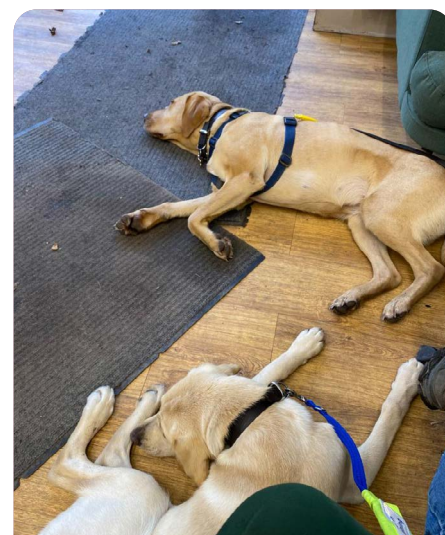


Photo: Two puppies settled in café.



### Being a partnership

- If your puppy becomes restless or starts barking during the exercise, they may need a break, get up and move away from the area without interacting with them. You can then return to your settle shortly afterwards.
- Let your PDA know if, when you are practising this exercise, you notice frustration behaviours e.g. barking, mouthing at lead/handler or backing up to the end of the lead.
- If you find you're having to continuously provide KONG's®, chews or Lickimats for your puppy to remain settled then please speak to your PDA.