



I AM
SAMMY,
TRUSTED GUIDE

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About Guide Dogs

Dogs have been companions and helpers to humans since ancient times—and this includes faithful canines that serve as guide dogs. In fact, the earliest evidence of a guide dog appears in a mural in Italy that dates back to the first century!

In more recent history, dogs were trained by a German doctor during World War I to help returning soldiers who were blind or had limited vision. The doctor established the first guide dog training school, and since then the number of guide dogs has increased across every decade.

According to the organization Guiding Eyes for the Blind, about 10,000 people in the United States who are blind or visually impaired are partnered with guide dogs. Others may choose to travel with white canes or with sighted guides. Just like Jessie, each person must decide what works best for them.

A trained guide dog can analyze situations and give their human teammate information about their surroundings. But a guide dog is not a GPS device—they cannot tell someone where to go. Instead, a person sets the course, and the dog helps get them to their destination

by indicating features to navigate along the way, such as stairs, curbs, and crosswalks. A guide dog is also trained to alert to things they can easily walk under—such as tree branches or low-hanging signs—that might pose problems to their taller human teammate.

Because of the vital work they do, guide dogs are allowed into many places other dogs are not. You might see them in the grocery store or at a restaurant. But no matter where you come across these working dogs, keep in mind that they have important jobs to do. Always remember to ask permission before touching or interacting with a harnessed guide dog.

A guide dog's day is not all work though! Just like other pups, they like to have fun too. When the harness comes off, guide dogs are free to run and sniff, play and explore. Playtime not only helps build the bond between the human and guide dog, it helps ensure that these dedicated working dogs live long, healthy, and happy lives.



Becoming a guide dog is not for all dogs. On the job, a single serious mistake could spell disaster. Because of this, guide dogs must go through months of training before they officially become part of a guide dog team.

At about eight weeks old, potential guide dog pups go to live in homes with volunteer puppy raisers. There they are taught obedience skills and learn to become comfortable around people. At twelve to eighteen months, the dogs return to the training facility. During this “doggy college” time, they develop one of their most important skills: intelligent disobedience. For people-pleasing puppies, learning to disobey in possibly dangerous situations can take months to master.

After passing this stage, each dog is carefully paired with a person who is blind or has a visual impairment, and they begin to form a bond through training, working, and playing together. It’s only after a successful pairing that the dogs graduate and become guide dogs. Only about seventy-five percent of dogs that enter guide dog programs complete the training. Others go on to different jobs or are adopted as pets.



Golden Retriever

The golden retriever was first bred as a hunting dog to navigate the rocky terrain of the Scottish Highlands. Today, these beautiful animals make wonderful guide dogs and companions.

Height: 21.5–24 inches

Weight: 55–75 pounds

Life Span: 10–12 years

Coat: Golden, cream

Known for: Kindness, reliability, confidence



Labrador Retriever

Labs were first bred to retrieve ducks from the water. Today, their alertness and friendliness make them excellent guide dogs.

Height: 21.5–24.5 inches

Weight: 55–80 pounds

Life Span: 10–12 years

Coat: Yellow, black, chocolate

Known for: Friendliness, intelligence, agility

