I want more information about the admissions process.

Please visit www.GuideDog.org or call us at 1-866-282-8047 to request a preliminary application. Our Consumer Services team will answer any questions you might have about getting a guide dog and our requirements. If you meet our criteria, we will send you a detailed application packet within 15 days.

What happens next?

Once you have completed the application, we will arrange an interview and request a video so we can evaluate your O&M skills, your pace, your home environment, etc. Please note, completion of the application does not automatically guarantee you a spot in our program. Our instructors will evaluate your needs to determine if we can serve you. If you are accepted into our program, we will begin looking for the right dog to suit your needs and lifestyle.

What happens after I graduate?

We support our graduates after they have completed their training. We continue to follow up with you to provide support if you have questions regarding behavioral or obedience issues with your dog, help with accessibility problems that you may encounter in violation of the Americans With Disabilities Act, veterinary care concerns, etc. This support can range from answering questions over the phone, to refresher training on campus or in your home community, to advice on when to retire a dog from its career.

What if I’m still not sure if a guide dog is right for me?

Please call our Consumer Services Office toll-free at 1-866-282-8047. We can answer any additional questions you might have and put you in touch with a member of our alumni council. They will talk to you about what life is like with a guide dog, and offer you a first-hand perspective of our programs and the difference a guide dog makes for them.

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Guide Dog Foundation for the Blind, Inc.

Consumer Services Office
Phone: 1-866-282-8047
Email: ConsumerServices@GuideDog.org
Website: www.GuideDog.org
Smithtown, New York

03/2015
Is a guide dog right for me?

A guide dog provides enhanced mobility and renewed independence for someone who is blind or has low vision. Our goal is to team the right dog with the right person to help them live without boundaries.

The decision to get a guide dog is a momentous one. We've prepared this short guide to help you answer the question: “Is a guide dog right for me?”

What does a guide dog do?

Guide dogs are taught how to find and follow a clear path, maneuver around obstacles, and stop at curbs. They follow their handler's directions, but when faced with a potentially dangerous situation (e.g., oncoming traffic), they will disobey to keep themselves and their handlers safe.

Why should I get a guide dog?

Many individuals who are blind or visually impaired feel safer and more self-sufficient with a guide dog. A guide dog provides enhanced mobility and independence, and allows a guide dog user to go where they want, when they want.

Who is eligible for a guide dog?

Anyone 16 years or older, who is legally or totally blind, and has completed orientation and mobility training to travel independently. You must be in good physical and mental health, and be willing and able to care for your guide dog (food, veterinary care, grooming), maintain its training, and use it for its intended purpose.

What kinds of dogs do you use?

We use purebred Labrador and Golden Retrievers, and first-generation Lab/Golden crosses. On a limited basis, we train Standard Poodles for people with documented allergies. Other breeds are available upon review by our certified training staff.

How old are the dogs when they are matched?

Dogs are approximately 16 to 24 months old.

How much does it cost to get a guide dog?

Students are provided their guide dogs and training free of charge. We also cover transportation (within the United States and Canada), and room and board during training. Once they return home, graduates are responsible for food and veterinary costs for their dog. We also provide a stipend for veterinary care and financial assistance is available on a case-by-case basis.

I have my own dog.
Can you train him to be a guide dog?

No. We have extensive breeding, puppy raising, and training protocols to ensure that dogs in our programs have the health, temperament, and ability to be guide dogs.

What if I have other pets in my home?

Instructors will make a decision on a case-by-case basis if it is feasible to place a guide dog in your household with your other pets.

How long is training?

Students attend an intensive two-week in-residence training program on our campus in Smithtown, NY. We keep our student-to-trainer ratio small (2:1) so that you will have plenty of one-on-time with your instructor. Training locations range from working on campus to rural and urban areas, and different modes of public transportation.

Where do I stay?

Students stay in our student residence in private rooms, with attached bathrooms, individual climate control, and access to our secure WiFi network. Each room has a small portable safe for your valuables. There is a communal dining hall; recreation room with cable TV, descriptive videos, and piano; fitness room; computer lab (with assistive technology for student use); snack room; and outdoor patio with picnic benches.

Am I responsible for meals?

We provide three meals a day, prepared by our staff chefs. We take into consideration special dietary needs and will adjust your menu accordingly.

How long is the waiting list to get a guide dog?

Three months to one year. For people with special requirements or requests, the wait may be longer.