



Frank

Training adventures begin!

Pupdate 3 of 6

1

2

3

4

5

6

Welcome to your February Pupdate

The colder months are nearly behind us and spring is just around the corner.

The UK's first guide dog partnership qualified in 1931. Since then, we have matched over 37,500 people with a guide dog – that's at least one new partnership every day for the last 94 years. Our dogs help people with sight loss to get out and about safely, providing life-changing support every single day. They help people with visual impairments to enjoy the freedom and independence many of us take for granted.

1 in 5 people will live with sight loss in their lifetime. By sponsoring a puppy, you're helping us provide vital services, from mobility training to assistive technology and more, that enrich the lives of adults and children with visual impairments. None of this would be possible without supporters like you!

I hope you enjoy reading the latest news from your sponsored puppy. Thank you for being a part of their journey.

Yours sincerely,

Steph

Steph Potter
Puppy Sponsorship Manager



Thank you

for sponsoring Frank



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**Hello, it's
Merry here,
Frank's
trainer**

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I've been working for Guide Dogs for nine years, and I'm currently training four dogs, including Frank. What I love most about my job is understanding each dog's personality and preferences around toys and treats! Learning that they've qualified as guide dogs is incredibly rewarding.

Settling in

Frank is an enthusiastic and energetic pup; he's a pleasure to work with. After his fosterers have brought him to training school in the morning, we start the day with free runs and play sessions, allowing him to bond with me and build a positive association with the new environment. Doing some early basic training in the form of games also provides a good foundation for the next training stages. It's still early days for Frank, but I noticed that he's very food-motivated. This will be great for training him with positive reinforcement: after Frank performs a cue or a skill correctly, I'll reward him with kibble.

Frank has met the other dogs I'm training: Sanders, a black golden retriever cross Labrador; Cece, a golden retriever cross German shepherd; and Trelfa, a yellow Labrador cross golden retriever. They all enjoy playing together.

Frank enjoys napping with Ilya, a golden retriever who's also in training. Ilya is so relaxed, she helps Frank feel totally at ease during downtime. They rest in the pen close to my desk while I focus on admin work.

Current sessions

As a first step, I've started teaching Frank the skill platforms, which will form the basis for many others he'll learn in the future. When he keeps all four paws on a platform, I reward him. This teaches him to find the correct guiding position and develop awareness of his body placement. Platforms are also helpful to teach Frank to walk in a straight line. By practising walking from one platform to another, he learns to identify changes in terrain, such as kerbs, outside the training room environment. Platforms are invaluable for improving his food manners too. When Frank first arrived, he was enthusiastic about food on the floor, grabbing it quite eagerly. Now, he can confidently walk to a platform and ignore any food on the ground.

I'm familiarising Frank with the brown training harness by letting him investigate and sniff it, helping him to get used to it in his own time. Frank already knows the cue 'touch': when he sees my fist and I say 'touch', he will touch my closed hand with his nose. Using this cue, I'll encourage him to put his head



Check out how well Frank is doing at training school by going to:

guidedogs.org.uk/puppy-frank

through the harness, gradually introducing the verbal cue 'head in'. Lots of practice and positive reinforcement, such as treats and praise, will help him build confidence with the harness.

Next plans

Frank is currently doing well in training, although he can be distracted by other dogs and cats when we're out and about. He's very keen to learn, so I'm not overly concerned. I'll continue using positive reinforcement to improve his focus. Frank has enjoyed exploring different places, including paddocks and the woods. I'll gradually introduce him to busier city environments in the coming weeks.

Thank you so much for sponsoring Frank. I look forward to updating you on his progress at training school in his next Pupdate in June.





The training harness

After around 12-16 months with their puppy raiser, our pups move to training school to learn more specific tasks related to their future career. Introducing a young dog to their brown training harness is one of the first milestones at training school. Most dogs have previously worn their puppy coat, meaning they're familiar with the body sensation. With this as a foundation, we build up to placing the harness on the dog's back and fastening it. Once a dog is partnered, they will wear the iconic white guiding harness.



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