



# Sage

A new chapter:  
training school

Pupdate 3

# Welcome to your October Pupdate

**I hope you're enjoying the start of the new season, as the leaves begin to change and the air turns crisper again.**

Did you know that every day, 250 people in the UK start to lose their sight, four of which are estimated to be children? Nearly half report feeling isolated and cut off from the world around them. Together, we can change that.

Your support goes beyond helping puppies become life changers; you're also making a multitude of vital services possible. We're dedicated to breaking down barriers by providing information, advice and support for adults, children and families. None of this would be possible without supporters like you.

Thank you for your invaluable and continued support of Guide Dogs. Your generosity directly impacts the lives of people with sight loss, ensuring everyone can live actively, independently, and well. You are making a massive difference!

Yours sincerely,

*Steph*

**Steph Potter**  
Puppy Sponsorship Manager



# Thank you

for sponsoring Sage



“  
**Hello, it’s  
Victoria  
here, Sage’s  
trainer.**

”

I’ve been working at Guide Dogs for 11 years. I started in the National Centre, looking after guide dog mums and their litters, and for the last two years, I’ve been working as a guide dog trainer. As a dog lover, I enjoy working with many dogs, helping hone their skills to become personal ‘pawsistants’. Everyone deserves to be independent, and the best part of my job is helping people living with sight loss to do so.

## Meeting Sage

Sage is such a sweet girl. She’s only been at training school for a few weeks, so it’s still very early days for her. The first week I spent lots of time building our bond, and it’s developing really nicely. Sage has settled in with her volunteer fosterers well too. I’m also training another dog called Oscar, a golden retriever cross, and Sage gets along with him fantastically. In fact, she’s the boss of their little pack. Anywhere she goes, Oscar follows – it’s funny to watch!

Sage is very clever and has picked up the new skills I’ve begun to teach her quickly. Not only is she really smart, but she’s also got some funny quirks.

She likes to lie down in what I can only describe as the shape of a frog – lying on her front, with her back legs stretched out on either side, forming a T shape. It makes me laugh so much!

## Introducing skills

I have a few different training sessions with Sage throughout each 'school' day, ensuring she gets lots of time to rest, play and have free runs too. This downtime helps embed what she's learnt in training sessions. I've begun work on platforms - this is one of the first skills I teach, as it forms a basis for many other skills. I started by introducing Sage to a low platform. I asked her to walk up to it and stand on it with all four paws – which she picked up really quickly. I brought in another platform and asked Sage to walk from one to the other, ending on the second with all four paws. This skill teaches her to walk in a straight line and to wait when there's a step.

I'm introducing Sage to her brown training harness. Initially, I left it on the training room floor and let Sage familiarise herself with it in her own time, using positive reinforcement to help her build a good association with it. Sage is so inquisitive, she was straight over doing a 'sniff investigation'; eager to learn what it was all about!



Watch Sage learn the skill platforms by scanning the QR code with your smartphone or going to:  
**[guidedogs.org.uk/puppy-sage](https://guidedogs.org.uk/puppy-sage)**



Scan me

## Next in training

In the coming months, I'll be helping Sage to feel comfortable wearing the guiding harness. I'll move from teaching skills like kerb work and obstacle avoidance in the training room to real-life situations. These skills are essential to indicate changes in terrain to someone living with sight loss, and help to keep them safe whilst out and about.

**Thank you for sponsoring Sage! I look forward to training her through the next part of her journey. Find out how she's progressing in your next Pupdate in February.**



## Where is Sage on her Pupdate journey?



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### 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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