

Spirit

GUIDE
DOGS



Pupdate 4

A new chapter

Spirit has started training school!

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A PUPPY**





Hello, I'm Chris, a trainer at Guide Dogs. I'm pleased to say Spirit has made it to training school!

As a guide dog trainer every day is different, some days the dogs are a pleasure to work with and other days they can be a challenge, I am constantly learning from them and I love my job. It's such a great feeling when you hear that your hard work has come to fruition and a dog you trained has qualified and is changing the life of someone living with sight loss.

Starting school

Spirit has such a zest for life and is so willing and enthusiastic to learn. He has adapted to life at training school very well and is always keen to start working each morning. Spirit shares his kennel with a golden retriever called Hugh and they get on so well together – Spirit is so sweet and always tries to make sure I am included when they are playing together. I sometimes take him for a pack run where he free runs with a group of my dogs at a nearby common; it's great for him to let off some steam.

I spent the first few weeks building a bond with Spirit by doing lots of fun things like free running, grooming and playing with toys. I also took him for a good look around the training centre so he could get used to his new surroundings. One of his favourite things is the grooming table, which he loves to stand on and be pampered!



Learning to guide

Spirit took to wearing his training harness quickly and looks awesome in it! In the mornings we go for a harness walk together in a quiet residential area, so that Spirit can focus on developing his guiding tasks. In the afternoon, we practice behaviours such as 'chin rest' in which Spirit will rest his chin on my lap or hand. This is a very valuable skill for his future owner, who can use it to health check his ears, teeth and eyes more easily.



Spirit has also tried out the obstacle course at the training school, a short course made up of every day obstacles he may come across whilst guiding, such as traffic signs and cones. He is now learning to bend his body around these obstacles and leave room for me to get around them too and is progressing nicely.

(Continued overleaf)



Challenges

Spirit is a bit of a sensitive lad and doesn't like going through puddles, mud or wet leaves – I think he likes his shiny fur too much! I'm currently teaching him it's a good thing to walk through these things and not something he has to avoid.

Sometimes when we are in busier areas Spirit can struggle to stay focused on me.

I'm teaching him each skill slowly so as not to overwhelm him and help him keep focused whilst we are out and about. I am looking forward to seeing him begin to make decisions himself and remain focused, despite any distractions that may be going on around him.

Thank you for sponsoring Spirit. Look out for his next Pupdate in June.

The matching process

Every person and dog is unique, so matching a guide dog to an owner is a complex and carefully managed process. Our trainers take into account a person's needs including lifestyle, walking speed and height.

Once a match has been made, our trainers spend several weeks training the guide dog owner and dog together, learning their common routes and making sure their partnership is a success.



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