



Sponsor  
a Puppy



# Theo

Theo's started  
training school!

Pupdate 4

# Welcome to your June Pupdate

**I hope you're well and enjoying the longer days and warmer weather as we begin to welcome summer!**

We can't thank you enough for your continued commitment and support. Because of supporters like you, we've been able to create over 36,000 life-changing partnerships to date. That's more than 400 lives transformed each year for 93 years – and counting!

Did you know that 2 million people live with sight loss in the UK, and this number is set to double by 2050? We're committed to providing support to as many people as possible, for as long as that support is needed. With the cost of living continuing to rise, we appreciate your help now more than ever. Thank you so much for supporting Guide Dogs.

I'm pleased to share your sponsored puppy's latest Pupdate, and I hope you enjoy reading it.

Yours sincerely,

*Steph*

**Steph Potter**  
Puppy Sponsorship Manager



# Thank you

for sponsoring Theo



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**Hello, it's  
Emily here,  
Theo's  
trainer.**

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I've been working at Guide Dogs since 2005. I started as a Guide Dog Trainer and have been a Guide Dog Mobility Specialist for the last 13 years. This means I also match the dog to their new owner and look after the partnership moving forward. Theo is one of the three dogs I'm training. Every day brings something new, and what I find most rewarding is helping people with sight loss to increase their independence and live the life they choose.

## Meeting Theo

Theo's calm and fun at the same time. He's very adaptable. He settled in beautifully at his fosterers' home: it's a loving family of five. Puppy Raiser Jo sent his toys, giving him a touch of familiarity in this new environment.

Theo's very relaxed about life. When I first brought him to the office at training school, he made himself comfortable straight away. Between training sessions, he relaxes with other dogs in a pen next to my desk – he gets on so well with his new pen pals! Theo always greets everybody like he's known them his whole life, with gentle enthusiasm. He's very good with children too.

## Training begins

Theo is a great dog to work with. He trusts me and follows me with confidence. I created a strong connection with him, starting his training by repeating the cues he already knew, like 'sit', 'stand', and chin rest; then, I gradually introduced new skills such as platforms.

Theo can step onto low platforms, placing all four paws on there and waiting. We'll use this skill to teach him to walk in a straight line and find kerbs while guiding. He's also learnt the cue 'back up'; he walks backwards slowly and safely to navigate out of tight spaces. I'm also teaching him 'collar' cues, which is when I indicate to Theo to go left or right by gently using his collar to turn in the relevant direction.

Theo's body sensitivity is still a work in progress. For this reason, I'm using the white harness instead of the brown training harness. This allows him to get used to the harness he'll wear once qualified. I'm building a positive association with the harness to help him wear it comfortably with the 'head in' cue. I begin the session with what we call a 'start button'; a way for Theo to tell me he's ready to start training. It's a positive way for him to feel more in control.

Theo loves food rewards and playing with toys, which is fantastic for positive reinforcement training. His favourite toys include rope and interactive toys.



Learn more about how Theo's settling into training school by scanning the QR code with your smartphone or going to:

**[guidedogs.org.uk/puppy-theo](https://guidedogs.org.uk/puppy-theo)**



**Scan me**



During downtime, Theo always enjoys a free run! Notably, his recall is very good. However, around other dogs, his recall can be slower, especially when playing. It's a work in progress, and I'm already seeing an improvement.

## Looking ahead

Over the next few months, I'll be working on Theo's comfort with the harness and practising his current skills and new ones. So far I've exposed Theo to various environments including the countryside near the training school, historical sites like cathedrals, and supermarkets and shops. Next, I'll try new modes of transport with him, and start navigating busier areas.

**Thank you for sponsoring Theo. I'm really enjoying training him.  
Find out how he's progressing in your next Pupdate in October!**



## Where is Theo on his Pupdate journey?



1

2

3

4

5

6



## What is STEP?

Standardised Training for Excellent Partnerships (STEP) is the bespoke programme we use to train our dogs. STEP uses the same principles as Puppy Raising for Guide Dogs and adds in the 37 key skills that are required of every guide dog. It is a scientifically evidenced way of training which places each dog at the heart. It harnesses the power of positive reinforcement so our dogs understand that learning new skills is rewarding, meaning they're more eager to engage. STEP helps us produce more confident guide dogs, which improves the life-changing impact they have on their owners.



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