



Guide
Dogs

Sponsor
a Puppy



Willow

Training commences

Pupdate 4

Willow

is progressing at training school



**“ Hello, it’s
Charlotte
here, and I am
Willow’s new
Trainer. ”**

I have been a Guide Dog Trainer for six years and it is something I find so rewarding. No two days are the same as there is always something that I am learning. Willow is an interesting, very affectionate, character who likes to be scratched under her whiskery chin.

Settling in at training school

Willow is generally very relaxed and loves to entertain herself. She likes to grab her toys and toss them in the air whilst sitting in the funniest positions. Willow stays with a lovely pair of fosterers who drop her off to training school in the mornings and pick her up in the evenings. She settled nicely in the office environment at training school. When the dogs first come in, they are so spoilt! We provide many bed options, natural bones, and toys so the process is associated positively.

Due to COVID-19, Willow hasn’t had much exposure to seeing other dogs and being around a busy environment. So, we started with a lot of work in quiet, residential areas without her harness on.

Because Willow is so bright, she picks up things very quickly, like target training. This involves focussing on one thing at a time. Usually, I'll put my hand or fist up, and Willow will touch her nose to it. This is a handy tool to allow Willow to calm down when she is overexcited, as in her mind, she will be thinking 'I know what to do here!' and that instantly builds her confidence.



New experiences

I set up cones at the back of the office and create my own obstacle course for Willow. This is a great way to strengthen the 'over' and 'in' cues to teach Willow how to move her body around bends, and she likes doing it. Her platform work is progressing steadily too, and she now knows how to find them!



Willow is surprisingly good at settling in social environments and I've seen improvements with her dog distraction skills. She enjoys clicker training, so when there is another dog passing on the street, I will click to redirect her focus to me, and break the intensity of the stare with the other dog. She can now pass another dog on the other side of the street with no fuss.



(Continued overleaf)



See how Willow has grown in her own video:
guidedogs.org.uk/puppy-willow

Future plans

I am currently focussing on shorter training sessions with Willow as she can sometimes slightly lack motivation during longer sessions. She is responding well to this, and I am hoping that with time, she will respond much better and will continue to progress well!

Willow has no problem jumping in and out of the car – in fact, she likes to sit up and watch the world go by as we travel! I'm hoping to take her on a train soon, initially without the harness, and I will gradually introduce her to it as time goes on to build up her confidence.

**Thank you for sponsoring Willow.
Look out for your next Pupdate!**



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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