# **Chapter 5: Dog Day**

Dog Day is a very exciting day for everyone, the day you will receive your dog and officially become a guide dog handler! It can also be quite an emotional day with lots of information to absorb as we begin real-life instruction. In this chapter, we will go over the basic schedule for the day, as well as give some guidelines and tips about what to expect.

# **\*\*Handling Social Media during the first week of class\*\***

We know that staying connected via social media is important and that you are excited to share your news. However, we do ask that you wait until Saturday morning to make any mass public announcements, post on blogs, graduate lists, or social media regarding the dog you’ve been paired with. This will give time for Guiding Eyes to communicate with all departments including those who handle puppy raisers, special name patrons and the rest of the training staff. While you are free to share directly with your family and friends, please be sure that they also understand that nothing is to be posted publicly until Saturday.

Let’s move on to the schedule for the day. Dog Day morning will start just as the previous morning did with a 6:00am wakeup call and Juno obedience before breakfast. After breakfast is when it starts to get interesting.

**8:00am Instructors** will go into a meeting with key staff members to finalize matches, review any challenges, and deal with any last-minute logistics. (May happen the afternoon prior if time allows)

**9:15am:** We will all meet in Alumni Hall. Thomas Panek, president of Guiding Eyes, along with other staff members will join us for a brief Meet & Greet. Instructors will then announce the name of your assigned dog. You will be given the dog’s name, gender, breed, and color but no other information about them at this time. Then, while instructors go to retrieve the dogs from the kennel, your Team Lead will talk about how to prepare for your new dog’s arrival, and what to expect for your first day together (more details below).

**10:00am:** You will be asked to return to your room to await the arrival of your new dog.

**11:40am** Instructors will begin working with each student one-on-one as we go to lunch. We will be emphasizing good control and proper heeling technique as you begin learning to handle your new dog.

**1:00pm:** Instructors will continue working with each student individually. Afternoon exercises will include parking your dog, harnessing, and your first workout with your dog in harness. You may also have an opportunity to practice placing your dog in “Close” position under a chair and walking up and down stairs with your dog.

**3:45pm** The instructors will come to your rooms to go over the procedures for feeding and watering your dog. You will feed and water the dog and then take it outside to park.

**4:30pm** If time permits, lecture will take place before dinner. Again, instructors will work with you to practice proper heeling as you travel to and from Alumni Hall and up to the Dining Room for dinner.

**5:15pm** Dinner. After dinner, instructors will be available should you require assistance, but will mostly keep to themselves, allowing some time for you and your dog to relax together. You are free to move about the building during this time (using proper heeling and control, of course), but it is recommended that you remain focused on building a relationship with your new dog.

**7:30pm** Water & Park. This will be announced over the intercom system. You will offer your dog two cups of water, then bring them outside to park. Instructors will be in the park area to observe.

**9:30pm** Final Park time. This will be announced, and instructors will be present for the first few days only. After that, you will be responsible for parking the dog yourself before you go to bed.

# **Preparing for your Dog’s Arrival**

You will be asked to wait in your rooms as instructors begin to deliver dogs. There are a few important things to take care of before your dog arrives. First, be sure that your room is tidy. Pick up any loose items from the floor, put away any food items, and be sure that trash can lids are closed or cans are up out of the dog’s reach. Often the dogs get excited upon meeting you and may look for something to hold in their mouth (they are retrievers, after all). They are also coming from living in the kennel environment and need some time to remember the rules of living in a home. You can help them avoid mistakes by simply “puppy-proofing” your room.

Secondly, wear your treat pouch and have your leash at the ready. By this point, hopefully you have had a chance to experiment with the treat pouch and figure out the most comfortable way for you to wear it. From this point forward, you will be expected to have treats on you anytime your dog is with you. You may also want to pull out your desk chair to sit on. It is best to greet your dog from a seated position to avoid bending down over them.

Lastly, if you do not typically keep lights on in your room, it is recommended to keep one on during the day or keep window shades open. This helps keep some consistency as the dogs adjust to a new schedule. They are accustomed to lights on during the day and off at night. This is not something that will be necessary long term, but simply a way that you can help the dogs adapt.

# **Meeting Your New Dog**

An instructor will bring your new dog to you in your room. We will have the dog on a leash but will allow him or her some freedom to move about as we enter the room. Your dog may come right up to greet you enthusiastically, or they may choose to check out the room a bit before greeting you. Most dogs will want to sniff around the perimeter of the room, this is totally normal. Dogs process the world through their noses, so this is just their way of sorting out their new surroundings. The instructor will help you interpret the dog’s behavior and will let you know when it is a good time to try to engage the dog by calling its name, clapping your hands together, or otherwise attempting to get its attention. You will begin by giving the dog treats just for being near you. The first 5-6 treats you give will simply be encouraging the dog to engage with you. This helps you make a good first impression and the dog begins to see you as a valuable source of food reward. At this point you will attach your leash to the dog's collar and officially take control of the dog. The instructor may give you some tips on how best to interact with your particular dog and will answer any questions you may have, then they will leave the room and you will have about an hour to relax with your dog and get to know them a bit.

Durig this time, and for the next couple of days, your dog should be with you on leash. If your dog is still interested in exploring the room, you should explore with them rather than allowing them to pull you around the room. Once they have adequately checked things out, you can restrict their movement by remaining stationary and holding the leash. Sit on a chair or on the floor with your dog if you are comfortable doing so. Pet your dog slowly to help encourage them to settle down. You may also notice them wanting to go to the door, maybe even whining a bit when the instructor leaves. Be patient and gently encourage your dog to engage with you, offering food reward when they respond.

# **What to Expect**

Keep in mind that it has been months since these dogs have been able to roam free in a house. They will need to explore your room and dormitory on leash and under control as you reintroduce to them the various rules for canines living indoors with humans. Because you are living with a service dog that has high expectations placed on how they need to behave in public, the rules are essential for you and your dogs to master.

Until your dog demonstrates an understanding of appropriate indoor behavior, it is important that they are kept on leash, tie down or crated. This time period will vary from dog to dog. Your instructor will work with you to let you know when it is appropriate to allow your dogs freedom in your rooms while here on campus.

You will be expected to keep your dog with you on leash at all times for the first few days. If you cannot have the dog with you on leash (i.e. while taking a shower) the dog should be in the crate or on tie down. It is vital to set up good habits from the start and keeping the dog on leash prevents accidents as well as helping to facilitate bonding. While in your room, you may choose to use a long leash if it is more comfortable. You may also remove the pad from the dog’s crate and place it on the floor next to you for the dog to lie on. If you are sitting at the desk, they should be next to you. If you are sitting on the bed the dog should be next to you on the floor. If your dog does try to jump on the bed, tell them **"Off”** firmly and give a leash cue towards the floor.

Try to keep your dog calm and settled while in your room. We will be introducing playtimes in a couple of days, but it’s best not to get your dog too excited in the room. You are provided with a Nylabone for your dog to chew on if they seem restless. Your dog may enjoy having you hold one end of the bone as they chew, or they may want to lie down and chew it on their own. Other dogs may not be interested in it at all. Your dog can have the Nylabone in their crate if you choose. If you find it is too noisy at night, simply remove the bone at bedtime.

On the first few days, park times will be longer as we are working to get the dogs on a schedule, and we want them to have a long time to be able to relieve themselves. Initially you will not say anything to the dogs in the park area, because they may not go the first couple times, and they will quickly learn to tune you out if you say "Get Busy Get Busy Get Busy" over and over again. If your dog starts to relieve itself, we will let you know, and you can then say **"Good Dog, Get Busy"** a few times so the dog can begin to associate those words with its actions. For the first week, instructors will be picking up after your dog; after that you will begin picking up after your own dog.

You may find that your new dog is still very interested in its instructors. This is to be expected as many dogs develop a strong connection with their primary trainer and will need time to transfer over to a new leader. This behavior does not mean that the dog does not want to be with you. At this point the dog does not understand that a new connection will be built with its new handler, so they will gravitate to what they know. Be patient and understand that over time your dog can develop that same rapport with you. Once established, the relationship between handler and dog can be very strong. There is no specific time limit on when this may take place. For most teams this “turning over” is a gradual experience and becomes even stronger once you and your dog have returned home.

From this point on your will have to accommodate for both the dog and yourself as you negotiate doorways, stairs, chairs, and elevation changes. It is important for you to think of how to protect the dog as you go through these normal daily routines. Instructors will be walking you through many of these techniques as we move through the first day with your new dog. They will also be discussed further in an upcoming chapter.

For those of you that have worked with dogs in the past, remember that this is a new young dog who has not fully adapted to you yet. It’s important to keep in mind that it is unfair to expect your new dog to act just like its predecessor. Each dog is an individual, and it is vital for you to get to know this dog over time just as you have previously. Instructors will work with all students to build an understanding of how to communicate with your individual dog to achieve positive results. Stay open to new ideas and techniques, and most importantly, be patient with yourselves and with your dogs.

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