**Chapter 8: Establishing a Feed, Water and Park Schedule**

It is very important that your dog has a predictable schedule with consistent feeding times, access to water, and opportunities to relieve itself (known as “parking”). In this chapter, we will explain why this is so important, review the specific schedule we will be adhered to during residential class, and discuss adjusting the schedule at home. At the end of the chapter, we will also provide step-by-step instructions on exactly how to feed and park your dog in a manner that will help maintain his/her training and ability to exercise self-control.

As a guide dog handler, it is part of your responsibility to provide for your dog's basic daily needs.

**Feeding**: Your dog should be fed two times per day. You will be informed of your dog's current daily ration which will be divided between the two meals. Feeding your dog at regular intervals will help keep them satiated as well as regulate their need to defecate.

**Watering**: During your training, you should be measuring your dog's water for the first week, at least. Offer 2 cups of water at a time at regular intervals throughout the day, for a total of 8 cups per day. This is generally more than an average dog will drink during a day, and you may start to notice a pattern of when your dog tends to drink the most. By offering water in measured quantities, you will be able to regulate your dog's intake of water and prevent “tanking up”. The dogs have become accustomed to drinking from water dispensers in the kennel, and some dogs enjoy the novelty of drinking large amounts of water from a bowl. Of course, regulating water intake also helps regulate your dogs need to urinate.

**Parking**: It is vital that your dog has ample opportunities to relieve itself outdoors, five times per day at minimum. In addition, you may find it beneficial to offer your dog an opportunity to park immediately prior to working. Establishing a regular park schedule with your new guide dog will help avoid accidents and allow you to learn your dog's particular needs and habits. Monitoring your dog’s stool quality is one way you can be aware of any health changes. Keep in mind that although your dogs are fully housebroken, they have been kenneled for the past few months, and may need several days to get back on a regular parking schedule. Relieving accidents early on is generally nothing to be concerned about and instructors will work closely with each team to address any recurring issues.

During residential class, we will primarily adhere to the following schedule:

7:00am Park, Feed, Water, Park

11:00am Water, Park

4:00pm Feed, Water, Park

7:30pm Water, Park

9:30pm Park only

\*Additional Park times will be offered prior to workouts

If you are training with your new dog at home, or once you return home after class, you can adjust the schedule to fit your normal daily routine, provided that you continue to offer at least five park times per day, feed your dog at regular intervals, and offer adequate water. You may choose to transition your dog to free choice water which will be discussed in a later chapter.

Feeding & Watering Your Dog Step-by-Step

1. Put your dog on a tie down, if available, making sure that the tie down is anchored securely and attached to the dead ring of the collar. Using a tie down with your new dog at feeding time helps establish good habits and manners, preventing any unwanted interference from the dog as you prepare their meal. Also, remember to put your leash away out of your dog’s reach. If you do not have a tie down available at home, have your dog Sit and Stay in the area where you intend to feed him.
2. Prepare your dog's food. Instructors will let you know exactly how much food your dog should receive at each meal. Try to be as accurate as you can when measuring food into the bowl. Level off the measuring cup before pouring the food into the bowl. Yorktown campus residents will find two bowls in your food bin. Both bowls are the same; one can be used for food and the other for water. Set one bowl aside and use the other one for your dog’s food. You will also find a measuring cup in the bin.
3. Bring the food bowl over to your dog’s tie down area or feeding area. Hold the bowl up high and tell your dog “Sit”, then “Stay”. **Try to avoid bending down over your dog**. An excited dog can jump up & hit the bowl or your chin. Set the bowl on the floor in FRONT of your dog as you remind him "Stay", then slide the bowl closer as you release him by saying “Break”.
4. While your dog is eating, measure out two cups of water into the other bowl. When your dog has finished eating, repeat the above process when setting the water bowl down as your dog will likely be hopeful that the second bowl is filled with food as well. Your dog may not drink right away, so leave the bowl down for a few minutes. Don't worry if they do not drink, they will drink what they need.

\*After feeding your dog for the first time, we will knock on your park door to get you for a park time. Please do not bring your dog out to park until an instructor is present.

\*When you have time, you may rinse the bowls and clean them with the towel and sponge provided under your sink. Set them out to dry. Bowls should not be routinely stored in the food bin as this may introduce moisture and potentially cause mold to form.

Parking your Dog Step-by-Step

1. Your dog should be on a short leash when exiting your room or home. Yorktown campus park doors have a large step down at the threshold. To prevent your dog rushing and pulling you down the step, ask them to “Sit” and “Stay” as you step out of the door first. Then use “Let’s Go” to invite them out.
2. Keep your dog under control in heel position until you locate the curb edge, or until you have reached the desired park area at home. Have your dog “Sit” and “Stay” again as you transfer to a long leash. Be sure your dog stays until you give a release signal.
3. Release your dog with “Break” or “Off” as you gently encourage them to step out in front of you into the park area. Keep your feet planted at the curb edge. If it’s more comfortable to step down off the curb, you may do so but keep your feet planted in one spot. Do your best to hold your ground and not allow your dog to pull you as they search for a good spot to relieve.
4. Take note of your dog’s behavior. Do they start to sniff or circle? Do they pace back and forth? Do they start to pull harder at the end of the leash? Instructors will help you begin to recognize your dog's signals that they are about to relieve.
5. When your dog relieves, offer calm praise and use the phrase “Get Busy”. The dog will associate this phrase and later you will be able to use it to cue the dog that it is time to relieve.
6. Once the dog has urinated and defecated, or when you and your instructor determine that enough time has passed, call your dog back to heel position at the curb edge. Have them “Sit” and transfer back to short leash before heading back inside. Be sure to consider the direction of the door hinge when entering your room.

\*The first several park times may be quite long as the dogs will take some time to figure out that this is their new park area. If the weather is less than ideal, dress appropriately to be out for 10-15 minutes.

\*Always wear shoes in the park area.

\*For students training with a new dog at home, the instructor conducting your training can assist you in identifying appropriate park areas and determining the best way to get your dog to and from those areas.

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