

## Living with a Blind Dog

Living with and training a blind dog is very rewarding. Set realistic expectations, be patient, and always remember to celebrate victories - no matter how small. Give your blind dog a few weeks to learn about his new home and the people he shares it with. Once he has mapped out his home, figured out where everything is, and is bonding with your family, you can begin training!

### Setting up your home

Carefully examine all areas of your home - inside and out - to look for anything at your dog's level that could injure or scare him. There are several types of halo harnesses on the market that will help keep your dog from bumping into walls and furniture. You could also pad coffee table corners and furniture legs with bubble wrap until he learns his way around.

The location of your dog's food, water and bed should never change; however, you can have food, water and another bed in a second location if you'd like. These areas need to be thought of as **home base** and can help reorient your dog if he gets turned around at any point. If possible, try to crate train your dog too - so he will be safely tucked away when you leave home.

Try not to rearrange your furniture. Relocated chairs and couches can be very unsettling for a blind dog that depends on his world staying predictable. You can **use scent markers** to alert your dog to where doorways are. A scent marker can be cotton balls with peppermint or vanilla flavoring dabbed on them. **A change in texture can help him learn about hazards.** Put bark chips around trees or bushes, such as roses, that have thorns and then work with him on leash so he learns not to run full steam into these "marked" hazards.

**Block off stairs!** Do not take any chances. Over time you can teach him about the stairs and how best to navigate them, but until then keep them off limits.

If you have a slippery floor, you can apply nonskid adhesive strips or introduce him to nonskid booties. Dogs don't love these right off the bat, so pair yummy treats and praise with his slow introduction to the booties.

If there are other animals in your home, have them wear a cat bell. If he seems to have trouble locating **you**, you could always sew a cat bell onto a ribbon or elastic hair band to put on your wrist or ankle.

### Helpful Tips

**Be your dog's advocate.** Don't let people or other animals approach him on their own. If your dog has just recently gone blind or is going blind, he may be feeling vulnerable. Supervise interactions and support him so he feels safe.

You will be your dog's safety net, especially at the beginning. Let him know when you're leaving the room and when you're approaching him. Teach him a word for each!

Walking him on a comfortable harness may give you more control than a regular collar when you are on walks.

Make a list of words that can help him navigate the world: "step up/down," "stop," "left/right," "slow," etc.

Toys, like the **Babble Ball**, are available that make noise and may fascinate your dog. You can also teach your dog the names of his favorite toys. Soft puzzle toys can also be great as your dog will use his nose to locate the treats.

## **Suggested Reading**

### **Living with Blind Dogs, second edition**

Caroline Levin

### **My Dog is Blind – but Lives Life to the Full!**

Nicole Horsky

### **Through A Dark Silence: Loving and Living with Your Blind and Deaf Dog**

Debbie Bauer

## **Blind and/or Deaf Dog Organizations**

The Oregon Humane Society is not affiliated with any of the organizations listed below and is not responsible for the services offered. This is not a complete list of organizations. We encourage you to reach out to organizations on your own ask for details about training methods and practices. We recommend trainers that use force-free, positive reinforcement based training.

### **Deaf Dogs of Oregon | [www.deafdogsoforegon.org](http://www.deafdogsoforegon.org)**

Advocacy, education and owner-support organization.

### **Deaf Dog Education Action Fund | [www.deafdogs.org](http://www.deafdogs.org)**

Education and funding resource for the purpose of improving or saving the lives of deaf dogs

### **Amazing Aussies Lethal White Rescue of Arizona | [www.amazingaussies.org](http://www.amazingaussies.org)**

Adoptions, rescue and educational resources for blind and/or deaf dogs.

### **Australian Shepherds Furever | [www.australianshepherdsforever.org](http://www.australianshepherdsforever.org)**

Guidance and education for owners with blind and/or deaf Australian Shepherds.

### **Association of Professional Dog Trainers | [www.apdt.com](http://www.apdt.com)**

Use the “Locate a Trainer” search tool to find a dog trainer in your area.

**Need help? Call our free pet behavior help line at (503) 416-2983.**