



Puppy Raising

Greeting people guidance



1. Greeting people guidance

In this section

In this section you'll learn how to support your puppy to greet people, in a polite and safe way, both inside and when out and about. By the end of your puppy raising journey, we would ideally like your puppy to:

- Greet people on most occasions with four paws on the floor, without jumping up, vocalising or mouthing.
- After greeting, consistently settle with occasional reinforcement or management. Please read the document [Settle](#) for more information.

The exercises include:

- Greeting visitors to your home.
- Greeting people outside your home.
- Responses to doorbells and door knockers.

Quick links

By clicking on each link below, you will be directed to the area within this guidance to support that area of learning.



Why



Knowing your puppy



Teaching foundations



Being a partnership



Why

Why is this important for a guide dog?

Your puppy's future role requires them to be relaxed and calm when meeting anyone. Learning this skill may also prevent future accidents (such as knocking people over), which is important for the safety of their future partner, visitors and/or members of the public. It also helps ensure the welfare of your puppy and prevents potential injury.

You're welcome to share this material with your family and friends, so they understand what you're trying to achieve.

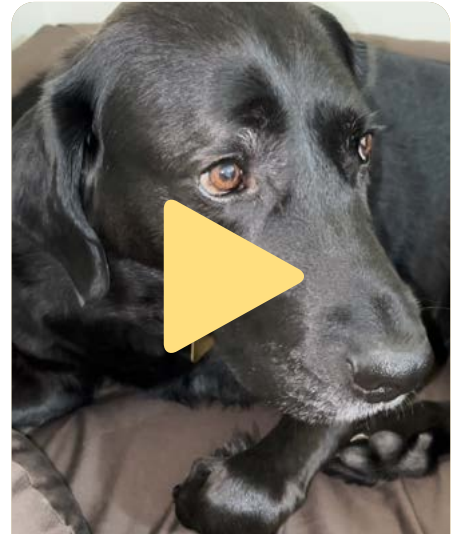


Knowing your puppy

Your puppy will meet people of all appearances throughout their life and it's important that they have the opportunity to meet a variety of children and adults in their puppyhood. Consider the impact of people wearing hats and hi-vis clothing, using crutches, or using a wheelchair.

Remember though, as with everything you introduce to your puppy, it's about positive interactions rather than quantity. Many puppies naturally want to jump up at people. Often this is because they want to get closer to our faces to greet us. You don't want to quash that good feeling towards people, but you do want greeting people to be a positive experience and for your puppy to learn to greet calmly. Whilst for some puppies, learning to be calm when greeting people is the biggest challenge, for others, new people can be scary at first.

Whether your puppy finds greeting people exciting or scary, the same over-riding principle applies, their body language and response will be helped by distance between them and the person. Distance is your friend. If your puppy is showing signs that they are excited, they need distance and time to calm down and to be rewarded for doing so.



Video: Guide dog owner greeting visitor.



Photo: A person wearing a hard hat and hi-vis.



Teaching foundations

Our aim is that, when given the cue to do so, your puppy greets someone with all four paws on the floor and without mouthing, vocalising or jumping up.

Explain to your visitors in advance what it is you wish for them to do. Also plan where to put visitors' coats and bags away from your puppy's reach before they enter the area where the puppy is.

Equipment required:

- Collar and/or harness (if, on Guide Dogs' and PDA advice, you have previously introduced one).
- Lead.
- Chews and food rewards on hand.
- Toys.
- Prepared frozen KONG®.
- A helper for the initial few sessions.

Stage 1: Visitor arrival

- For your first few sessions try setting up using a family member or friend so that you can assess your puppy's reaction in a controlled manner.
- Place your puppy in a secure area where they can't follow you, (e.g. behind a barrier such as a baby gate) and give them a suitable chew or toy to keep them occupied while you answer the door.
- Bring your visitor into the house, leaving your puppy where they are while you and your visitor greet each other. Ask your visitor to 'ignore' your puppy to begin with.
- If you're entering the room where your puppy is, enter first and put your puppy on a lead when calm. Feed at a level for your puppy to keep all feet on the floor, so as not to encourage them to jump up.



Try your best to make sure all visitors greet your puppy in a calm and consistent manner.

Or, if your puppy is staying in the secure area, feed your puppy through the gate, low down, so all four feet are on the floor, until your guests are ready. Then you can put the lead on and have your puppy with you.

If your puppy is going to stay in the secure area, give your puppy a frozen KONG® or bone to keep them occupied.

Stage 2: Greeting your visitor

Aim: Your puppy is comfortable and calm before starting this stage.

- With your puppy still on a lead, use food rewards low down at puppy level to encourage four feet on the floor and to help maintain their calm behaviour. Food is always to come from the handler only.
- If your puppy is calm within a leads length of the visitor, allow the visitor to quietly bend down and greet your puppy. They should gently and briefly touch your puppy under the chin and around the front of their shoulders, not on the top of their head.
- We don't want your puppy to find visitors overwhelmingly exciting. Expecting minimal fuss will help your puppy behave calmly when greeting people.
- After a few seconds of interaction with your visitor, encourage your puppy away from the guest using vocal encouragement, food, or a toy. Avoid using your puppy's collar or the lead to bring your puppy away. If this is not effective, please ask your visitor to provide some distance to allow you to calm your puppy.
- While you continue to speak to your visitor, encourage your puppy into a bed, near to your chair. Once your puppy is settled you can remove the lead and use a stuffed KONG® or chew to keep them occupied. If your puppy falls asleep, then don't worry about disturbing them, let them sleep.
- If your puppy is backing away or shows discomfort/ anxiety always speak to your PDA.



For your puppy to remain calm, please ask visitors for minimal fuss and attention.

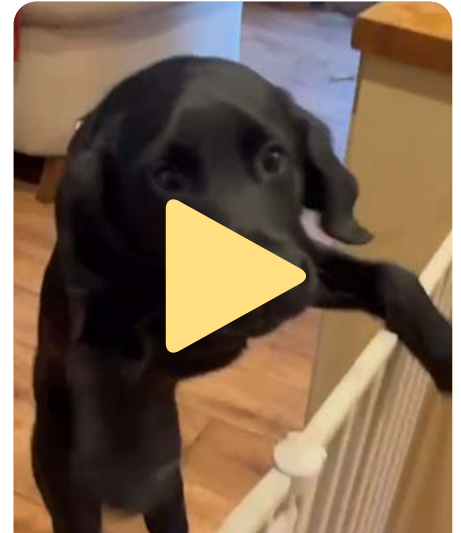
Stage 3: Progression

Your puppy will need to learn this same process with different visitors to understand how to behave around visitors in general. Your puppy will also need to learn to cope with visitors standing up, moving around, or generally seeming to be more exciting. You can introduce the following elements slowly.

Once your puppy is calmly greeting visitors (with four paws on the floor, no mouthing, jumping up, vocalising, or backing away) while on the lead, you can introduce off lead greetings.

- Keep your routine the same.
- Increase the level of reinforcement to start with as the activity will be harder.
- Always ask visitors to interact calmly while you're managing excitement levels of your puppy. Remind them your puppy should not be jumping up so any greeting should be at your puppy's level.

Over time, you'll no longer need to control where your puppy chooses to settle. You'll also be able to reduce the amount and frequency of reinforcement you offer when they do settle down and the behaviour becomes more established.



Video: Visitor arriving young puppy.



Greeting people outside your home.

Our aim is that, when given the cue to do so, your puppy greets someone with all four paws on the floor, without jumping up, mouthing or vocalising. You'll need to be confident in using the cue 'Okay' before beginning this exercise.

Ask the person you're completing this training with to stand in a relaxed manner, not to stare at the puppy and to remain calm without interacting with the puppy.

- With your puppy on a lead, slowly take a few steps towards the person (rather than them approaching you). Reward your puppy with kibble low to your puppy's head and verbal praise for maintaining a loose lead and remaining calm.
- If your puppy pulls on the lead or shows excessive excitement to get to the person or people, stand still or increase distance to a point where your puppy can be calm. Avoid giving your puppy the opportunity to drag you over to greet a person.
- If your puppy shows reluctance to approach (looks away, tucks their tail or any other sign of discomfort), stop moving forward. Should this occur discuss it with your PDA.
- Always use food rewards and your voice to get your puppy's attention back on you and to move puppy further away to focus on you.
- Once their focus is back on you and they can maintain a relaxed lead, you can take one step forward at a time so that they can calm down or gain confidence between steps. Reward your puppy for calm and confident behaviour.

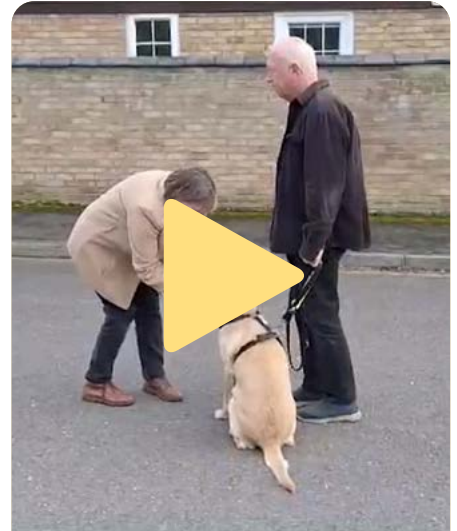


Always remember, distance is your friend.

- When you're near enough to the person (so that the greeting can happen with a relaxed lead) and if your puppy has all their four paws on the ground, say 'Okay' and allow the person to greet your puppy by gently stroking them on the chest area (you may need to demonstrate this).
- In the early stages you can manage jumping up by hooking a finger in your puppy's collar to prevent them from jumping up while being fussed. Please first read the document [Collar hold and restraint guidance](#) before doing this.
- Continue to reward your puppy for keeping their paws on the floor when greeting people.
- Keep the greeting short.
- If your puppy demonstrates that they are uncomfortable, make sure you end the greeting, contact your PDA for advice and minimise greeting people until you have received support. Examples of body language showing puppy discomfort include turning their head, lip licking, avoiding contact with the person.
- As the greeting ends, encourage your puppy back to you, using a vocal 'Let's go'. This will avoid them leaping up as you move away.

Stage 2: Progression

Practice makes permanent. You'll need to practice this exercise with different people and in different environments. Depending on how motivated your puppy is near people, this is an exercise that can take many repetitions over weeks and months.



Video: Ideal greeting on lead outside.



Video: Excitable greeting on lead.



Doorbells and door knockers

As your puppy ages we can start to work on their response to a knock on the door or the doorbell ringing. Our aim is for your puppy to choose to stay calm when either of these two events happen and then to greet visitors politely with four paws on the floor. It's best to practice this with the help of a family member or friend, rather than when you're expecting an actual visitor.

Practice greeting people separately until you feel your puppy is ready to bring these two activities together.

- Have your puppy on a lead or behind a barrier.
- It can help to do this closer to the door.
- Ask your helper to knock on the door or ring your doorbell. When this happens, reward your puppy for calm behaviours using as many food rewards as you need to maintain that calm. Please refer to the document [Dog body language and communication in foundation knowledge](#) for more information on calm behaviours.
- If you're using a barrier then feed your puppy through the bars.
- You don't need to answer the door to your helper at this stage, just work on the knock/doorbell response. Keep practising this in short sessions until your puppy is consistently remaining calm.

Stage 2: Progression

It's good to teach your puppy to respond to different sounds that mean someone is at the door so they're ready for whatever may be encountered as an adult dog. If you've practiced with a doorbell, you can practice with a door knock as well.

The [Dogs Trust website](#) has a collection of sample sounds that you can use.



Puppies very quickly associate sound at the door with visitors arriving.



Being a partnership

- As with everything you introduce to your puppy, it's about positive interactions rather than quantity.
- Distance is your friend. If your puppy is showing signs that they're excited, they need distance and time to calm down and to reward for doing so. If your puppy is showing signs that they are scared they need distance to assess what is happening, gain confidence and to be rewarded for looking.
- If there is the opportunity, it can help to explain to people that your puppy is training and ask them to politely wait until you're ready for your puppy to greet them; most people will wait, especially for a guide dog puppy. It's also important particularly in the beginning to keep greetings short to help your puppy stay calm.
- Some puppies don't like to be touched on the head. If they move away, ask your visitors to gently and briefly touch your puppy under the chin or around the front of their shoulders, not the top of the head.
- If your puppy starts to snatch at the food reward when presented, particularly if they don't usually, you may need to move them further away from your visitor (or person while you're out). Greeting can be an exciting activity and so keeping your puppy calm and focused on you may require a high level of reinforcement when introducing this activity.
- Only approach the person when your puppy is calm. It may take several minutes before you're able to move a step forward. It's not a race; give your puppy the time they need. Your puppy will get better with practice and there's no benefit in rushing the greeting at this stage.
- In the early days of introducing this training to your puppy you may receive a delivery or have an unexpected knock at the door. Your PDA will advise you on the most appropriate way to manage your puppy based on your home setup. For example, these could include putting your puppy in another room, behind a barrier such as a stair gate or on a lead.



As with everything you introduce to your puppy, it's about positive interactions rather than quantity