



# Guide Dogs for the Blind

Puppy Raising Department

## Ruff Notes – April 2020

### Socialization & Puppy Training Special At Home Edition

*Raisers can ensure puppies continue to receive plenty of socialization, training, physical and mental enrichment while puppies are on outing restrictions and/or otherwise unable to visit public spaces!*

#### Socialization

<https://www.guidedogs.com/uploads/files/Puppy-Raising-Manual/Puppy-Socialization.pdf>

One of the integral parts of raising a puppy is ensuring the puppy is socialized and confident around anything he/she might come across in their future role as a working guide dog. We believe this is especially true during the puppy's first 16 weeks of life.

Luckily, there is plenty you can do without leaving the house, like having humans play dress-up, playing different noises from a computer or speaker, and introducing puppies to walking over different surfaces such as exercise-pen panels or crate dividers. Each pleasant, novel experience that a puppy has will contribute to their ability to generalize positivity in the face of new experiences when restrictions are lifted. If you are having trouble finding resources (surface, sounds) please reach out to your leader or CFR.

While it can be a lot of fun for raisers to get dressed up or create other novel experiences, please be aware of the puppy's reactions; to create a positive learning experience, **the puppy** needs to be having fun too! If a puppy shows any concerns, the experience is too challenging. Review the document "Building a Confident Puppy with R+" for a refresher on how to identify signs of stress and "best practice" socialization guidelines

(<https://www.guidedogs.com/uploads/files/Puppy-Raising-Manual/Building-a-Confident-Puppy-with-R.pdf>).



\*\*This puppy is having fun. Look at that wagging tail!

#### House Behavior

Take this opportunity to review and reinforce appropriate house behavior and settled behavior in the home.

<https://www.guidedogs.com/uploads/files/Puppy-Raising-Manual/Teaching-Good-House-Behavior.pdf>

<https://www.guidedogs.com/uploads/files/Puppy-Raising-Manual/Teaching-Settled-Behavior-in-the-Home.pdf>

At this time, teaching/reminding puppies to be relaxed when they are left alone is also very important. Raisers may need to actively practice leaving puppies alone in one room/area of the home while the family occupies another area. Remember that puppies under 16 weeks of age may be left with a Stuffed Kong to learn to enjoy alone time. Please review the document [Food Containing Toys: Stuffed Kong and Wobbler](#) for guidelines on the use of toys containing food. Older puppies should still work through the Home Alone process, even if the raiser does not need to leave the house (<https://www.guidedogs.com/uploads/files/Puppy-Raising-Manual/Home-Along.pdf>).

### **In-home Training Games**

Fortunately, nearly all puppy behaviors (perhaps aside from things like teaching respectful dog-dog interactions in a single-dog household) can be introduced and progressed in a home environment, with a little creativity. Remember that as the puppy progresses, try to change up your training environment and distraction levels to ensure the puppy is generalizing these skills and not learning “I only need to walk on loose leash up and down this one hallway”! Short but focused training sessions, and mixing up the games practiced, are a great way to tire out puppy brains. We will be sending out some ideas for making the games a little more challenging for older puppies in the next weeks.

### **Mental and Physical Outlets**

Learning new behaviors is great mental exercise for puppies. Games like “stay” and “Go to Bed” with distractions can be fun to play and help those busy-minded puppies without needing outside environmental stimulation. Don’t forget your 3 D’s (distance, duration, and distraction)! (<https://www.guidedogs.com/uploads/files/Puppy-Raising-Manual/R-Terminology-for-Raisers.pdf>)

The act of chewing also releases happy brain chemicals and helps animals relax. Make sure puppies have access to plenty of appropriate chew toys – and save your furniture from a puppy looking for a natural outlet! As always, please refer to the Toy Policy for approved chews and toys (<https://www.guidedogs.com/uploads/files/Puppy-Raising-Manual/Puppy-Raising-Toy-Policy.pdf>).

### **Food Toys for Mental Enrichment ([Food Containing Toys: Stuffed Kong and Wobbler](#))**

Using a slow-feeder bowl (such as Slo-Bowls by Kyjen/Outward Hound) or placing a large Nylabone or Kong into the puppy’s regular food bowl can make regular mealtimes an opportunity for problem-solving (at least the first couple times!) and mental enrichment. A portion of the puppy’s meal can also be fed from a kibble dispensing toy:

- The Kong Wobbler was historically a CFR-assigned special protocol but has been approved to use population-wide
- Stuffed Kongs are also a great option. A frozen Kong can be a fun challenge for puppies once they have learned how to enjoy a stuffed Kong.

\* Please review the document [Food Containing Toys: Stuffed Kong and Wobbler](#) for guidelines on use and seeking permission to offer toys containing food.

Additional ideas for exercise and interactive play with the handler can be found in the Exercise and Play guidelines (<https://www.guidedogs.com/uploads/files/Puppy-Raising-Manual/Exercise-and-Play.pdf>). Puppies who are naturally higher energy may appreciate extra opportunities to run around with a Jolly Ball or sturdy plastic bottle in the yard to get their ya-yas out!

### **Communication, Communication, Communication!**

While on restricted contact or socialization, raisers must continue to have strong and regular communication with their leaders. Any questions, challenges, or concerns should be brought to the leader/CFR's attention promptly so that we can best support you.

Reminders of what constitutes concerning behaviors, how to report concerning behaviors, and best practice guidelines for filling out monthly reports in the most informative way can be found in the following documents:

- Recognizing and Reporting Negative Behaviors (<https://www.guidedogs.com/uploads/files/Puppy-Raising-Manual/Recognizing-and-Reporting-Negative-Behaviors.pdf>)
  - Ruff Notes – Puppy Behaviors to Report to the Leader (<https://www.guidedogs.com/uploads/files/Puppy-Raising-Manual/Ruff-Notes-5.19-Reporting-Negative-Behaviors.pdf>)
- Ruff Notes – Raiser Monthly Reports (<https://www.guidedogs.com/uploads/files/Puppy-Raising-Manual/Ruff-Notes-12.17-Monthly-Reports.pdf>)