



Guide Dogs for the Blind

Travel Guidelines

Travel can be a good socialization opportunity for a guide dog puppy, but it also needs to be a positive experience for the puppy, raisers and for the general public who may come into contact with the puppy on its travels. Regardless of the means of transportation, GDB staff and volunteers must make every effort to ensure that a program dog travels as safely as possible.

Here are some general guidelines to ensure a safe and pleasant trip:

- Raisers should check with leaders before taking a puppy on a trip; the leader needs to know where each puppy is and if the planned trip is suitable. If the puppy is not ready for such a trip, the leader will help coordinate with a puppy sitter in the club or perhaps with another club close by. If a puppy sitter is unavailable, raisers may have to board the puppy at an approved kennel in their area at their own expense.
- Travel outside of the supervising CFR's territory must be approved by the CFR by filling out the Puppy Travel form and submitting it to the leader who will forward it to the CFR. If raisers are not sure if the area they plan to visit is outside of their CFR's territory, they should consult with their leader.
- GDB puppies are only allowed to travel within the states covered by GDB CFR staff. However, puppies may travel into states that are not covered by staff so long as the destination is no more than three hours from a functioning puppy raising club. Raisers may travel into Canada so long as the destination is no more than three hours from a functioning puppy raising club. No travel is allowed into Mexico.
- The states covered by GDB staff are:
 - Arizona
 - California
 - Colorado
 - Idaho
 - Nevada
 - New Mexico
 - Oregon
 - Texas
 - Utah
 - Washington
- For raisers of intact female puppies, the potential of the dog coming into season while on a trip must also be considered. For intact female puppies over six months of age, raisers must consult with their leader and/or CFR as to the suitability of the trip and discuss accommodations that may need to be made if the female comes into season.
- Raisers should carefully consider the appropriateness of settings frequented on vacation. Amusement parks, festivals and fairs may overwhelm the puppy. Hot weather may make it uncomfortable or even dangerous for a puppy to go on an outing. Consult the Socialization Guide and be prepared to make alternate accommodations for the puppy. Sometimes a local puppy raising club can arrange puppy sitting in their area; plans should be made through leaders and CFRs well in advance of the trip. When visiting family members in their home, raisers should consider the suitability of other pets in the home that may interact with the guide dog puppy.
- It is good planning to take a crate along on the trip if there is room. A wire crate can fold up for ease of packing and is very handy when staying in hotels and unfamiliar homes. Fabric crates are not suitable for guide dog puppies.
- Any travel with puppies not fully vaccinated should be carefully considered due to the risk of exposure to pathogens.
- Raisers and leaders may not demand, coerce, lobby, argue, litigate or otherwise attempt to force issues of access for any puppy denied access to any means of public or private transportation.

- A GDB puppy causing a disturbance on public transportation must exit that transportation at the first available opportunity.
- Raisers need to be prepared with a backup plan in case of denied access. This is particularly crucial when traveling by air. (See Airline Travel with GDB Puppies below.)

Travel provides many opportunities for development in a guide dog puppy. Equally beneficial however, is the puppy learning to adapt to other households and different work/school routines. To a puppy, going to stay with another club member is just as big an adventure as going on a trip out of town! Raisers should discuss their travel plans with their leader at the earliest opportunity so that other arrangements can be made for the puppy should it be decided that the pup is not ready to travel.

Career Change Dogs

- Career change dogs may not ride within the cabin of an airline and may not access other means of public or private transportation made available specifically to program-active dogs either by law or by the courtesy of transporter.
- Career change dogs may never wear a guide dog harness or puppy coat to gain access to a means of transportation.

Transporting GDB Puppies in Vehicles

The primary rule in dog transportation is to use common sense. Raisers should evaluate the situation utilizing the guidelines that follow and select a safe, manageable option. The primary goals are safety and teaching the puppy to calmly remain where it is placed in the vehicle.

- A puppy that is not trusted to remain calm in all circumstances should be on tie-down or crated while in a vehicle. If volunteers are transporting a potentially unruly or otherwise distracting puppy, it must be crated or managed by a passenger, so as not to distract the driver.
- The safest place for puppies to ride in cars is in a secured crate, if one will fit in the back seat or a cargo area. Depending on the type of vehicle a puppy raiser drives, there may not be room for a crate.
- Allowing pups on seats is not permitted, but there are some cars that give no option due to floor space or other factors, including front seat airbags. If the raiser has no choice but to allow the puppy on a seat, the pup should be kept in one spot, preferably on the rear seat and not allowed to move around. If riding in someone else's car, it is courteous to provide a large towel or sheet to cover the spot to help keep the seat clean.
- There is concern over the danger to children and animals with some passenger side airbags. In some incidences, accidents triggering these airbags have injured and even killed small children and animals. For this reason, we advise having puppies that ride in cars that have front seat passenger airbags, lie on the back seat floorboards, the back seat if there is not adequate room on the backseat floorboards, or on tie-down on the passenger floor at a level which will be below an activated airbag.
- Car seat restraints should not be used for a guide dog puppy. There is limited evidence of the complete testing of any of these devices. Devices are most often tested for fabric strength not animal injury prevention. Improperly designed models may have the potential to cause injury to a puppy.
- A puppy may ride in the back of a station wagon or hatchback, but it should remain in one spot and be well behaved. If the surface is slick, a non-slick surface such as a rubber-backed carpet or a rubber mat may be provided for the pup to ride on. Puppies can become worried if they slide around and cannot get any traction to brace themselves. This may cause a fear of car riding.
- GDB puppies may not travel in the back of open pickup trucks. If a raiser must transport the pup in the back of a pickup truck, it must have a shell and the puppy must be safely secured in a crate.

GDB puppies may not be left unattended in vehicles regardless of the weather. A common cause of death in dogs is being left unattended in cars on hot, or even just warm, days.

Airline Travel with GDB Puppies

GDB recommends that raisers very carefully consider whether taking their puppy on board an airplane is really of benefit to the puppy. For assistance identifying appropriate channels for air travel, please reference [Air Travel for Puppies in Training](#).

Just as ticketed passengers are experiencing increased scrutiny of their persons and belongings when they fly, so do service animals and guide dogs. Guide users, GDB staff, and some puppy raising volunteers, have reported incidents where they experienced unexpected delay and inconvenience when traveling with a dog or program puppy. There have been occasions when a puppy has been refused permission to fly in cabin with the ticketed passenger.

Raiser needs to always inform the airline ahead of time that they are traveling with a guide dog puppy. Raisers need to be prepared with a backup plan in case of denied access. Ticket and gate personnel may deny boarding for a GDB puppy in training even though the raiser has received permission to fly the puppy when booking the flight. Puppy raisers should always remember that there is no legal right to transport puppies in the cabin of airplanes. Such access is granted as a courtesy from individual airlines that wish to voluntarily do so. Different airline staff may interpret airline policy differently. Raisers may be denied access at any time and must willingly comply with the instructions of the airline employee that they are communicating with. Raisers must always be courteous when interacting with airline personnel or other passengers.

- All puppies transported within an airline cabin must be approved by the supervising CFR by submitting the Puppy Travel form to the leader who will advise and forward to the CFR. Puppies may be denied permission to fly in the cabin if the pup is not developmentally ready for such a journey.
- Raisers are responsible for obtaining a Health Certificate and Rabies certificate, required by law, to transport a dog by air. GDB will not reimburse for any costs associate with airline travel unless the travel is at GDB's request.
- Puppies below the age of 20 weeks, and all other GDB puppies that show evidence of behavioral or medical conditions that might affect their ability to behave appropriately during an airplane trip, must be flown as freight or excess baggage (with advance permission from the airlines and the approval of their CFR only.)
- No youth under 18 years of age may transport a GDB puppy in an airline cabin without an adult GDB-trained handler in attendance.
- GDB puppies are allowed to travel by air within the ten western states (CA, OR, WA, NV, ID, AZ, UT, CO, TX and NM) only, and must always have permission to fly from the club leader and the Community Field Representative (CFR). Remaining in the states in which GDB has puppy raising staff gives raisers an emergency contact in case there is a problem while traveling.

Additionally raisers should consider the following:

- The duration of the flight – is it appropriate for the age and relieving schedule of the puppy?
- Flight times vs. meal times – puppies should not be fed pre-flight.
- Direct flights are preferred
- Raisers should always travel with an extra day of food for the pup in the event of delays.
- Raisers may consider downloading the app “Where to Go: a directory to airport animal relief areas” (Apptology) to their smartphone, which provides the locations of animal relieving areas in airports.

Going Through Security with a GDB Puppy

- The handler and dog are able to clear metal detector machines as separate units (utilizing a sit-stay command). However, the handler must retain physical control of the dog even if the handler is being screened. This means holding onto the leash at all times. (See note below about leash type for this.)
- Screeners will need to visually and physically inspect an animal when an alarm is sounded during its screening. This is normally done by hand, however the hand wand can be used. The hand wand can be used in the “vibrate” mode so as not to frighten the dog.
- When a raiser receives permission to fly with a puppy, the raiser should carry an additional leash (nylon slip type with no metal) to use when taking the dog through security. Raisers may have to make such a leash as commercially available ones have metal rings. The cord leash should be at least six feet long and longer would be preferable. The reason for this is that sometimes the raiser is required to have the dog stay on one side of the metal detector and then be called through to the raiser on the other side.

GDB understands that guide dog puppies are part of the family and that raisers will want to include them in their vacation and travel plans. When it is possible to do so in a safe reasonable manner, GDB will try to accommodate those wishes. GDB appreciates raisers understanding when such arrangements are not possible. It is GDB's first priority to make travel safe and ensure the wellbeing of program puppies.