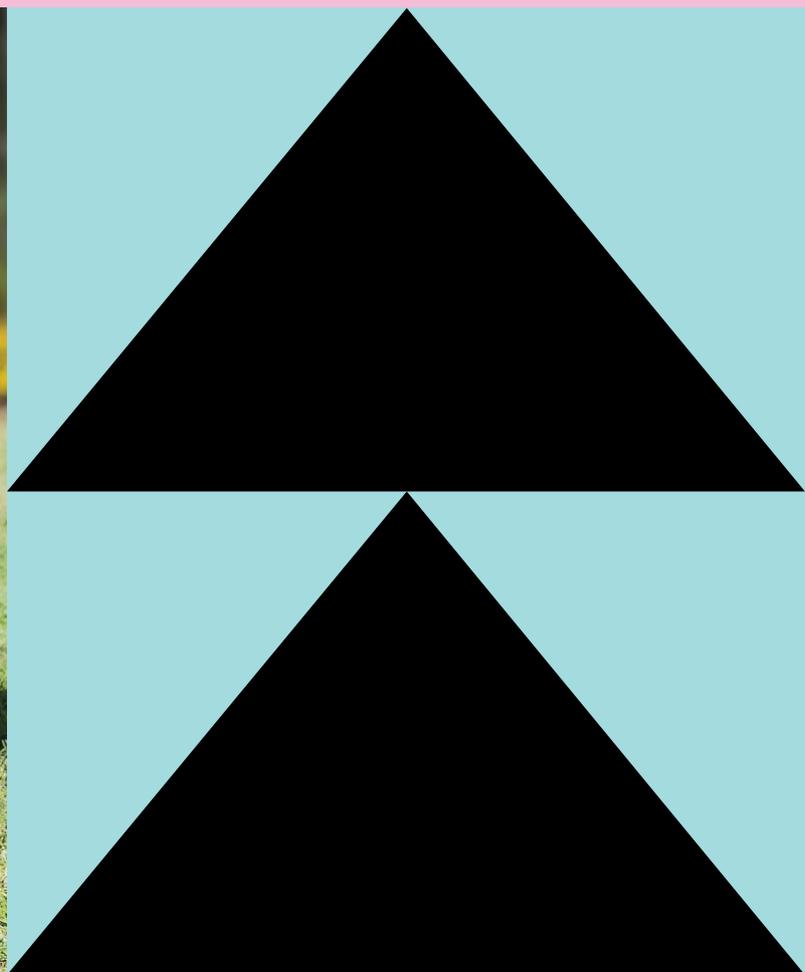


# The Ultimate Dog Care Guide



**Guide Dogs.**

**BlackHawk®**

Whether you consider your dog your fur-baby or your best mate, we know you want to do right by them and give them the happiest, healthiest life possible. But with so much conflicting advice about nutrition and training, it can be hard to know where to start and who to trust. That's why Guide Dogs Australia and Black Hawk have teamed up to give you the Ultimate Guide to trusted training techniques and nutrition essentials including myth-busting tips from our experts.



## Canines love consistency

No matter your dog's age or breed, clear and consistent communication from your first day together will be key to setting you up for a strong, well-adjusted relationship. Dogs get as confused by mixed messages as we do, so one of the best ways you can care for your dog is by establishing clear expectations and routines and giving consistent directions. If you're going to use "sit" one week, make sure you don't use "down" the next week and expect the same thing. Keep it simple and keep it the same to reduce frustration and help your dog thrive.

### What's in a name?

Guide Dogs try to give all their dogs short, easy to pronounce names. One or two syllable names are easier for your dog to respond to and more effective for training - try calling out 'Gwendoline' vs 'Frankie' across a crowded park! Make sure you reward your dog for responding to their name with a treat and/or plenty of praise.

# What training method should I follow?

Guide Dogs Australia use a reward-based training method which involves using positive reinforcement through food and praise whenever your dog demonstrates the desirable behaviour. Jessie comes when she's called? Give her plenty of praise and a well-deserved treat. Arlo stays sitting quietly on his lead while you pop into the shop? Pile on the pats and the "good dogs". With positive reinforcement, your dog will quickly learn to associate a behaviour or skill with great feedback from you.

## Step by step Good Lead Walking



1. **Build the reward zone.** Clip your dog's lead on to their collar or harness and deliver food rewards to your dog when it's stood by your side, you are teaching your dog that being at your side is a good place to be. Remember to hold the lead so it is slack as this will help stop lead pulling in the future.



2. **Reinforce the behaviour.** Once you have started moving away from the dog it's important that you reinforce that you want them by your side. Continue to offer food rewards when the dog is by your leg so they know that is where they should be.



3. **Avoid tension on the lead.** If your dog ever moves ahead of you, becomes distracted, or pulls in any direction, avoid the temptation to lure the dog back to your side. Instead, stand still, remain quiet and wait for them to return to your side or turn attention back to you. Your dog will learn that tension in the lead will mean an immediate stop and no reward.



4. **Building awareness.** Once your dog stops when you do, try changing direction. If your dog moves with you then reinforce the behaviour with a reward so your dog knows it's good to move with you while on the lead.

## What if I have a cheeky, anxious or mischievous pooch?

Reward based training is highly effective in training all dogs, whatever their temperament. You just need to be – you guessed it – consistent and be prepared to be patient too. Guide Dogs Australia advises you should never resort to physical punishment or negative responses (shouting, frustration, disappointment) in training, as it can damage trust and lead to a scared and unpredictable dog.

If your dog is anxious, shy or plays up around different people or objects, use positive reinforcement and reward-based training around those challenges to show the dog there is nothing to fear. Before long, your dog will start to associate those things with good memories.

Plenty of socialising in general is a great way to ensure your dog is comfortable in lots of different situations, with different people, and paired with positive reinforcement will help lead to a happy and relaxed dog.

And if your dog isn't food motivated? Don't worry – positive reinforcement and reward-based training can come in the form of playing, hugs, pats or a favourite toy.

## Top tip with reward-based training: don't ignore your dog when they do the right thing

### Myth-busting with the experts

**Doesn't reward based training mean I'm bribing my dog or making them reliant on food?**

Eddie Sullivan, Guide Dogs Puppy Development Manager: "At Guide Dogs, we believe food is a powerful training tool when used correctly and in the correct amounts.

Once your dog has a strong handle on the training, you can start to thin out the food rewards and use positive verbal reinforcements instead, along with plenty of love, hugs, pats and access to their favourite toy. You want them to know they're still doing great work, so they'll maintain the behaviour."

**Do I have to buy specialised treats for all this reward-based training?**

Dr Ada Siu, Black Hawk Veterinarian: "High quality kibble will do the trick. Guide Dogs use the dog's everyday food - Black Hawk kibble - as a very effective food-based training reward. We recommend weighing out what your dog needs each day for meals then setting aside 10% for treats which helps avoid over-feeding. If your dog does need a high-value treat for extra motivation, just make sure it's allocated as part of their daily food intake."

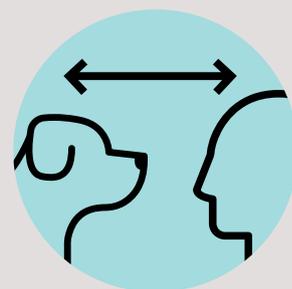
Take every opportunity you can to praise your dog for doing something well. They'll quickly lose engagement if you ignore them or only pay attention to them when you're frustrated with them. It's easy to start taking it for granted when your dog sits and waits for dinner when told to, but every direction followed, or command obeyed deserves the doggie equivalent of a high five.

# How can I teach my dog to come when called?

Recall is one of the most crucial skills your dog will need and can be one of the most challenging to teach – especially in a park full of tempting distractions. Guide Dogs Australia recommends ‘targeting’ or ‘touch’ training as it taps into one of your dog’s favourite pastimes – sniffing – by having them touch a target (your hand is a good one) with the tip of their nose.



## Step by step Touch Training



1. Lay your hand out flat near your dog’s nose. As soon as its nose touches your hand, give praise and a treat to reward the behaviour.
2. Repeat this until they’ve got the hang of it.
3. Next up, continue the exercise but introduce the word ‘touch’ so your dog associates the word with the action (and a treat/praise too of course).

4. Put some distance between you and your dog and add in some distractions. You could start in your living room with some favourite toys on the floor.

**Your ultimate goal is to get this working in a park, so remember the positive reinforcement your dog receives for touching your hand has to be worth them giving up sticks/digging/balls/mates!**

# What kind of diet will help support my dog's training routine and keep them healthy and happy?

A quality diet to accompany all your positive reinforcement training is essential. Good nutrition benefits your dog's health and stimulates and supports their learning. High-quality dog food will have a balanced mix of around 23 essential vitamins and minerals, along with more than 12 essential amino acids and fatty acids, to help nourish everything from a glossy coat and healthy skin to energy levels, digestive system and even stool odour. Skin disorders, a dull coat, changes in their faeces and low energy levels can all be signs that your dog's diet is lacking in nutrients.



## How to choose quality food for your dog

Check the ingredients to make sure there's an animal protein at the top of the list - chicken, fish, lamb or beef are all popular. These proteins are crucial to ensure your dog is thriving.

Be wary of vague terms like 'meat and animal derivatives' - you want an ingredient list that is specific and transparent about exactly what's included.

Most importantly, ensure the dog food has an AAFCO (Association of American Feed Control Officials) statement, guaranteeing that it's well formulated.

**Dr Ada Siu, Black Hawk Veterinarian**

Always follow feeding guidelines listed on your dog's food – never wing it! Portion control is essential to avoid overfeeding so be sure to weigh food out to get accurate portion sizes. And keep an eye on your dog's overall weight and condition. If you think portions need to be adjusted, consult your vet for advice.

## My dog gets overexcited at dinner time – how can I make it a calmer experience?

Most dogs get excited around mealtimes – the prospect of a bowl-full of food can send them into a tail-wagging, jumping, whining frenzy. While a consistent routine is important, avoid putting out dinner at the exact same time each night so your dog can learn to be slightly adaptable, and keep using your positive reinforcement training to ensure your dog sits and waits calmly until they're directed to eat.

If your dog tends to bolt their food down, consider using a puzzle toy or slow feeding bowl. This can be a stimulating and engaging way for them to eat and stops dinner from being over in under five seconds flat!

### How do Guide Dogs choose which food to feed their dogs?

“At Guide Dogs Australia we need a food that delivers the overall nutritional requirements of our world-class bred pups and dogs. This means high quality nutrients, clearly defined, natural ingredients with no fillers and all the good stuff like proteins to help our puppies grow into life-changing working dogs. The fact that it's Australian made and supports communities like ours as well as Aussie farmers and regional communities is the icing on the cake.”

**Dr Russell Harrison, Guide Dogs**



There will be mischief. Holes will be dug. Muddy pawprints will be left on your clothes and couch. But it's worth it for the love and joy your dog brings to your life. Care for them with a balanced diet and consistent training and see your bond strengthen as you nurture a happy and loyal companion.