

HINTS FOR LIVING WITH A BLIND DOG

New to the family

- First, get down on the floor and crawl around at the dog's eye level to find anything that might be dangerous.
- Have children crawl around blindfolded to see what it will be like for their new playmate.
- Try to have something familiar to the dog -- toy, blanket, bed, etc. -- for comfort in a strange new place.
- If you have time, provide the dog with something with your scent on it at least a few days before getting the dog.
- Decide on a specific area that will be the dog's home base; an area where it can be contained. Consider having a crate there for it to sleep and eat in.
- Remember: a dog's 1st sense is smell, 2nd is hearing, 3rd is sight. Make use of different textures.
- Get Living with Blind Dogs by Caroline Levin (<http://www.petcarebooks.com>)
- Join the Blinddogs list at Yahoo!Groups (<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/blinddogs>)

Padding furniture and corners

- Bubble wrap taped around table legs, wall or cabinet corners, etc.
- Batting from the fabric store
- Foam pipe insulation from the home center plumbing dept.

Provide a base

- Keep a bed in rooms the dog is most comfortable -- maybe one in the bedroom and one in the family room.
- A crate with an open door provides a safe haven.

- Put a mat under food and water dishes.
- Locate something in the main area of the home that the dog can always hear so that he can orient himself to that. A small fountain or a clock that actually takes works well.
- Shelf liner can also be used under food and water bowls, in doorways, or as "landing pads" in a familiar place for a small dog that is often picked up.
- Don't pick up small dog, carry around, didn't put it down anywhere -- they will be lost. Use a landing pad.
- Small pet beds can also be used as landing pads in rooms the dog is usually in. You might use one particular scent under the bed to make it easier to find.

Stairs - stepping off into the unknown

- Use baby gates, decorative fireplace screens, etc. to block off stairs.
- Don't push it. A traumatic fall can cause a permanent fear. Give it time.
- A treat (piece of kibble) on each step or two going down.
- Stand in front of the dog and hook your finger lightly in the collar or harness. Encourage, but try not to pull the dog down the steps.
- Practice going up and down until it's done smoothly.
- Put mats at the top and bottom of stairs.
- A narrow strip of good old shelf liner on the very edge might help.
- If you use a ramp, make sure there is a raised edge so the dog doesn't step off the side.

Outside, Landmarks inside and out

- Small wind chime at the back door

- A fountain-type water bowl that lets the water drip or splash
- "Path" of carpet runners or heavy rubber shelf liner
- Mat under bowls; door mats at doors, steps, and stairs
- Scents on danger areas (vanilla, citrus, furniture polish, etc.) It doesn't need to be strong, a dog's sense of smell is much better than yours. Put the scent on the small felt circles that are used to protect furniture and floors from scratches
- If your dog runs into things in unfamiliar areas, use a [Littlest Angel Vest](#) to protect the head/nose.
- Use [Mesh Eyewear](#) to protect the eyes or prevent a blinding glare in bright light for dogs with cataracts and some vision

Guiding

- Harnesses seem to work best, and should always be used instead of a collar for dogs with glaucoma.
- Pass a leash through a length of PVC pipe for a rigid guide
- Doggie door: hold the door open and lure the dog through with a treat
- Work on vocabulary: "careful", "Watch!", "step up", "step down", "find it", etc.
- A dog needs to bump around in order to "map out" his environment. Lead him around to obstacles he would normally encounter and let him bump (gently) . Say "Oops!" in a playful voice and lead him off in a different direction.
- **Littlest Angel Vest:** Wait on using the vest. Give the dog time to learn on his own. That will build his confidence. (It hurts you more than him.) He should be able to get around in his own home without help. Use the vest outside and in unfamiliar areas. The vest should be an aid, not a crutch.

Getting along

- Bell -- on your pant leg so the dog knows where you are
- Bells -- on other animals in the house
- Crate to retreat to, that is safe and familiar
- Try to speak to or lightly blow on the dog (not in its ear) before touching
- Aggression may be due to a feeling of vulnerability, but it may also be caused by pain, a thyroid condition, or other physical problems. Time for a vet check.
- Confusion and reversing day/night may be signs of senility. Look into OTC phosphatidylserine (PS) or Rx Anipryl.

Emotions (Google these for info on them)

- **Flower Essences** (Anafloa for your dog, Bach for you and/or your dog) can help.
- **Anxiety Wrap** can take the edge off
- **Thundershirt** works the same way as an anxiety wrap. Amazing! Really calms most dogs
- **D.A.P. (Dog Appeasing Pheromone)** mimics a natural comforting pheromone produced by mother dogs

Toys and play and exercise

- Emphasize sound and smell
- Roll-A-Treat Ball (dispenses treats as it rolls), balls and toys, such as Play-N-Speak Interactive Dog Toys, with recordings in them (NOT unattended), scented balls & toys
- Have a special long leash to use in a wide open area for running in a safe circle around you
- Slow down on walks -- smelling around means more now
- A long hall makes a good "runway" for a game of fetch
- A large rigid plastic pool with a large ball in it to chase round and round
- "Go find it" -- hide smelly treats