

# Guide Dogs

by Sue Walker



This text is levelled at Purple 1.

## Overview

This report describes how guide dogs are trained and how they help blind and visually impaired people. It provides opportunities for students to identify and summarise main points and to use the information to explain why guide dogs are special.

There is supporting information inside the front cover for teacher use. There is an audio version of the text on the Ready to Read CD *Readalong 2011*.

## Related texts

- *Finding Tibs* (RTR, Orange), which conveys the perspective of a person who is blind.

## Cross-curriculum links

- Social sciences (level 1) – Understand that people have different roles and responsibilities as part of their participation in groups.

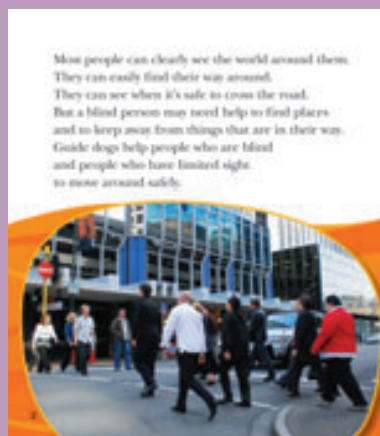
## Text characteristics

Key text characteristics as described in the reading standards for after two and three years at school are shown in the boxes with a solid outline. Other boxes indicate additional characteristics.

The structure of the text as a report with an introduction, a series of main points, and conclusion

Some settings and contexts that may be outside the students' prior knowledge but can easily be related to it, for example, through:

- the use of comparisons to clarify the difference between the perspective of a sighted person and a blind person and between guide dogs and other dogs ("Most people can ... But ...", "Unlike other dogs");
- the use of examples, signalled by a dash and/or the words "like" and "such as" ("– things like escalators, shopping malls ...");
- the direct address of the reader on page 8

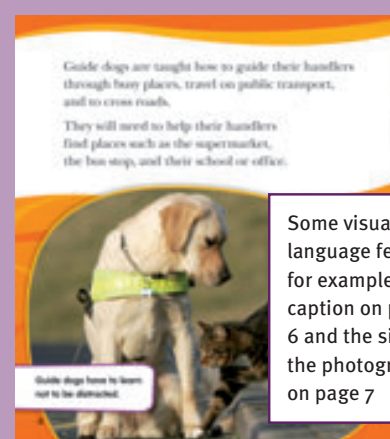
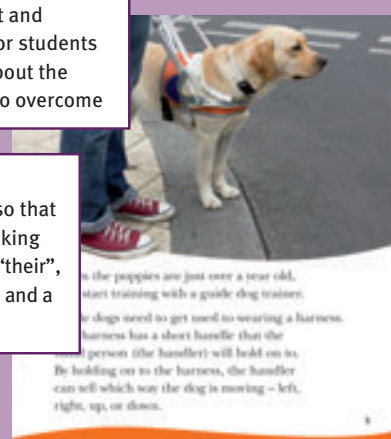


Shifts in time – the description of the dogs' training, signalled by indicators of time ("When the puppies are about eight weeks old", "When the puppies are just over one year old", "When the training is finished")

A mix of explicit and implicit content in text and photographs that provides opportunities for students to make simple inferences, for example, about the sorts of distractions the dogs would have to overcome

A variety of sentence structures, including compound and a few complex sentences, so that students are required to notice and use linking words, such as pronouns ("They", "These", "their", "who", "that") and/or punctuation (commas and a dash), as a guide to phrasing and meaning

Ideas and information organised in paragraphs



Some visual language features, for example, the caption on page 6 and the sign in the photograph on page 7

Some unfamiliar words and phrases, the meaning of which is supported by the context or illustrations, for example, the subject-specific vocabulary including nouns and noun phrases ("guide dogs", "limited sight", "Labradors", "Golden Retrievers", "breeds", "puppy walkers", "escalators", "cafés", "restaurants", "harness", "handler", "public transport", "difference", "speed", "confidence"); verbs ("placed", "allowed", "taught", "travel", "distracted", "matched", "admire"); adjectives ("safe", "blind", "loyal", "friendly", "intelligent", "volunteer", "busy", "from a distance"); and adverbs ("clearly", "safely"); commonly used words that have multiple meanings, for example, "guide" used as an adjective on most pages and as a verb on page 6

## Suggested reading purpose

- To find out how guide dogs help people and why guide dogs are special

## Setting learning goals

(What opportunities does this text provide for students to learn more about how to “read, respond to, and think critically about” texts?)

To meet the reading purpose, students need to draw on a range of comprehension and processing strategies, often simultaneously. The strategies, knowledge, and skills below link to *The Literacy Learning Progressions*. Select and adapt from them to set your specific learning goal. Be guided by your students’ particular needs and experiences: who they are, where they come from, and what they bring (*Reading and Writing Standards for Years 1–8*, Knowledge of the learner, page 6).

This text provides opportunities for students to:

- ask questions and look for answers as they read
- identify and summarise the main points in each paragraph or section
- imagine (visualise) some of the challenges that blind people face
- make inferences about why guide dogs are special
- use word-solving strategies to decode and/or clarify the meaning of unfamiliar words and phrases (for example, context, photographs, grapho-phonics, and word-structure clues)
- track connections between ideas within sentences and paragraphs.

## Introducing the text

- To support your students, especially English language learners, with some of the key vocabulary, have the students share their ideas about the qualities of guide dogs and what guide dogs have to do. You could also have English language learners share their experiences of seeing guide dogs in other countries. Discuss the students’ ideas and record the key vocabulary for qualities and actions on a chart or in the group reading book.
- Show the students the book and share the reading purpose and learning goal, for example, to identify and summarise the main points. Discuss some strategies that will help them do this, for example, to look for topic sentences and key words, think about what is most important, and make connections between ideas.
- Have the students look at the title page photograph. Ask them to describe the photograph and record any key vocabulary on

the chart. Have the students share how they know it’s a guide dog. To provide more support with the vocabulary, especially for English language learners, you may wish to have them look at other photographs in the text before reading and explore more key vocabulary to add to the chart.

## Reading the text

Below are some behaviours you could expect to see as the students read and discuss this text. Each example is accompanied by instructional strategies to scaffold their learning. Select and adapt from the suggestions according to your students’ needs and experiences.

### The students ask questions before and during the reading and look for answers as they read.

- Some questions may have arisen out of the introductory discussion. As the students read, encourage questions and discussion as they discover new information.
- Use your judgment to decide if the answer will be found in the text (and prompt the student to be on the alert) or whether to record it for further investigation.
- At the end of the reading, review some of the students’ questions. For example, *We wondered why the handlers and dogs needed to be matched together. What have we found out about that?* Note that the answers to the students’ questions are likely to include a mix of explicit information from the text and inferences the students have made.

### The students use the text and photographs to identify and summarise the main points about how guide dogs help people and what makes them special.

- Display the chart from the introductory discussion and either add the summarised information to it as the students read through the text or start another chart alongside.
- Remind the students that you’re looking for main points about how guide dogs help people and what makes them special.
- Have the students read page 2. *What sentence here do you think is most important?* This information (in the fifth sentence) is likely to already be on the students’ chart, although the idea of people with limited sight also having guide dogs may be new. You could read the students the information about this inside the front cover.

- Prompt the students to visualise situations other than crossing a road where a guide dog would be helpful.
  - After the students have read page 3, allow plenty of time for discussion. For example, why these particular breeds are most suited to be guide dogs and how the training of a guide dog may be different from the training of a dog that is a pet. Prompt the students to make connections to what they know about these breeds of dogs, especially in regard to the meaning of “loyal”.
  - Before adding main points to the chart, remind the students of the reading purpose. Prompt them to notice that the relevant information on this page is about how guide dogs are special (because they’re “loyal, friendly, and intelligent”).
  - Have the students read pages 4 and 5 and think, pair, and share about the relevant main points here. Again, the focus is on why guide dogs are special (they are allowed to go in lots of places that other dogs can’t, so they have to get used to them; they have to be specially trained; they wear a harness).
  - Prompt the students to use the photographs as well as the text. Compare the dogs in the photographs on pages 4 and 5. For example, the dog on page 5 looks older and very alert and is wearing a harness. The students may notice an apparent discrepancy – on page 4, the dog looks quite big and is wearing a vest that says “In Training” but page 5 says that training doesn’t start until they are just over one year old. Prompt the students to infer that getting used to being in public places can also be thought of as “training” but that the serious training starts when the dogs are older. Prompt the students to infer why the dog wears a harness with a short handle rather than a lead (as on page 4).
  - Have the students read page 6 and identify the main ideas (mostly about how guide dogs help people) for you to add to the chart. The photograph here is a very powerful demonstration about one way that guide dogs are special – they don’t get distracted.
  - After reading page 7, encourage the students to discuss the idea of the dog being “matched” to a handler. *What does that mean for the dog? For the handler?* The students may make connections to the qualities of loyalty, friendliness, and intelligence as described on page 3. Encourage the students to infer what qualities a handler would need.
  - Identify the main points for the chart (from the second paragraph).
  - Have the students read page 8. *Why should you never pat a guide dog?* Note if they make a connection between the instruction about not patting the dog and the idea on page 6 of the dogs not being distracted.
  - Review the summary chart and reading purpose. In addition to the notes on the chart, prompt the students to make connections to their own life experiences, including experiences of dogs, to visualise the challenges that blind people can face and help them infer why guide dogs are special.
  - Revisit the learning goal and support the students to track how they met it. Ask the students to describe an example of how they identified and summarised the main idea.
- The students look for and use clues to decode and/or clarify the meaning of unfamiliar words and phrases (for example, context, photographs, grapho-phonics, and word-structure clues).**
- For the first reading, have the students focus on getting the gist of the text and meeting the reading purpose rather than solving every vocabulary challenge. Provide some prompts (as suggested below) and note any particular challenges or learning opportunities to return to after the reading. The students may well find that the challenges have lessened or even disappeared on a second reading.
  - Prompt students to break longer words up into syllables or familiar chunks, for example, “vol-un-teer”, “es-ca-la-tor”, “dis-trac-ted”, “con-fi-dence”. You can model this on a whiteboard.
  - Page 3 has a proper noun and multisyllabic words so rather than hold up the reading, you may want to tell the students some (for example, “Retrievers”). The students should be able to use word knowledge and grapho-phonics information to work out “Lab-ra-dors”.
  - Remind students of the strategy of reading on (to the next word or the end of the phrase or sentence) to help work out or clarify the meaning of words and phrases. Many of the subject-specific words in this text appear within noun phrases (for example, “limited sight”, “Golden Retrievers”, “puppy walkers”, “shopping malls”, “public transport”, “bus stop”) or verb phrases (for example, “spend time”, “are allowed”), which provide support for the meaning. English language learners are likely to need more explicit support because they will be less familiar with these word combinations (collocations).

- Prompt the students to make connections to their prior knowledge, for example, of people who help out at school or their parents who volunteer in the community, to clarify the meaning of “volunteer” (page 4).
- On page 8, prompt the students to use the following sentence to support them with the meaning of “admire”. Encourage discussion (*Why would you admire a guide dog?*) in order to reinforce its meaning if it’s new to the students.
- Have a dictionary available to confirm or clarify word meanings.

**The students use their knowledge of punctuation and syntax to help them track connections between ideas within sentences and paragraphs.**

- Tell the students that some of the sentences in this text are quite long and have commas to help clarify the meaning. Briefly discuss the use of commas to separate items in a list or to group words together in phrases (or chunks of meaning).
- Also mention the use of linking words (pronouns, such as “they”, “their”, or “these” and conjunctions, such as “who”, “that”) to link ideas within or between sentences.
- As the students read the text, draw attention to one or two examples (as suggested below) but don’t make this the focus of the lesson. Any difficulties with tracking links between ideas can be attended to in more detail after the reading. For example, after reading page 2, check that the students realise that “They” (in line 2) refers to “Most people” (in line 1), or after reading page 3, briefly draw attention to the links between the word “These” (line 3) and “Labradors and Golden Retrievers” in the previous sentence.
- Pages 3, 4, and 6 have examples of commas used to separate items in a list, and pages 5 and 8 have examples of commas used to support phrasing.

**After reading**

- Students can reread the text as they listen to the audio version on the Ready to Read CD *Readalong 2011*.
- Have the students share any questions they had about guide dogs and how they found (or didn’t find) an answer. Discuss any other questions the students have as a result of reading the text and record them for further investigation.
- Have the students reread the text with the purpose of identifying the main points about how the dogs are trained (a different focus from

the original reading purpose). Encourage the students to form hypotheses about the skills and personal qualities a volunteer puppy walker or trainer would need.

- Discuss the qualities that guide dogs need to have, beginning with the ones mentioned in the text (loyal, friendly, intelligent) and adding others. Have the students develop a synonym or definition and an example for each adjective.
- Make connections to the students’ knowledge of other “special” dogs or animals that are trained to help people, such as sniffer dogs or police dogs. *How are they the same as or different from guide dogs?*
- Have the students share with a partner any words they found difficult and the strategies they used to work them out. Listen to the discussions. Do you need to follow up on any decoding strategies, particular words, or features of words?
- Discuss the meaning of the prefix in “Unlike”. *Why has the author used this word here?* Generate other examples of words with this prefix and discuss how the prefix affects their meaning.
- On the whiteboard, write out some sentences from the text to demonstrate how the students can use their knowledge of both vocabulary (for example, relative pronouns (“who” and “that”) and syntax to signal the links between ideas in a sentence or paragraph.