

# Guide Dogs



by Sue Walker

*Ready  
to Read*

Published 2015 by the Ministry of Education,  
PO Box 1666, Wellington 6140, New Zealand.  
[www.education.govt.nz](http://www.education.govt.nz)

First published 2010 for the Ministry of Education  
by Learning Media Limited, Wellington, New Zealand.

The Ministry of Education would like to thank the Royal New Zealand  
Foundation of the Blind for their assistance with this book.

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Series Editor: Kate Boyle

Designer: Elton Gregory

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Enquiries should be made to the publisher.

Publishing services: Lift Education E Tū

ISBN 978 0 478 16242 4 (print)

ISBN 978 1 77690 411 2 (online)

Replacement copies may be ordered from Ministry of Education Customer Services,  
online at [www.thechair.co.nz](http://www.thechair.co.nz)

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Please quote item number 16242.

The teacher support material (TSM) and audio for Ready to Read texts  
can be found online at [www.readytoread.tki.org.nz](http://www.readytoread.tki.org.nz)

This book refers to “blind people” and “people with limited sight”.

The Royal New Zealand Foundation of the Blind provides services  
for people who are totally blind and those who have limited sight  
that can't be corrected by surgery or wearing glasses.

The Foundation also has Guide Dog Services who breed and train  
puppies to become guide dogs.

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Ministry of Education



Most people can clearly see the world around them.  
They can easily find their way around.  
They can see when it's safe to cross the road.  
But a blind person may need help to find places  
and to keep away from things that are in their way.  
Guide dogs help people who are blind  
and people who have limited sight  
to move around safely.



Most guide dogs in New Zealand  
are Labradors and Golden Retrievers.  
These breeds of dogs are loyal,  
friendly, and intelligent.

Guide dogs need to be trained.  
The training starts when they are puppies.



When guide dog puppies are about eight weeks old, they are placed with volunteer puppy walkers.

Puppy walkers and their families spend time with the puppies. They help the puppies get used to things they will see every day when they work as guide dogs – things like escalators, shopping malls, supermarkets, and cafés.

Unlike other dogs, guide dogs are allowed to go into shops and restaurants. They can ride in buses, trains, and taxis.



When the puppies are just over a year old, they start training with a guide dog trainer.

Guide dogs need to get used to wearing a harness. The harness has a short handle that the blind person (the handler) will hold on to. By holding on to the harness, the handler can tell which way the dog is moving – left, right, up, or down.

Guide dogs are taught how to guide their handlers through busy places, travel on public transport, and to cross roads.

They will need to help their handlers find places such as the supermarket, the bus stop, and their school or office.



**Guide dogs have to learn not to be distracted.**



When the training is finished, the guide dog is matched with the blind person who will be their handler.

Guide dogs are very important to their handlers. They allow their handlers to get around safely, and with more speed and confidence.



If you see a guide dog, admire it from a distance. Never pat a guide dog when it is wearing a harness. The harness means the dog is working. It is guiding its handler.

A guide dog has a very special job.





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To go directly to audio and TSM for this book, scan the QR code or use the short URL.



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