



Is my Dog Suitable?

Eligibility criteria for your dog, or a potential dog to be mindDog.

Choosing the Right Dog for the mindDog Program

Who is this for?

This information is for anyone thinking about having a dog in the mindDog program, whether you're planning to adopt or buy a dog specifically for this purpose, or you already have a dog you're considering training as your assistance dog.

Joining the mindDog program is a significant commitment, both financially and in the time you will need to dedicate to training. The first 12 months, known as the trainee year, require consistent practice, patience, and effort to build the skills your dog will need to succeed. This period can be demanding and will involve regular training sessions, follow-up assessments, and lifestyle adjustments. Applicants should carefully consider whether they have the resources, support, and stability to meet these commitments before applying, as mindDog may not be the right choice for everyone at this time.

What does a mindDog need to be like?

A mindDog must be safe, reliable, and calm in public. If your dog is not emotionally stable or well-behaved, it will not be accepted into the program. The safety of the public, your dog, and you, are our top priority.

If your dog displays any of the following behaviours, they are not yet ready for public access training:

- Boisterous or over-excited behaviour
- Nuisance barking
- Hackles raised, growling, showing teeth, or lunging
- Biting or aggression
- Excessive fear or anxiety
- Inappropriate toileting (in public or indoors)

These issues must be resolved before applying. If any of these are present at the initial assessment, your dog will not be accepted into the program.

Please note: the application fee is non-refundable, so we strongly advise resolving behavioural issues in advance.

If you're concerned about any of these behaviours, we recommend working with a force-free, positive-reinforcement trainer before applying.



Does your dog have basic obedience?

Your dog must already have some basic obedience training. At a minimum, your dog should:

- Have a strong connection and bond with you
- Walk calmly beside you on a loose lead
- Sit on command
- Come when called, even in distracting environments
- Toilet appropriately
- Be calm around children and other dogs
- Not lunge or bark excessively when excited or distracted



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What if I don't have a dog yet?

If you're choosing a dog for the program, it's important to put suitability above all else. A dog that looks cute or is your dream breed may not be appropriate for assistance work. You'll want a dog that:

- Is people-focused, calm, and enjoys learning
- Has a stable temperament
- Is confident but not pushy
- Is free from genetic or behavioural issues

We encourage people to consider rescue dogs aged 2–3 years old but be cautious and assess temperament carefully. Puppies can work, but you need energy, time, and a long-term commitment to socialisation and training. We do not accept dogs under 6 months of age or that have not been desexed and prefer applicants to wait until their puppy is 12 months of age before applying as many young puppies are too immature and struggle with the training at 6 months old.

Avoid buying from pet shops, online ads or puppy farms or breeders who cannot provide health and temperament history.

Think Ahead

Having a mindDog is a 10+ year commitment. Carefully consider:

- Your physical and emotional capacity to care for a dog
- Your ability to provide daily exercise, enrichment, and training
- The financial commitment (vet bills, food, equipment, training)

Are you ready?

Before you apply to join mindDog, make sure:

- Your dog is emotionally stable and socially appropriate
- Your dog has basic obedience and public manners
- You understand the commitment involved
- You are prepared to train and care for your dog long term

If your dog isn't ready yet, that's okay. Take the time to build the foundation with patience and the right support, many dogs can succeed. Invest in a force free, positive reinforcement trainer, as they will give you the tools for your toolbox when working with your dog.

