

Use this standard as a guide to helping your dog to pass his Public Access Test.

The purpose of the *Public Access Standard* is to provide a focal point when you begin public access training with your Trainee mindDog. We suggest that you also download the Public Access Test (PAT) from our website to understand what is required of a mindDog and his partner.

If you are working with someone who is not a mindDog trainer, it's a good idea to show them this standard.

The Importance of Off-leash Training

Your dog should be trained to reliably execute basic obedience both on and off-leash. There is no substitute for off-leash training of your dog — you may accidentally drop the leash, his collar may slip off, or there may be a door open that shouldn't be.

The emphasis in training your mindDog should be on maintaining his controlled focus on you, and being responsible in any situation that could possibly arise, including your own incapacitation.

Equipment and positioning

All a well trained dog needs is a flat collar. Head collars, complex harnesses or other control equipment should be unnecessary. Some mindDogs load their poor dogs up with all sorts of equipment they have seen on the internet. Too much gear distracts your dog who can't focus on his job of looking after you.

Tiny dogs may be carried in your arms, using a carrier, sling or other device. You may use a dog pram if it suits your circumstances.

A mindDog should never sit on a seat unless it is necessary for him to perform his duties, or for his safety. If he does need to sit on a seat you should provide a mat, or something appropriate to protect the seat. The dog should always appear comfortable and



confident in his working position.

Mobility and balance harnesses

mindDog does not endorse the use of rigid harnesses on clients' dogs for mobility or balance. We are not equipped to assess the suitability of individual dogs for this role. A dog which is too short or too light can be physically damaged by inappropriate mobility or balance work.

Dogs will not be accepted for Public Access Testing wearing a rigid harness.

Car travel safety

Physical safety of your dog must be ensured while you are driving. In most states this means the use of a canine seat belt.

Unloading from a vehicle

Always get your dog out of the vehicle on the side away from traffic. He should not leave the vehicle until you invite him to do so. Once outside the car, he should stay close to you and out of any obvious danger. He mustn't wander away. He should ignore any distractions including other dogs which may be in the vicinity.

Remember — it is your responsibility to keep him safe.

On the street

Your dog should walk alongside you on a loose leash and not pull, stop to sniff objects, greet other people, or eliminate, unless you ask it to do so.

Tiny breed dogs may be carried, though they should demonstrate the ability to walk on a loose leash in a safe area.

Entering a building

Practice entering buildings via a door that you must open manually. Your dog should not push ahead of you. Then use a door that opens automatically.

He shouldn't startle or show fear when you enter through an automatic door and should stay calm on a loose leash. Tiny dogs may be carried if this is their usual working position.

The Training Standard cont'd

Moving through a store with distractions

The team should enter a busy store. Your dog should be on a loose lead in the heel position or if he's a tiny dog, carry him in his normal working position. As you move through the store, he should move smoothly with you around corners. He should stop when you do and should not brush against merchandise or topple items.



He shouldn't startle or be frightened by shopping carts, baby strollers, or small children. He shouldn't greet other people unless they are his friends. While his focus should always be on you, he should be aware and relaxed in his surroundings. Tiny dogs that are carried should sit quietly and calmly without attempting to get out of their designated place.

Grocery Store

Supermarkets or grocery stores offer a lot of temptation to a dog. As you move through the aisles, he should not sniff any food products or people. Pay close attention to him when you are near meat and cheese sections. If he shows any interest in the products distract him with some treats.

While in the grocery store, you should make sure that he will do a reliable sit and stay in an area where shopping carts and people are whizzing by. Shopping trolleys are noisy, difficult things especially at dog height. Your dog needs to remain calm and relaxed around them.

Tiny dogs who need to stay physically connected to their partners should remain in their normal working position.

Don't ever tie your dog's lead to a trolley. If he startles, or someone bangs into your trolley and he jumps away, the trolley he is tied to can cause physical and emotional damage. This can turn a calm reliable dog into an anxious nervous animal.

High-distraction behaviors

Think about the kinds of things you and your Trainee mindDog are likely to come across in



public areas:

loud noises, people running, sirens, people who ask unwanted questions, elderly people with mobility scooters or walkers, children, aggressive people.

Your dog must always remain calm particularly with children. He must tolerate children petting him, poking him, pulling his tail. He should remain in position, tolerate the child, but not engage with it.

Public transport

Practice boarding and riding as many forms of public transport as you can. This includes trains, buses, trams, taxis, whatever is available in your area.

Again, your dog should remain calm and not display any interest in other passengers. Make sure you have him in a place where he is safe and not going to get stepped on. Generally speaking, a mindDog should ride on the floor rather than on a seat, but he may be placed on a seat if his safety is at risk.

A tiny mindDog may need to be protected from other passengers' feet by riding in a carrier, shoulder bag, or in your lap.

You may be unable to use public transport or simply not need to. However, there may be an occasion where you have to take your dog on a plane. No airline makes planes available for dog training but he still needs to be able to handle the cramped space and the experience of take off and landing. If you drive a good way to prepare him for this is to train him to curl up in the footwell of the passenger seat.

Restaurants

Trainee mindDogs must be calm in restaurants. Your dog must not eat food or crumbs from the floor. He

should be in a down-stay under the table, if possible, and remain there quietly. If there isn't space for him to sit comfortably under the table, then try and find a table where he can be out of the way and safe. Tiny dogs should remain calmly and quietly in their normal working position during the meal.

Never let your dog, no matter what size, get on the table. Don't feed it or let it beg. Don't ask a waiter to bring food or water to your dog. Don't surreptitiously share your food with him. If it is mealtime for your dog, feed and water him before going to a restaurant.

Test your dog's training by dropping a small piece of food near him. A well-trained mindDog should know "Leave it". He mustn't break his position, or attempt to sniff or eat the food. When he does well, make sure he is rewarded. But give him one of his treats — don't ever reward him with the food on the floor.

Bathrooms

Because of the size of some dogs, we advise using wheelchair accessible rest rooms where available.

If you do need to use a standard cubicle and your dog is large, don't try to get him in with you. Put him in a sit-stay in front of the cubicle where he can wait for you. If he is a small dog you can take him in with you. Make sure he doesn't squirm or attempt to escape, nor should he peek under the partition into adjacent stalls or whine to get out.

When you wash your hands and can't hold the leash, have him in a sit-stay beside you until you are ready to leave.

Some dogs find the smell of cleaning products used in public rest rooms to be confronting and may be stressed. The sound of the hand dryers or cubicle doors slamming can cause him to startle. Like all other training situations, introduce your dog to new experiences slowly and carefully. Don't expect him to get right first time.

Lifts

Together, you and your dog should be able to enter and leave a lift in a calm and controlled manner. He may sit, stand, or lie down, whichever is the most appropriate. He shouldn't startle or cower out of fear, rather he should be at ease, confident, and focused on you.



Some lifts can get very crowded especially in shopping centres where they also carry trolleys. If your dog is small and you are concerned, wait for the next one.

Stairs

You and your dog must master stairways both up and down. He should not run up the stairs faster than you, nor should he be fearful of them. He should be calm and relaxed on stairs.

Off lead recall with distraction

Your dog must come when you call him. It doesn't matter if he is checking out another dog, sniffing something interesting or running across the park. When you call, he has to come straight to you without hesitation.

When tested he will be put in a sit stay in a busy area. You will be asked to walk away from him for at least 10 metres, then call him.

His recall should be rapid, deliberate, and focused. He shouldn't amble along, sniff, or become distracted. All mindDogs regardless of normal working position, need to demonstrate this ability.

Surfaces

Your mindDog will encounter a variety of surfaces in the course of his travels. It could be asphalt, gravel, linoleum, cobblestones, slippery marble or a metal grating of some kind. It may be glass blocks over a commercial kitchen, a propped-open manhole cover, or a piece of iron sheeting in a construction zone.

All mindDogs need to walk confidently on a variety of surfaces. It's always a good idea to expose your dog to as many different surfaces as possible early in its life. This builds confidence in your dog.

These are the standard requirements for a mindDog.

If you need your dog to perform other duties like medication reminders, danger alerts or other specific actions, please talk to your mindDog trainers.

The trainee mindDog in these pictures is Tais and his partner is Nicola Ramsay.
Photos by Emily Smith

