

Blind Dog Tips

These suggestions have been summarized from past messages from the Blind Dog email list and message board, at www.blinddogs.com

1. Try not to move furniture around or leave obstacles on the floor.
2. Remember that animals pick up easily on our emotions, so try to express "happy" emotions around a blind pet.
3. Emphasize the senses that your pet still has:
 - Blind dogs still have their sense of smell, hearing, taste and touch.
 - Dogs that are both blind and deaf have their senses of smell, taste and touch. (They can feel vibrations, especially when you walk.)
4. Allow your dog to smell other peoples' hands before being petted. Most blind dogs' personalities do not change; however, some dogs can be easily startled, which could lead to fear biting.
5. Try to treat them as normally as possible. Building their confidence is key to letting them know that you still love them and that they are still able to do the things they used to do. For blind dogs, letting them know that they are still the same dog in your eyes can be the basis for the type of personality they will develop or keep.
6. Encourage your blind dog to do the same things he used to, and be sure to praise him when he does. However, if he is unable to do some of the activities that he used to, remember to be understanding and praise him anyway.
7. Be creative with different scents to mark areas for your blind dog. Just make sure that the method of marking you use is safe. You can use flavored extracts, scented oil, cologne or a dab of perfume. Dab a bit of this scent on furniture legs, doorways and steps so you dog can smell obstacles and barriers. Using different scented candles in each room may also help your dog distinguish the different rooms of your house. Using a specific scent for steps only will prepare your dog for the step and prevent falls.
8. You can also use textured materials to mark areas. Your pet will be able to tell where he is by the feel of the fabric under his feet. Throw rugs work quite well, and guests won't even recognize their "real" purpose. Indoor/outdoor carpeting, wind chimes, cedar chips and decorative bricks or blocks can help guide a blind dog along his way outside.
9. Use bells or jingling tags on your other dogs to help her follow along with the others and to avoid your other dogs startling her. You can also use bells on your shoes to help her find you.
10. Do not be afraid to walk with a "heavy foot" when approaching your blind or blind/deaf dog. Dogs are especially sensitive to vibrations when they cannot see, and even more so when they can neither see nor hear.
11. Do not underestimate the power of touching and massaging.
12. Be very vocal with your blind dog. Talking helps your dog to tell where you are and what you are doing.

13. A simple tabletop fountain with a large bowl can be used as a water dish or commercial pet waters are also available. The sound of running water helps to orient the blind dog and allows him to find his way to the water. The sound also helps him know what room in the house he is in. This method of providing water to your dog can be especially helpful when moving to a new home, and most dogs enjoy drinking from running water.

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