



## Public Access Standard

Based on the Public Access Standard from the  
Psychiatric Service Dog Society (PSDS)  
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## information sheet

Supplied by mindDog (Psychiatric Service Dog Association (NSW) Incorp., PO Box 797, Surry Hills NSW 2010. Ph: 0405 745 476  
mindDog is released from any liability associated with the use of this voluntary Public Access Standard for Service Dogs.

The purpose of the public access standard is to provide a focal point for owner-trainers as they embark upon public access training with their Trainee mindDog. The standard is also helpful to professional dog trainers who are working with mindDog clients. Please download the Public Access Test from our website to understand what is required of a mindDog and handler.

mindDogs should have a strong bond with their handlers. This bond is best achieved with a young dog trained by its handler. If the handler is unfamiliar with training dogs or is not confident of their training skills, we encourage them to work with a mindDog approved trainer in their area.

### Mastering Basic Obedience First

All dogs must master basic obedience before they begin wearing their Trainee vest. This is very important especially with small or toy breeds which are often picked up and carried. It is fine for you to carry your small dog but he must still be good at basic obedience. It can be very disappointing when we turn up to do his test and he fails because he won't sit and stay. Make sure that he has fully mastered the behaviours of basic obedience, such as: sit, down, stay, come, wait, go, back, etcetera.

Train your dog to respond to verbal commands or hand signals. They are helpful when you need to direct your dog in a public setting where silence prevails, like libraries, movie theatres, or performances.

### The Importance of Off-leash Training

Your dog should reliably execute basic obedience behaviours both, on and off-leash. There is no substitute for off-leash training of one's service dog. Sometimes leashes are accidentally dropped, collars become undone, or someone leaves a door open that should have been closed.

You are responsible for your mindDog in any situation including your own incapacitation.

### Disqualifying behaviors

A dog that demonstrates boisterous behaviour, nuisance barking, hackles-up, growling, showing teeth, lunging, biting, aggression, excessive fear, or inappropriate elimination is not ready for public access work. If your

dog has any of these behaviours directed at humans, or other animals in the vicinity, then you must consult with your trainer. Remember, when you and your Trainee mindDog are out in public, you are representing all mindDogs. Take the time to do things right.

### Equipment and positioning

Minddog does not recommend the use of choke chains, prong collars or shock collars. Plain collars, simple harnesses or a comfortable head collar are okay. Tiny dogs may be carried in your arms, using a carrier, sling or other device. A mindDog should never sit on a seat unless it is necessary for the dog to perform its duties, or for its safety. If so, the handler should strive to provide a mat, carrier, or other barrier to protect the seat from the dog's feet. The dog should always appear comfortable and confident in its working position.

### Common public access situations

#### Car travel safety

Physical safety of one's service dog must be ensured while the handler is driving. In New South Wales this means the use of a canine seat belt.

#### Unloading from a vehicle

The dog should not leave the vehicle until given the appropriate command, or until lifted from the car if the dog is too tiny to exit safely on its own. Once outside the vehicle, the dog should remain within 1.5m of the vehicle (instead of wandering away) and out of any obvious danger. The dog should ignore any distractions including other dogs which may be in the vicinity. Always get your dog out of the vehicle on the side away from traffic.

#### Approaching a building

The dog should walk alongside its handler on a loose leash and not pull on its leash, stop to sniff objects, greet other people, or eliminate, unless specifically cued to do so by its handler. 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

The dog should enter buildings via a door that its handler must open manually. This should be repeated using a



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door that opens automatically. While entering the building, the dog should continue to be on a loose lead without pulling. The dog should not rush ahead of the handler as the team enters the building, nor should the dog startle when entry is through an automatic door. Tiny dogs may be carried if this is their usual working position.

### Moving through a store with distractions

The team should enter a busy store. The dog should be on loose lead in the heel position or a tiny dog carried in its normal working position. As the team moves through the store, the dog should turn corners synchronously with the handler. Dog should stop when handler stops. Dog should not brush against merchandise or topple items. Dog should not startle or appear frightened by shopping carts, baby strollers, and small children. Dog should not attempt to greet other people. Rather, the dog should be aware of its surroundings, while at the same time remaining focused on its handler. Tiny dogs that are carried should sit quietly and calmly without attempting to get out of their designated place.

### Grocery Store

Team should enter a grocery store, and the handler should push a shopping cart, while the dog keeps pace alongside on a loose lead. Tiny dogs carried in their normal working position should sit calmly and quietly without attempting to get down from their designated place. As the team moves through the store, the dog should not sniff any food products or people while moving through the aisles. Handlers should be especially attentive when the team is near meat and cheese sections.

While in the grocery store, the handler may wish to challenge the dog's training by placing it in a sit-, down-, or stand-stay (tiny dogs may remain in their normal working position) in an area where shopping carts and people are whizzing by. The dog should not break the stay position, nor be fearful of the shopping carts and people, as they move about. The dog should remain focused on its handler until cued otherwise.

### High-distraction behaviors

- 1) Handler puts dog in a down-stay in a busy public space. Dog should not startle, vocalize, or break the down-stay. If small dogs have been trained to move closer to their handler in these situations, or do another behavior for their safety, that trained response should not be counted negatively. For tiny dogs in carriers, the carrier in its normal position should be jostled unexpectedly instead of stepping over the dog.
- 2) Handler puts dog in a sit-, stand-, or down-stay in a busy public space, tiny dogs may remain in their normal working position. An assistant will recruit a child to come and pet the dog. The dog should not startle, vocalize, or appear threatened by contact from the child. The dog should remain impassive, tolerate

the petting from the child, but not engage with the child further. The dog should persist in its sit-, stand-, or down-stay position until cued by its handler to do otherwise.

- 3) The dog should be trained to tuck its tail when in a sit- or downstay- position. This item may be omitted if the dog has an extremely short tail, or if the dog is carried in its normal working position.

### Mass transit

The team should practice boarding and riding as many forms of public transport that are available to them. This includes trains, buses, trams, taxis, or planes. The dog should remain calm throughout the trip and disinterested in other persons present. The handler may choose to put the dog in a sit-, stand- or down-stay, as conditions permit. Generally speaking, a mindDog should ride on the floor rather than on a seat. On rare occasions, a mindDog may be placed on a seat when its safety is at risk. Tiny mindDogs may need to be protected from other passengers' feet by riding in a front carrier, shoulder bag, or in the lap of its handler.

### Restaurants

Trainee mindDogs must be calm in restaurants. The dog should not lunge at any food or crumbs that may be on the floor. The dog should be placed into a down-stay under the table, if possible, and remain there silently for the duration of the meal. If the setting will not allow the dog to remain under the table, then it may be placed in a down-stay next to, or under, the handler's chair and out of the way of other patrons and staff.

Tiny dogs should remain calmly and quietly in their normal working position during the meal. This may be on the handler's lap. At no time is a service dog of any size acceptable on a table. The dog may only be in a chair if it is in a carrier. Peeking out from under the table or the carrier, sniffing around, or begging for food is not permitted. The dog may sit, stand, or otherwise interact with the handler as necessary to provide assistance.

A handler should not request that a waitperson bring food or water to their dog. The handler must not surreptitiously share their food with the dog while they are still inside the restaurant. These are inappropriate behaviours. **mindDogs** should be fed and watered before or after the handler dines in a restaurant.

Challenge the dog's training by dropping a small piece of food near the dog. A well-trained mindDog will not break its position, nor will it attempt to sniff or eat the food. When a dog behaves appropriately under these circumstances, be sure to offer it positive reinforcement for good behaviour.

### Bathrooms

The dog should be familiar with public restrooms. The dog should follow its handler into the toilet stall if

possible. It should not squirm or attempt to escape, nor should it peek into adjacent stalls or whine to get out. When the handler leaves the toilet stall, the dog should move calmly with its handler. When the handler washes their hands and is unable to hold the leash, the dog should be placed out of the way, in a sit-, stand- or down-stay, and maintain that position until the handler is ready to leave the restroom. In cases where there is no accessible toilet stall, or where stalls are too small to fit dog and handler, the handler should place the dog in a sit-, stand- or down-stay, out of the way, while using the toilet. Carriers with tiny Service Dogs inside may be hung on the hook on the back of the bathroom door or held as appropriate.

### Lifts

The team should enter and leave a lift in a controlled fashion. The dog should ride both up and down in the lift and may sit, stand, or lie down. The dog should not startle or cower out of fear. The dog should be at ease, confident, and attentive to its handler throughout the ride.

### Escalators

The team should practice using an escalator (ascending and descending), only if it is possible to do so safely. In other words, escalator work is optional, because if not done correctly, your dog's feet could be seriously injured. Observing and following a more experienced team on and off the escalator is helpful for a new dog to learn how it is done.

When getting on the escalator move with a full and confident stride. Hesitation or fear, on the part of the handler, will be communicated to the dog through the leash, and this is not the message a handler wants to send in these critical training moments. Most dogs will be fearful getting on an escalator for the first time.

You may wish to spend several training sessions desensitizing your dog to the escalator sounds, and the metal plate where the steps come up using praise, treats, or other positive reinforcement. When your dog is more comfortable around the escalator, use positive reinforcement and gentle guiding to get your dog on the escalator. Within 1.5 seconds of stepping on to the escalator, the handler should praise the dog profusely for his bravery and offer additional positive reinforcement, and then quickly collect oneself to prepare for stepping off the escalator shortly thereafter.

A dog should never visit with others on the escalator; this is no time for socializing. It is important to allow at least six steps between your team and the individual(s) in front of you on the escalator.

In order to step off the escalator safely, you will need to be walking at full stride. This is why you should allow at least six empty steps between you and the person in front

of you when you first get on. In a full and confident stride, your dog will be able to step off the escalator without issue. Some handlers prefer to give their dog the "jump" command to get them over the end of the escalator. If you hesitate, or in any way communicate fear through the leash, your dog could be injured. Some dogs prefer to pace themselves more quickly than the handler when getting off the escalator. So long as the handler is always in control of the dog, and the dog is not getting in the way of others who are stepping off the escalator at the same time, this is OK. Smaller mindDogs may be carried when using the escalator.

Escalator work is not for everyone. It requires a confident and synchronized approach on the part of handler and dog. The risk of permanent injury to your dog is real and should not be underestimated. On the other hand, for the team that has no problems with it, all the more power to you. Just realize that not everyone can do it, and that's OK. This is what lifts are for.

### Stairs

The handler and dog must master stairways both up and down. The dog should not run up the stairs, nor should it be fearful of them. A team should be climbing stairs together in a controlled manner.

### Off lead recall with distraction

Dog should come when called by the handler at a distance no less than 10m and in the presence of high distraction. Relevant distractions may include a group of people moving or standing around, children playing, or the presence of other dogs. The dog's recall should be rapid, deliberate, and focused. The dog should not amble along, sniff, or otherwise become distracted by extraneous stimuli. 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 its 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 demonstrate this ability 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, and that's a good thing!

**These are the standard requirements for a mindDog. Should you need your dog to perform other duties such as medication reminders, danger alerts or other specific actions, please contact us.**

### Contact mindDog:

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