

MANY TEARS ANIMAL RESCUE

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Advice if you are Adopting a Blind & Deaf Dog

Many people immediately write off a blind and deaf dog but Many Tears has successfully homed several of these. One of the most important things about owning a blind and deaf dog is their safety. You should always have a safe place to put them whether it's a safe room in your house or a crate in case you ever have to leave the dog home alone. If a deaf/blind dog gets lost, he or she will be in real danger. These dogs cannot see or hear cars, people or other dogs. So, you are responsible for their safety!

Crates will keep your dog safe and comfortable if you can't be there. So we suggest you get your new dog used to a crate and it will help to have something with your "smell" in there with him or her. An old fleece or a blanket which you can wrap around you before you put it in the crate will help your dog feel safe and secure. If your dog uses a crate use a bungee or something similar to hold the door open. This way your dog doesn't need to worry that the door may only be partially open.

Before you get to training, spend time with your new blind and deaf dog and form a bond. You should always have a bond with your dog, but it's especially important with blind and deaf dogs. You are going to be his/her eyes and ears so forming a bond is very important. You need to give lots and lots of praise (by touch) and treats to form this bond. Blind and deaf dogs rely mainly on touch so be sure to pet your dog all over from their ears to their paws. This way they are very use to touch and at ease with it.

Textures are a great way to guide your blind and deaf dog. Rugs, mats, blankets etc are all ways to guide your dog so they can work out where they are. Blind and deaf dogs use their noses and paws to find their way around. The rule for textures is don't move them! Place them in one spot and leave them there. If you move them, you will confuse the dog and it may even take longer to teach them the whole process again. To get your dog adjusted to the house, start by laying textures around the house, for example a mat in front of the door, so that your dog can feel where he or she is going. You could put a mat under the food and water bowl, so that he or she can anticipate where their food and water bowl is. You also can try putting different scents in different rooms to help orient your dog with what room she or he is in but if you start using scents you must continue to use them.

It's a good idea to show your dog around the house. Start by putting a lead on your dog and walk around the house with him or her. This way she or he will get an idea of where the furniture and everything else is. You will probably have to do this several times and in the beginning he or she will bump into things but soon they will have the entire house "mapped" out in their head and will find their way around.

Use a baby gate screen to block stairs until your dog has mastered them. Place a mat at both top and bottom of stairs so the dog knows when it's at the top or bottom of the stairs. Teach stairs by placing a "treat" on every step or two. Stand in front of dog, holding collar or harness, and gently encourage (without pulling), practice until he is able to go up and down smoothly.

It's best to walk your dog on a harness. You will have more control if the dog pulls and cause less stress to the dog. To make your life a little easier while out walking your dog, you can get a jacket or a bandana of some sort that says Blind and Deaf Dog, so that people know not to startle your dog but trying to stroke it.

You cannot let a blind and deaf dog run free in an unknown area for a couple of reasons. If these dogs meet strange dogs when out and running free they cannot hear or see the signals other dog is giving them. The other reason is your dog could run off. Since you can't call your dog back and the dog won't be able to see where you are, you cannot let this dog off the lead unless you are absolutely sure he or she is in a safe area.

Use "touch" to train your dog. For example get your dog's attention with a gentle tap of his nose and then put his food bowl down or tap twice between its shoulder blades to signal you are going for a walk and immediately put the dog lead on. You will be amazed at how quickly your deaf dog will come to associate the sign with the event that follows. Keep using your chosen sign and watch your dog's reaction. If they respond with excitement and prepare for walkies or dinner then you have successfully communicated to your dog.

Train your dog with positive reinforcement which basically is anytime your dog does what you want; give them lots of praise and treats. Soon they will realise when they do want you are asking for, they get a yummy treat and some love! If they are not doing what you ask for, just wait.