

# Assistance Dogs

Assistance dogs, also known as service dogs, are assisting people all over the world. These highly trained dogs primarily help people with disabilities. They are trained to provide specific services to their owners depending on their owners' needs. For example, an assistance dog can be a great helper to a **paralyzed** person who is unable to move part of or all of his or her body. The dog can help the person move around the house and assist with many everyday tasks such as turning lights on and off. Some service dogs are highly specialized, such as **seizure** dogs that can predict seizures and alert their owners, giving them time to move to a safe location before they start shaking uncontrollably. Additionally, a dog can be trained to alert a **diabetic** owner when his blood sugar gets too high by detecting scents that the person is not even aware they are giving off. As an added bonus, assistance dogs are great companions who provide love and loyalty. Service dogs help their owners to feel a sense of independence and freedom, not to mention companionship. Service dogs come in several types.

Guide dogs, also known as Seeing Eye dogs, help visually **impaired** or blind people. Imagine for a moment not being able to see and imagine how much more challenging your life would be. You would probably want a helper. A dog goes to "Guide Dog School" to work on intensive training by professionals for about six months. After that, the dog gets customized training to learn the specific needs of its owner. Meanwhile, the owner gets trained to work with the dog. The dog and the human form an incredible bond. The guide dog devotes its life to guide its owner.

Hearing dogs, also known as hearing ear dogs, are similar to guide dogs, but they help those that are hearing impaired. Just as before, imagine what your life would be like if you did not have one of your five senses, and in this case—your hearing. You would need some assistance. Hearing dogs are trained for a minimum of three months to recognize sounds and means of alerting their owners. As with the guide dogs, the dog and the human form an amazing partnership in which the dog devotes its life to helping its owner.

**Mobility** dogs help those that are mobility-impaired. In other words, they help people that cannot move some or all of their limbs. They are excellent helpers for those that are partially or fully paralyzed. They are trained for at least one year to learn such skills as pushing wheelchairs, opening doors, bracing a handler who is trying to stand up, retrieving specific items such as medicine or items in the refrigerator, turning lights and appliances on and off, even calling 911. They can be trained to do what is helpful to their owners, such as helping with dressing and putting items in the washer and dryer.

Some dogs are therapy dogs. They help to lift the spirits of people who are depressed, lonely, sick, or stuck in the hospital. A dog's playful, loving, accepting nature makes him great to have around. Therapy dogs can assist those in need of **rehabilitation** to become healthy again. These dogs work in places such as nursing homes, hospitals, and rehabilitation centers.

Service dogs are allowed to go almost anywhere the general public goes. That includes any privately owned businesses that serve the public such as restaurants, hotels, retail stores, sports facilities, theaters, concerts, taxis, etc. The American Disabilities Act (ADA) requires that businesses allow people with disabilities to bring their service animals onto business premises in whatever areas customers are allowed.

Assistance dogs truly do provide help without asking for anything in return. A dog can be a real blessing to someone who needs help, support, and love.



**B. The following words are bold in the text. Match each term with its definition.**

diabetic \_\_\_\_\_

paralyzed \_\_\_\_\_

seizure \_\_\_\_\_

impaired \_\_\_\_\_

mobility \_\_\_\_\_

rehabilitation \_\_\_\_\_

a. unable to move all or part of the body

b. the ability to move

c. a return to good condition or health

d. sudden uncontrolled movement

e. in damaged condition

f. having diabetes, a disease that causes high blood sugar which can result in increased hunger and thirst, fatigue, and frequent infections.

**C. Fill in the blanks using the terms above. Use each term only once.**

1. To imagine what it is like to be hearing-\_\_\_\_\_, try wearing earplugs while watching television at a normal volume.
2. After the ski accident, Paul's leg became \_\_\_\_\_ and he can no longer move it.
3. A \_\_\_\_\_ must be very aware of his or her blood sugar levels.
4. A person having a \_\_\_\_\_ may start shaking and may even fall down without realizing it.
5. When she broke her leg, her \_\_\_\_\_ became very limited.
6. It can take months to achieve complete \_\_\_\_\_ after being in a car accident.

**D. Answer each question using complete, detailed sentences.**

1. How does a dog become an assistance dog?
2. Give three specific examples of ways a service dog can help a person who is paralyzed.
3. How long does it take a dog to be trained to become a hearing dog?
4. What does a therapy dog do?
5. If pets aren't allowed into most businesses, then why must these businesses allow service dogs?
6. Copy a sentence of text that supports your answer from number 5.