

Applying for a Seeing Eye® Dog

Background

- Individuals in training with Seeing Eye® dogs are referred to as *students*. Once students complete training and return home with their dogs, they are referred to as *graduates*.
- On average, **260 dogs** are matched with people who are blind and visually impaired each year. 30 percent of graduates are first time dog users
- There are approximately **1,700 current Seeing Eye dog users in the United States and Canada**
- **17,000+ partnerships between individuals and dogs have been made since 1929**
- Common causes of blindness in our student population: [RLF/ROP](#), [Retinitis Pigmentosa](#), Other illness, [Glaucoma](#), [Diabetes](#)

Application Process

- There are 12 to 13 classes with a maximum of 24 students each year. The waiting period from application approval until an individual starts class is about 60 to 90 days
- Applicants are assessed based on:
 - Amount of residual vision: not based on the definition of legal blindness, but whether vision interferes in the safety and effective working relationship with a dog.
 - Level of maturity: must be at least 16 years of age and be able to handle the responsibilities of caring for a dog
 - Independent travel skills: existing skills in [orientation and mobility](#)
 - Physical fitness: must be physically and mentally capable of handling the stress of training with a dog
 - Living conditions: a home environment conducive to use and care of a dog
 - Plan for use of the dog: must be active enough to warrant the need
 - Sufficient hearing ability: must have the ability to judge traffic noise

Training and Instruction

- Dogs are returned by their puppy raising families between 14 and 16 months of age. They must complete a **four-month training program with an instructor before they are matched with a student**
- Once an application is accepted and a dog appropriate for that student is identified, the student is scheduled for class. They train together at The Seeing Eye, under the supervision of a sighted instructor
- First time students participate in a **25-day training session**. For returning students the session lasts **18 days**

Returning home

- When an individual graduates with a Seeing Eye dog, he or she takes full ownership responsibilities for the dog

- **The Seeing Eye is the only guide dog school that grants full ownership rights to its graduates at the time of graduation**
- Seeing Eye graduates receive support for the lifetime of the partnership with their dog, whether they need advice about their dog, have issues with access or require an instructor to travel to their city to assist them with a training or environmental issue
- **The average working life for a Seeing Eye dog is eight years.** Many Seeing Eye dogs have lived and worked to the ages of 10 or 11. Retired Seeing Eye dogs may be kept as pets, given to a friend or relative as a pet, or returned to The Seeing Eye

Cost

- First time students pay \$150 tuition and returning students pay \$50, veterans of military service pay \$1. This fee, **unchanged since 1934**, includes the cost of the dog and its initial equipment; the student's instruction with the dog; room and board; round-trip transportation; and lifetime follow-up services. **No one has ever been denied a Seeing Eye dog for lack of funds**

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