

# THE LIFELONG COMMITMENT OF TRAINING AN ASSISTANCE DOG

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Training an assistance dog is an ongoing journey. After more than two years of intensive daily training, socialisation, and adherence to guidelines, your dog will still require regular check-ups, refresher sessions, and recertification every three years for Public Access Accreditation. Throughout this time, you will need to focus not only on obedience and public access training but also on maintaining your dog's physical and mental well-being. This includes learning how to communicate effectively with your dog and managing both the benefits and challenges that come with having an assistance dog.

Working with animals can be unpredictable. Even with dedication and meticulous training, setbacks can occur. For example, even in well established assistance dog training companies, the average pass rate for assistance dogs from a single litter is typically around 30%. Success in training is largely dependent on your commitment, the consistency of the training and rules, and the careful selection of a well-bred dog. However, some factors are beyond our control, such as negative experiences during formative years, injuries, or health issues. Additionally, some dogs may not possess the necessary traits for a working role, such as a lack of motivation or difficulty managing stress. Being aware and prepared for these possibilities is crucial.

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## Preparing for the Unexpected

Attached is a plan template with some questions to help you and others prepare for potential challenges during the assistance dog training process:

Consider these questions carefully, and consult with your healthcare professionals for support and guidance. Compile all of this information in a folder for easy reference and peace of mind. If you find any of this unmanageable, it may be worth reevaluating whether the assistance dog process is right for you.

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## Your Plan

YOUR DETAILS	DOG'S DETAILS
Name: _____	Name: _____
	Date of Birth: _____
	Breed: _____

**What is the purpose of your dog's training?**

Assistance  In-home therapy

**If your dog cannot fulfill their intended role or if your circumstances change, what will your next steps be?**

- Will your dog transition to being an in-home therapy dog without public access rights, or will they become a family pet? Keep in mind that a dog bred for work requires ample interaction, activity, and mental stimulation; a sedentary lifestyle will not suffice for their mental health.
- Will rehoming be necessary? If you need to train a new assistance dog and cannot manage a multi-dog household, this might be a necessary option. Similarly, if your dog displays aggression that you cannot manage, or if you cannot provide for their needs, rehoming may be the best choice.

Your plan:

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**Do you have the resources to maintain training after obtaining Access Accreditation?**

- Training sessions are typically held once a year, but they may be scheduled sooner if you or Assistive K9s identify a decline in standards or changes in tasking needs. Remember that the three-year retests are essential for retaining public access rights. Yes  No

**Who will take on the responsibility of training, walking, and caring for the dog if you are unable to do so?**

- This could be short or long term and may arise from mental health issues, injury or illness.

\_\_\_\_\_ Phone No: \_\_\_\_\_

**If your dog passes away, retires early, or gets injured, who will step in to provide care?**

- The bond between an assistance dog and their handler is exceptionally strong. The loss of such an animal can have a profound impact.

- Who will support you during this time?

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- Will you need to replace your assistance dog, or have you developed the capacity to manage independently?

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- If your dog is trained for medical alerts, what alternatives can you use for that support?

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- How will this situation affect your mental health, and what steps will you take to cope?

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- Who is in your support network? Identify your support workers, family, friends, or counselors.

<hr/>	Phone No:	<hr/>
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**What will happen to your dog if you need hospital care, long-term support, or if you pass away?**

- Living situations can change unexpectedly, particularly for those with disabilities.
- Is there someone who can provide an equally active and fulfilling lifestyle for your dog, even without access rights?
- Are they prepared to support your dog through the transition?

<hr/>	Phone No:	<hr/>
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**Have you prepared a handover pack?** Yes  No

- Sudden changes can happen, so it's essential to have a plan in place.

**Do you have a retirement plan for your dog?**

Yes  No

- Sudden changes can happen, so it's essential to have a plan in place.

**Are you informed about when to retire a dog, and of your own dog's breeds common health conditions?**

Yes  No

**Are you committed to obtaining veterinary approval for public access retests?**

Yes  No

**Are you aware that Assistive K9s can retire a dog if deemed unfit to work?**

Yes  No

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S I G N A T U R E

Name:

Sign: .....

Date:

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## Retirement Plan

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Assistance dogs may be retired at any age for a number of different reasons, its important to ensure you are aware of the likely outcomes for your personal situation as well as what can be commonly expected for your dog’s breed.

In general, an assistance dog should be considered for retirement when:

- **Age-Related Factors:** Generally, dogs start to show signs of aging around 8 to 10 years, but this can vary by breed.
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- **Physical Health Issues:** If your dog experiences chronic health problems, such as arthritis or other mobility issues, it may be time to retire them.
- **Behavioural Changes:** Significant changes in behavior, such as increased anxiety, reduced motivation, or inability to perform tasks, can indicate that retirement is necessary.
- **Declining Performance:** If the dog struggles to complete their trained tasks consistently or shows fatigue during activities, they may need to retire.
- **Veterinary Recommendations:** Always consult with a veterinarian for an assessment of your dog’s fitness for work.

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### Your Plan:

**What is the expected retirement age for your dogs breed? (3 years off life expectancy)**

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

**What are the common health risks associated with your dogs breed?**

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**What are your plans for retirement?**

- Will they transition into a pet role. or perhaps a therapy position in a care facility?

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## Care Handover Pack

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### Training History

Level of training:

Training Organisations / clubs:

\_\_\_\_\_ Date/s with \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Date/s with \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

Command & rules list attached? Yes  No

### Medical History

Any previous or ongoing medical conditions? Yes  No

Issued any medication? Yes  No

Details of conditions and medication administration:

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Veterinary details:

Practice name: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

### General Care

Diet and feeding schedule

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Flea / worm prevention Yes  No

Brand \_\_\_\_\_ Regularity \_\_\_\_\_

Grooming routine

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Day planning / regular activities

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Behaviours / anxieties to be aware of

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**Other contacts**

E.g. Breeder, groomer, walker, etc.

**Role:**

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Company/contact name:

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Telephone:

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Email:

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Address:

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Additional details:

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**Role:**

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Company/contact name:

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Telephone:

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Email:

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Address:

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Additional details:

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**Role:** \_\_\_\_\_

Company/contact name: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
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Additional details: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Role:** \_\_\_\_\_

Company/contact name: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Additional details: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Role:** \_\_\_\_\_

Company/contact name: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
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Additional details: \_\_\_\_\_  
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