



## *What is a Service Dog?*

First of all, a service dog is a dog. He's a living, breathing creature with feelings. Like you he has wants and needs. He has his own identity, temperament and personality. He's an individual. Second, he's not Super Dog. With training, he will become a helpmate, a partner. He will learn to do things for you that you never dreamed possible. He might even save your life. He'll have days when he can't seem to focus and he just wants to play. He'll drive you crazy with his barking or his chewing or his digging. And he'll love you unconditionally. He'll greet you like a long lost friend when you return from the store. He'll put his head in your lap for comfort when you're sad. These are the things that make up a dog.

But if you train a Deputy Dog you enter into a partnership to take your relationship with your dog one step further than the average pet owner. You're training him to be a service dog. You might want him to retrieve things for you and help you up, take off your shoes and socks, open the door and pull your wheelchair. You might want to take him to work or school, to the store and the restaurant.

What does a service dog look like? The important factors are that he looks good, that he looks healthy and happy. Your dog should be well groomed. This is especially important if he has a long coat, but every dog should look clean when he goes out in public. It's very important that he maintain a proper weight. It's very hard on a working dog to carry a lot of extra weight. It will shorten his life. Your dog should, of course, be under good control before he ever goes out into public places. He should be calm and confident.

What will a service dog do for you? There are so many things that a dog can be taught to do. If you have a need, there may be a way to teach your dog to help. You need to be realistic, though, and remember he is canine, not human. He will offer you companionship and love, and he'll listen to you without judging or blaming. He'll learn as much as you can teach him and be happy to help. As you move forward in your training, you'll think about the ways that he can assist you in your everyday life

What will you do for your service dog? You're forming a partnership here - you and your dog will become a team. That means that you have responsibilities to him. He's dependent on you for his basic needs—food, water, shelter. But there is much more to this partnership. You need to return his love and show it in ways he can understand. Talking to him, petting him, playing with him will bring as much joy to you as it does to him. You must also groom him regularly, take him to the vet regularly, and make sure he understands his place in your pack. If you are fair and consistent in your training, it will strengthen your relationship, and make you both happy. This is how you achieve teamwork.

So, what is a service dog? Look at the dog sitting beside you. That's a service dog.