



## FOSTERING A DEAF DOG



**LISTEN UP!**



Fostering a deaf or hearing impaired dog **isn't all that much different than caring for a hearing dog**. Outside of an obvious physical defect, **deaf dogs are just your normal, everyday dogs**. They simply communicate with their dogs using signs and body language instead of words.



### WHAT CAUSES DEAFNESS?

The most **common cause of deafness is genetics**, and there are several breeds that are more prone to hearing loss than others. A common trait within these breeds is coat color. Dogs with white or merle coats have a higher risk of being born with congenital deafness. **Common Causes of Canine Hearing Loss:**

- Ear wax buildup in the ear canal
- Untreated or chronic ear infections
- Injury
- Drug toxicity
- Tumors
- Congenital birth defects
- Gradual hearing loss due to aging



### DOES IT TAKE A SPECIAL TYPE OF PERSON TO FOSTER OR ADOPT A DEAF DOG?

**Experience with deafness isn't necessary to successfully foster** a deaf dog. Dogs experience the world through their nose first, then eyes, **then ears**. **They communicate through energy and body language**. With a deaf dog, it is critical that you be present, feel the energy, read signals, and **be in tune to yourself and the environment around you**, just as you are asking your dog to do. You will bond with your deaf foster dog in a way that he trusts you as his leader.



I LOVE MY DEAF DOG

## **3** IMPORTANT WAYS TO HELP YOUR DEAF DOG

**FIND NEW WAYS TO COMMUNICATE.** Just like any other dog, a deaf dog wants to communicate and bond with their family. A dog that's hard of hearing or deaf can't respond to verbal commands so switch to hand signals! Create different hand signals for each command, some people base the signals off of American Sign Language or create their own that's easy to remember.

**TIP:** Make sure to create a **unique hand signal to represent your dog's name**, so he knows when to respond.



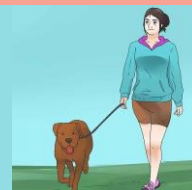
**SWITCH TO VISUAL CUES.** A deaf dog can be easily startled and can struggle with separation anxiety. Gently touch your deaf foster dog when you enter or leave a room so he's always aware of where you are. A startled dog could act aggressively, so make sure everyone in your family (especially children) know how to interact with your dog.

**TIP:** At night, you can turn lights on or off or **use a flashlight to signal your dog**.



**KEEP YOUR DOG SAFE OUTSIDE.** Deaf dogs won't hear busy traffic or be aware of other dangers around, which can make bathroom trips scary and dangerous. Deaf dogs should be kept on a leash at all times or in a fenced in yard for their own safety.

**TIP:** Attach a **bell to your dog's collar** for easy tracking if he escapes or becomes lost.



# FAQ

## How do I communicate with my deaf dog?

Deaf dogs can be taught to respond to hand signals instead of speech. Many people use signs adapted from American Sign Language to cue their deaf dogs, or they develop their own signs. The hand signals must be **clear, distinguishable from other signs, visible at a distance, and used consistently**. Learning to respond to signs or hand signals is very easy for dogs because they are very adept at interpreting body language and facial expressions. Try to use your voice when you are signing so that your body language and facial expressions **will be more natural**.



## How do I get my dog's attention?

- thump on the floor with your hand or foot to cause vibrations
- wave your hand around in front of the dog
- toss a lightweight toy into the dog's line of sight
- flick a flashlight or pen light on and off
- jiggle the leash to get your dog to look at you
- when it's time to come in from the backyard at night, flick the porch light on and off

Before you do something to get your deaf dog's attention, consider whether the action will frighten him. **If your dog is sleeping and you need to wake him, always touch him gently in the same place**; the shoulder area may work best. You can also try putting your hand in front of his nose and letting your smell wake him up. Every time you wake him, give him a treat and some love.



**How do other dogs react to a deaf dog?** One of the challenges of living with deaf dogs is **managing them around other dogs**, who often **misread the deaf dog as being socially inept** because he doesn't respond "normally" to canine vocal cues. To keep your deaf dog safe around other animals, **you'll need to establish a "heads-up" prompt to alert your dog when other dogs are approaching**. You should also watch each dog's body language for signs of discomfort, fear or aggression. On the flip side, dogs with great social skills **can help deaf dogs learn**.

## OTHER TIPS



- ❑ Always keep your dog on a leash when you're out walking. It's a good idea to write **"I am deaf" on the dog's collar, harness or bandana** to alert people when they are approaching him.
- ❑ If your dog gets anxious when she doesn't know where you are, **get her attention when you're about to leave the room and allow her to watch you leave**. She may or may not decide to join you, but at least she'll know where you went.
- ❑ Always approach a deaf dog **in a gentle way to avoid startling her**.
- ❑ A "watch me" signal or physical cue, such as a light tap on the shoulder, is a **great way to teach the dog to focus on you**. Also, treat your dog frequently and at random times to encourage and reinforce her desire to always be checking in with you.

PLEASE  
NOTE...

## Links to Great Resources for More Info on Deaf Dogs

<https://www.rover.com/blog/deaf-dogs-101/>

<https://deafdogsrock.com/what-every-new-deaf-dog-family-needs-to-know>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8b3uuLx4Ktg>

<https://www.purina.co.uk/dogs/health-and-nutrition/dogs-with-special-needs/coping-with-deafness>