

## **Assistance Dogs**

### **Examples of alert and task behaviours**

**Alert behaviours** - Alert behaviours are crucial for disabled people who may need immediate warning; such a reminder to take medication, or signal environmental dangers. Assistance dogs are trained to recognise specific cues and respond accordingly, ensuring the safety and well-being of their handlers.

Assistance dogs can detect a range of conditions, including changes in blood sugar levels or anticipate seizures by smelling subtle chemical changes in their handler's breath or sweat. Assistance dogs may alert their handler by nudging, licking, barking, pawing at them, or even circling and staying close to them, providing the time for their handler to get in a safe position or take medication.

They can also be trained to recognise the smell of smoke or the sound of a fire alarm, and will alert their handler and may lead them to safety or retrieve help. Assistance dogs can also alert to important sounds like doorbells, alarms, or the approach of vehicles.

Assistance dogs might also be trained to detect rising stress levels and initiate calming behaviours or ensure their handler has space in groups and crowds. They might lean against their handler to provide pressure therapy, perform blocking behaviours by circling their handler to ensure space, or guide them to a quiet space. Some assistance dogs are trained to wake their handler during a nightmare by nudging, resting their head or lying on them.

**Task Behaviours** - This is behaviour that involves an assistance dog carrying out a specific action to assist their partner. These tasks are tailored to the handler's unique needs, ensuring their independence.

Assistance dogs trained to support mobility can fetch items like phones, keys or medications, and some are even trained to pick up bank cards and assist handlers with taking off gloves or jackets by pulling on the clothing. They can also open doors by pulling on handles or pushing buttons. To support every day and emergency tasks, assistance dogs can be trained to press emergency buttons and even turn lights on/off.

Guide Dogs are trained to navigate obstacles, stop at curbs, and help their handler safely cross streets, ensuring they reach their destination safely. Some assistance dogs are trained to memorise common routes, such as from home to work, and guide their handler along these paths.

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