



**Additional Info**

# PUPPY RAISING

**Apply through our website [Dogswithwings.ca](https://dogswithwings.ca) or email [Volunteer@dogswithwings](mailto:Volunteer@dogswithwings) for more information.**



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## What is Puppy Raising?

**Puppy raising is the first step in a DWW dog's journey to becoming an assistance dog.**

Puppy raisers welcome a DWW puppy into their home and support their development through:

- Early socialization
- Foundational training
- Exposure to everyday environments

Puppies typically join raisers at around 8 weeks of age and may remain in the Puppy Program until approximately 16–18 months, before moving into Advanced Training. Throughout this journey, raisers play a critical role in helping each puppy build the skills, confidence, and resilience needed for their future role.

**You are not expected to have all the answers. Our training team provides ongoing guidance and support every step of the way.**

**Be apart of their journey so they can transform from a puppy**



**To a life-changing assistance dog, helping people who need them most.**



**Pictured is DWW Pumbaa, who currently works at the Stollery Children's Hospital, helping thousands of children, families, and staff who need him.**

## What to Expect: The Reality of Puppy Raising

Raising a future assistance dog is an incredibly meaningful experience, but it's important to understand what the day-to-day reality looks like.

These are normal Labrador Retriever puppies, not fully trained service dogs.

### They will:

- Chew things they shouldn't
- Have accidents in the house
- Bark, get distracted, and make mistakes
- Have challenging days where progress feels slow

This is all a normal and expected part of their development.

At the same time, you are not doing this alone.

### Dogs with Wings provides:

- Ongoing support from professional trainers
- Weekly classes and structured training plans
- Access to resources, guidance, and 1:1 support when needed
- Expenses related to food, vet care, and supplies needed to puppy raise



With the right support, most raisers find that while it can be challenging, it is absolutely manageable, and so rewarding.

There may be moments where you feel frustrated, overwhelmed, or question why you signed up. That's completely normal. Because of this, one of the most important things to consider before becoming a puppy raiser is:

### What is your “why”?

Whether it's giving back to the community, supporting individuals who rely on assistance dogs, or being part of something bigger, having a strong reason to stay committed will help carry you through the more challenging moments.

## Time Commitment & Lifestyle

Puppy raising is a meaningful and rewarding experience, but it does require a consistent time commitment.

### Length of Commitment

- Traditional puppy raising typically spans from approximately 8 weeks of age to 16–18 months
- Flexible options are available, including split raising and short-term placements (see below)

### Weekly Commitment

- Attendance at a weekly puppy class (in-person or virtual)
- Ongoing communication with your trainers

### Daily Commitment

- Regular training woven into everyday life (meals, walks, routines)
- Supervision and management, especially in the early months
- Toilet breaks, feeding, enrichment, and exercise

Puppy raising is not about setting aside large blocks of time for training. Instead, it's about integrating training into your daily routine.

### That said, young puppies do require:

- More frequent supervision
- More structured routines
- More time at home in the early weeks

As the puppy grows, independence and flexibility increase.

### Lifestyle Considerations

### Puppy raising can work well for many lifestyles, but it's important to consider:

- Your work schedule and flexibility
- Your ability to attend classes regularly
- Your willingness to bring the puppy into daily activities (errands, outings, etc.)
- Your support system (family, roommates, etc.)



## Flexible Puppy Raising Options

We understand that committing to the full puppy raising journey is not feasible for everyone. To make volunteering more accessible, we offer flexible options:

### Split Raising

One volunteer raises the puppy from approximately 8 weeks to 8–10 months  
A second volunteer raises the puppy from 8–10 months to 16–18 months  
This allows volunteers to choose the stage that best fits their lifestyle.

### Short-Term (Holding Tank) Homes

Care for a puppy for a shorter period (typically 1–2 months)  
Often used for puppies awaiting transfer to another organization

**These roles are incredibly valuable and help support the broader assistance dog community.**



## Why It Matters

Every puppy raised through this program has the potential to change someone's life.

Whether a dog becomes an assistance dog or is released as a pet, the foundation you provide shapes their future.

Puppy raising is not always easy, but it is deeply meaningful. With the right support, it becomes an experience that is both manageable and incredibly rewarding.

If you're interested in learning more or exploring whether this opportunity is the right fit for you, we would love to connect.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **Can I work full-time?**

Yes, many of our puppy raisers work full-time. However, you must have a plan in place for the puppy during the day. This could include:

Bringing the puppy to work with you

### **Working from home**

Having a family member or household member actively involved in the puppy's care

**Our DWW dogs cannot be left alone for a full workday, so a consistent and appropriate plan is essential.**

### **What happens if I go on vacation?**

Dogs with Wings has a network of approved boarding homes who can care for the puppy while you are away. We ask that boarding requests are submitted in advance so we can find the best fit for them while you are away.

### **Can I have other pets in the home?**

Yes. We complete dog assessments and allow up to two other dogs in the home. We also love when puppies are raised in homes with a variety of animals, including cats and other small pets. These experiences can be very beneficial for their development.

### **What if I get attached and don't want to give the puppy back?**

This is a very common and very normal feeling. These puppies become a big part of your life.

However, the goal of puppy raising is to prepare the dog for their future role as an assistance dog. Having a strong "why" and staying connected to the impact you are making can help during this transition.

You are never alone in this process, and our team is here to support you through it. What if the puppy doesn't make it into the program?

Not all dogs will continue on to become assistance dogs. Decisions are made based on each dog's individual health, behaviour, and temperament.

In some cases, the puppy raising home may be offered the opportunity to adopt the dog if it is determined to be the right fit. If not, Dogs with Wings follows a thorough process to ensure the dog is placed in the best possible home.

## Application Process

1. **Apply through our website:** [Dogswithwings.ca](https://dogswithwings.ca) - Volunteer - How to Volunteer - Puppy Raising - Apply Now
2. **Wait for an email or phone call from our team**
3. **Successfully go through the volunteer onboarding process**
4. **Wait for communications from our team letting you know you have been successfully onboarded**
5. **Once you have been onboarded, we will let you know when we have a good fit for your situation, timeline, and availability for a placement of a puppy.**



**We look forward to hearing from you!**



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