

**Chapter 23: Working in Tandem with a Second Guide Dog Team (Doubles)**

During class training there will be times when one team is working in tandem with another team. This is often referred to as working in doubles. In this chapter, we will discuss proper etiquette and explore the benefits of working in doubles.

There are several reasons why an instructor may have you work in tandem with another team and many benefits as well. Working in doubles allows one instructor to work with two teams at a time, which translates to longer trips. Working in doubles also allows students to work more independently, giving feedback to each other and working through situations together without input from an instructor. Practicing in doubles is especially beneficial for any team that will be working with other guide dog teams at home, such as spouses, friends, or colleagues.

It is important to understand that working in doubles will occur sporadically during class, at the discretion of instructors. Teams will work both alone and with other classmates. There may be individual teams that perform better while working alone and therefore may not work in a double. If you feel you would benefit from working in doubles, be sure to communicate that to your instructor.

There are a few simple rules of etiquette that will help the tandem experience to work smoothly. By following these guidelines, students can work independently of instructors in many cases.

**Teams should change leads at the down curbs.** This means that the team which arrives at the down curb second will lead in the next crossing and the subsequent block. Teams should communicate to each other when they have arrived at the down curb and once out of the street on the other side.

**Judge crossings independently.** Both handlers should listen to traffic patterns to determine when to cross. Communicate with each other to agree to cross during the same light cycle. After the first team enters the street, the second team should count two full seconds before starting to cross. This will space the teams out in the crossing and help ensure that each dog can work accurately.

If crossing an uncontrolled intersection or if the second team is not comfortable with entering the street, they can wait until they can determine that it is a safe time to cross, or wait until the next cycle and alert their partner that they are doing so.

**Communicate with your partner.** The teams should communicate every so often on the sidewalk by calling out to the other teammate. Teams should be consistent and respectful of not passing the other team, giving equal time in the lead and rear. If one team has stopped to re-work an error or is working through a distraction, the other team member should stop and wait for them to resume working.

**\*If you hear your instructor shout “STOP”, assume that it was directed at you. STOP IMMEDIATELY and wait for further instruction or direction. Keep in mind that the instructor will be following behind the second team and will likely be quite a bit farther back than when working with teams individually. Always pay close attention and listen for instructions shouted from behind.**

Students who utilize tandem travel in their home area should also adhere to these rules whenever possible. Doing so will help ensure that each dog’s work remains consistent and safe. Dogs generally like to follow each other. By regularly alternating which dog is in the lead, they are much less likely to rely on each other by following.

*Updated September 2020*