

# Dogs



Pre-reading activity: Comprehension strategy - Self Questioning

1 Write three questions that you would like this fact piece on dogs to answer.

Think, Pair, Share: Comprehension strategy - Self Questioning

2 Compare your questions with your partner and try to predict the answers.

During reading: Comprehension strategy - Determining importance

3 Highlight five words in the text that may answer some of your questions.



The dog is one of the most **popular** pets in the world (of course, cat lovers will argue that cats are more popular!). Dogs have long played an important role in the lives of humans. They are often called 'Man's Best Friend'. This is because dogs help people out in so many ways.

There are about 138 **officially recognised** dog breeds (types).

Dogs vary in size from the **chihuahua**, which is about 25 centimetres, tall to the Irish wolfhound, which is over 2 metres tall standing on its hind legs.



Some breeds of dog are **considered** to make better pets, while other breeds are considered to be better as working dogs. Jobs that dogs perform include hunting, farm work, police work, rescue work and being the 'seeing-eyes' for the blind. Dogs are **intelligent** and very willing to be trained. They make great **companions** as well as work animals.

Dogs have an excellent sense of smell. This means dogs are very good at tracking and can sniff out **illegal** items like drugs or bombs at ports and airports. A dog's sense of smell is about 50 times better than a human's.

Dogs have an excellent field of **vision** and can see almost in a circle. Their hearing is also very **keen** (sharp). They can hear higher sounds than humans can. Their great hearing makes them good guard dogs.



## The Garda Dog Unit

The Garda Dog Unit was set up in 1960. Over the years, the unit has grown and is now a **vital** part of policing in Ireland. The main Dog Support Unit is based at Kilmainham Garda Station in Dublin.

The Garda dogs assist with searches for **suspects** of crimes and for **evidence** (clues) which may have been **discarded** (thrown away). Most of the

Garda dogs are **detector** dogs. These dogs are trained to **detect** (find) illegal drugs. Dogs can do what no human or machine can because of their keen sense of smell.

It takes at least eight weeks to train a dog to search for drugs and explosives. After the initial training is completed, the dog and its handler start work, although training is continued on a **regular basis**. The dogs live in their handler's home, so they build a **relationship** with each other. The dogs understand the difference between being at work and being off **duty**.



A police dog in a search



A guide dog

## Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind

Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind is a well-known **charity** in Ireland. It aims to help people with sight loss to lead better lives. Irish Guide Dogs breed their own dogs to ensure that the puppies have the most suitable **temperament** (nature) and traits (manners). At eight weeks old, each puppy is placed with a **volunteer** puppy raiser.

The puppy raiser house trains and does **basic obedience** (doing what it is told) exercises with the puppy. After 14 months, the puppy moves to the Irish Guide Dogs Training Centre where it starts early training. This **phase** lasts for five months with a trained instructor. The dog is taken on several walks each day. It is taught how to cross roads, stop at kerbs and how to avoid **obstacles** (barriers) that would block its owner. If the dog is **considered** suitable, it will **progress** (go on) to another three months of **advanced** training.

At 22 months, the dog is a fully trained guide dog. It is then matched with an owner. The new partners **attend** classes together at the Irish Guide Dogs Training Centre in Cork. Once the dog and its owner go back to their own home, an instructor will visit **regularly** to make sure they are working well together. A guide dog usually retires around the age of 10.



A guide dog in training

## Post-reading activity: Comprehension strategy – Self Questioning

- (a) Are there any questions about dogs that have not been answered for you by this fact piece?