



A Vibrating Vest Could Help Dogs Follow Commands

What are support dogs?

- Support dogs are dogs which have been trained to help people.
- Support dogs can help people with a visual impairment, a disability or who are autistic.

Tai the dog's new vest is pretty special! The newly designed technology allows him to follow commands just by feeling gentle vibrations.

Like many dogs, Tai is very good at following commands. He can lie down, spin and come back to his human **handler**.

However, unlike many dogs, Tai can do this all without his owners even having to speak!

Instead, he wears a special vest. This has been designed to vibrate gently when the handler presses a button on a remote control.

The engineer tested it on himself to make sure the vibrations didn't cause Tai any discomfort. The buzzing sensation feels similar to the vibrations a mobile phone might make.

Tai can recognise what each vibration means and knows what to do. The vest has been developed at Ben-Gurion University in Israel. The six-year-old Labrador and German shepherd **crossbreed** wasn't always this responsive! He trained as a guide dog but was too easily distracted. However, with this vest, he has been quickly trained to perform tasks.

The engineers hope that this vest will help dogs who work in places where they are far away from their handlers or where it's hard to hear instructions. Dogs that work in noisy places can wear earmuffs, which make it harder for them to follow commands.

The vest will also help guide dogs that are older or hard of hearing. People who have



Illustration: Tai the dog wearing his vest.

difficulties speaking could also use the vest to help command their guide or **support dogs**.

Dogs have been helping humans for at least 15,000 years but some people think 'man's best friend' has been helping us for much longer.

Today, support dogs offer help to many people who might need assistance, such as people with a **visual impairment** or a disability.

So far, Tai is the only dog to trial this new technology. If it works with other dogs, this vest might be able to help more people get the help which only a loyal pup can give!

Glossary

handler	A person who trains a dog.
crossbreed	An animal whose parents are two separate breeds.
support dogs	Dogs that have been trained to help people.
visual impairment	Being partly or fully unable to see.

Questions

1. Find a phrase in the opening paragraph which tells you that the vest has just been created.

2. 'So far, Tai is the only dog to trial this new technology.'

Tick the word which is closest in meaning to 'trial' in this sentence.

- beginning
- court
- difficulty
- test

3. Find two potential areas where this vest might be useful.

1. _____

2. _____

4. Put a tick in the table to show whether each statement is a fact or an opinion.

	Fact	Opinion
Tai's new vest is pretty special.		
The vest vibrates to give the dog a command.		
Tai trained as a guide dog.		
This is a great opportunity for many people.		

5. Compare how well Tai followed instructions before and after being trained with this new vest.

6. Summarise this news story in 20 words or fewer.

7. What do you think the engineers who made the vest will do next? Explain your answer.

Answers

1. Find a phrase in the opening paragraph which tells you that the vest has just been created.
newly designed

2. 'So far, Tai is the only dog to trial this new technology.'
Tick the word which is closest in meaning to 'trial' in this sentence.

- beginning
 court
 difficulty
 test

3. Find two potential areas where this vest might be useful.
Accept any two answers from the following: they could help dogs who work in places where it's hard to hear; they could help dogs who are hard of hearing; they could help people who have difficulties speaking.

4. Put a tick in the table to show whether each statement is a fact or an opinion.

	Fact	Opinion
Tai's new vest is pretty special.		✓
The vest vibrates to give the dog a command.	✓	
Tai trained as a guide dog.	✓	
This is a great opportunity for many people.		✓

5. Compare how well Tai followed instructions before and after being trained with this new vest.

Before he was trained with the vest, Tai was easily distracted and didn't follow instructions well. Now, he is very good at following commands.

6. Summarise this news story in 20 words or fewer.

Accept any reasonable summary which is 20 words or fewer, e.g. A new dog's vest has been designed which vibrates. This allows the dog to follow instructions without the owner speaking.

7. What do you think the engineers who made the vest will do next? Explain your answer.
Accept any reasonable answer which refers to the news story, e.g. I think they will test the vest with different dogs as they have only trialled it with Tai the dog so far.