



# Guide Dogs for the Blind

## WHEN YOU MEET A PERSON WHO IS BLIND

- Treat a person who is blind the same as you would anyone else. They do the same things as you do, but may use different techniques.
- Identify yourself and address the person by name.
- Speak in a normal tone of voice and talk directly to a person who is blind, not their companion.
- Give useful directions instead of vague descriptions like “over there.”
- Don’t worry about using common, everyday words and phrases like “look,” “see,” or “watching TV.”
- If a person looks as though they may need assistance, ask. They will tell you if they do.
- Pulling or steering a person who is blind is awkward and confusing. Avoid grabbing their arm, and please don’t touch or steer a guide dog’s harness.
- Ask, “Would you like me to guide you?” Offering your elbow is an effective way to lead someone who is blind.
- In a restaurant, give clear directions to available seats. Offer to read the menu aloud and/or describe what is on their plate.
- Leave doors all the way open or all the way closed—half-open doors or cupboards are dangerous. Don’t rearrange furniture or personal belongings without letting the person know.
- Be sensitive when questioning someone about their blindness; boundaries should be respected.

## WHEN YOU MEET A WORKING GUIDE DOG TEAM

- Always ask permission before petting someone’s guide dog.
- A guide dog should never be offered food or other distracting treats.
- Guide dogs are responsible for helping their handlers safely cross a street. Calling out to a guide dog or intentionally obstructing its path can be dangerous. Please don’t honk your horn to signal when it is safe to cross. Be especially careful of pedestrians in crosswalks when turning right on red.
- When guide dogs are not in harness, they are treated in much the same way as pets. However, they are only allowed to play with specific toys. Please don’t offer them toys without first asking their handler’s permission.
- In some situations, working with a guide dog may not be appropriate. Instead, the handler may prefer to take your arm and have you guide them instead.
- You may encounter a guide dog wearing a head collar, which is a humane training tool that helps a dog become calm and focused when distracted. The head collar is not a muzzle and is designed to permit the dog to fully open its mouth and can even be worn when the dog is eating, drinking, or playing.
- Access laws in the U.S. and Canada, including the Americans with Disabilities Act, permit guide dogs to accompany their handlers anywhere the general public is allowed, including taxis and buses, restaurants, theaters, stores, schools, hotels, apartment and office buildings.

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