



Guide dog is working...

What does it mean?

The working guide dog is constantly concentrating on keeping their owner safe by:

- Identifying obstacles
- Developing safe routes
- Monitoring their owner for commands (verbal, hand signals or through harness)
- Staying alert to activity in the surroundings
- Figuring out what can be ignored
- Determining potential hazards to their owner

Guide dogs are specially trained to:

- Walk in a straight line in the middle of the pavement unless avoiding obstacles
- Stop at curbs or edge of sidewalks and wait for a command
- Judge height and width to prevent their owner from bumping their head or shoulders
- Assists with traffic

Do not pet

a guide dog while they are in harness or training vest.

Look for my paw for KEY tips!



HARNESSING INDEPENDENCE THROUGH TEAMWORK

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Our Mission

The OccuPaws Guide Dog Association is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, charitable organization based out of Madison, WI and is an International Guide Dog Federation accredited school. Our mission is to place fully trained guide dogs with Wisconsin's (and surrounding states) visually impaired residents at no charge, through an in-home training program.

YOUR GIFT lets us give dogs at no charge!



Your support matters. We exist entirely on public donations, fundraisers and grants with no government support. 93% of all donations go directly to program expenses. All your donations are tax deductible.

Are you thinking about getting a guide dog? Contact us for an application and to learn more.



ASSISTING Guide Dog Users



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The basics:

When working with a guide dog team, please observe the following general rules:

- Do provide notice of any upcoming obstacle. Such as staircase's, construction, and overhead clearance like a tree branch.
- Avoid parking next to parking islands. These are seen by guide dogs as an obstacle and are difficult to navigate.
- Watch the guide team for possible misguided cues.
- While walking with the guide team, please stay at their right shoulder. Guide dogs take direction from right hand signals. When an assistant stands on the left, it can distract the guide dog who then tries to accommodate more space for both the owner and assistant.
- While assisting try to maintain a safe environment.



More questions? Contact us!

608.772.3787 or info@occupaws.org

Techniques for successful direction while in motion:

Some techniques depend on the comfort level of both the guide dog team and the assistant.

Verbal use of left and right.

- To guide their dog, guide dog owners must use the following verbal commands left, right and forward.
- When a guide team assistant uses these same commands, the guide dog can sometimes become confused which commands to obey.
- As an alternative use time as found on a clock. For example: 3 is right, 12 is forward, 9 is left, and so forth.
- This can also be used when describing the locations of food on a plate.

Tap directions on the guide dog owner's back.

- Tap the left shoulder for left, the right shoulder for right.
- Tap twice if in a store when you need to turn right at the second aisle.
- To tell the owner about stairs, use a line in the middle of the back. Move the finger up for staircase up and down for staircase down.

Guide Dog Access Law

There are fines and ordinances that can be enforced if a person interferes with a working guide dog. It's a Class A or B misdemeanor for interference and a Class 1 Felony for injury or death of a guide dog. Plus fines, expenses, compensation, replacement, etc. can all be court ordered.



Dos & don'ts to assisting guide dog owners:

- Do talk directly to the guide dog owner.
- Do talk and act normally. Most blind people have excellent hearing.
- Don't refer to the guide dog by name, use "your dog."
- Don't offer or tease a guide dog with food.
- Don't give commands or whistle at the guide dog.
- Don't distract the dog.

What can you do to avoid distracting the guide team:

- Discuss with the guide dog owner in advance how to work together with directional cues.
- Consider which techniques will be used by the assistant to give the guide dog owner directions.
- Two minutes of planned discussion before shopping in a busy store can greatly improve the experience for everyone.



Know the
LAW!

