

**Guide Dog Etiquette for Apartment Complexes**

Guide dogs play a critical role in the lives of individuals who are blind or visually impaired. They assist in obstacle avoidance, route memorization, and target identification. Each guide dog completes an intensive training course over a 2-year period in which they are taught obedience, house manners, proper socialization, and in-harness working commands. As such, they are calm, quiet, and non-aggressive in public spaces as they focus purely on their handler and tasks. Guide dog handlers are fully responsible for the direction, maintenance, and behavior of their dogs and have undergone skills development training of their own. Both guide dog and handler experience increased independence and confidence through the advantages of teamwork.

Below, we have outlined a few considerations for pet owners encountering guide dog teams and ensuring a safe environment for all.

# Do not attempt to engage with or distract a working guide dog.

Guide dogs must focus on their handler’s directional cues while remaining safe and accurate in avoiding obstacles and targeting destinations, among other tasks. Please do not pet, speak to, feed, or give eye contact to a working guide dog.

# Make handlers aware of your presence.

Individuals who are blind or visually impaired may not be able to see you. Identify yourself by voice and notify them if you have a dog with you to better ensure an opportunity to create a positive interaction, rather than catching the handler by surprise or embarrassment.

# Always keep your dog on-leash.

Clip your leash to your dog’s collar or harness before opening your apartment door to prevent your dog from running down the hallway and interfering with a guide dog team. Your dog should also be on-leash while relieving itself in accordance with local laws and safety regulations. Avoid retractable leashes, as they do not allow you to have maximum control over your dog.

# Keep your pet under control.

Aside from keeping your pet dog on leash, you should also practice obedience and recall. If your dog is reacting to the presence of a guide dog, ask them to sit and maintain a safe distance from the other dog. Do not congregate in confined spaces. Notify the handler of where you and your dog are in relation to them.

# Be aware of your dog’s temperament when confronted with stimulating interactions.

It is natural for a pet dog to become excited when encountering another dog. However, a guide dog handler cannot easily tell if your pet is simply rambunctious or aggressive as they cannot see body language. Please avoid working guide dog teams if you know your dog will not act favorably or increase socialization opportunities with other pet dogs to minimize their reactivity.

# Report instances of Aggression.

If you witness any aggressive dog behavior in your building, report it to the concierge, leasing office, or other appropriate party. Dog attacks have potentially fatal physical and emotional consequences for working guide dog teams. Immediate action should be taken to remove threats and promote a safe, accessible, and inclusive community for all.