

Guide Dogs & Their Owners

A guide dog is a highly trained dog that acts as a mobility aid to blind and visually impaired people. It provides not only mobility, but gives freedom and independence as well as being a faithful and loving companion.

With the increased mobility and independence gained through the use of a guide dog, the confidence of the blind or visually impaired person soars.

Well trained guide dogs are intelligent, alert, and always willing to serve. Amongst other things a guide dog is taught to:

- Walk in a straight line in the centre of the pavement unless there is an obstacle.
- Not to turn corners unless told to do so.
- To stop at curbs and wait for the command to cross the road, or to turn left or right;
- Amazingly they are taught to judge height and width so that its owner does not bump their head or shoulder
- How to deal with traffic.

Matching the correct dog with the correct owner takes skill and experience. The owner's length of stride, height and lifestyle all contribute to the type of guide dog they will be matched with. Dog and owner will spend up to four weeks of intensive training together until they qualify together.

Some Do's & Don'ts When Meeting A Guide Dog

- Don't give the dog commands. Only its handler can do so.
- Don't walk on the dog's left side as it may become distracted or confused.
- Do walk on the owner's right side but several paces behind him.
- Don't attempt to grab or steer the person while the dog is guiding him or her
- Do ask if the owner needs your assistance and, if so, offer your left arm.
- Don't give the dog table scraps. Do respect the handler's need to give the dog a balanced diet and to maintain its good habits.
- Don't allow children to tease or abuse the dog.
- Do allow it to rest undisturbed.
- Don't allow your pets to challenge or intimidate a guide dog.