



GuidanceResources®

How to Act Around Service Animals

When a service dog is in its harness, wearing other identification or simply out with its handler, it is “on duty” and should be treated as such. Use the following tips to ensure that you do not disrupt a service dog while it is working:

- **Speak to the handler, not to the dog.** Do not speak to the dog or direct any other sounds, such as whistling, to the dog. This can distract the dog from performing its duties.
- **Do not pet the dog.** A service dog is not a pet and should not be touched without the handler’s permission. If the handler denies permission, do not take it personally.
- **Do not feed the dog.** Many service dogs are on special diets and adhere to strict feeding schedules. Feeding the dog is not only distracting, it can be detrimental to its health. Handlers cannot afford to have their assistants fall ill.
- **Do not ask the handler about his or her disability.** The handler does not have an obligation to educate you about his or her condition or about the service dog, and may not have the time or desire to enter into a conversation.
- **Do not touch the handler.** The dog could interpret this as a threatening gesture, leading it to display protective behaviors.
- **Educate your children.** Many children want to pet every dog that they see. Talk to your children about service dogs and explain that they are working to help the handler. Lead by example by showing respect for the handler and the dog.



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