

# EVERYTHING ABOUT GUIDE DOGS (AND THEIR HUMAN FRIENDS)



Rules, advice and suggestions, in order to respect these animals and people too, - above all those PEOPLE who are affected with disability) - in order to avoid any report or sanction, in order to be informed and in order to improve the life quality of everybody Guide dogs and their human friends too

by Blindsight Project - ONLUS for people affected with sensorial disabilities

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**The law says guide dogs are allowed everywhere: respect their work!**

A blindsight Project campaign - [www.blindsight.eu](http://www.blindsight.eu)

## **PREFACE**

The first thing, which has not to be forgotten, is that a guide dog must not be divided from its visually impaired companion, since this dog is considered like an aid. Guide dogs are protected by the law 37/1974, which has been completed by law 60/2006, published the 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2006 in the Official Journal [book n 52]. This law says that guide dogs can go everywhere with their visually impaired companion, without any restriction, they are allowed in places where family dogs usually are not, e.g.: taxis, public transportation, ambulances, shops, hospitals, churches, hotels, schools, etc... Whoever breaks this law has to pay a fine, which ranks from 500 to 2500 Euros. Moreover, it might be possible that the visually impaired person makes a statement for discrimination, see law 67/2006, published the 6<sup>th</sup> March 2006 in the Official Journal (book 54)

This is the first thing that has to be learned, but we know, that it might be possible to incur in some mistakes and misunderstandings in coming across a guide dog with its visually impaired companion. Mistakes that are not meant to be, but that can put this couple and the sighted person in danger

So, Blindsight Project Onlus for sensorial disabled people - which has chiefly been involved in the circulation of the guide dogs. Campaign, decided to write this little handbook. It contains some information, rules and advice, which are useful for the dog and for the blind or partially sighted person, who can go around freely, as the law says. These rules are also useful for sighted people too, in order to avoid fines, sorry figures, reports and - above all - to avoid discrimination and trouble to the other people.

Actually, the things written in this document are not well known as they should be, since every day a visually impaired person and his or her guide dog are not allowed to go into a shop or to travel by public transportation because of the dog, who is his or her eyes indeed. However, it is also true, that the number of the reports has increased in these last

years. Therefore, we hope that you will help us in spreading out this document in order to inform owners and managers of shops, restaurants, hotels etc. About the dangerous consequences if they don't know or if they break the law, in order to learn to know and respect the visually impaired people and in order to facilitate the precious and hard work of our "four-footed" guides.

Thank you!

*Blindsight Project for Sensory disabled people*

## **RULES, ADVICE, SUGGESTION AND INFORMATION**

### **1. PLAY, CURIOSITY, CONTACT, PATS**

There is no doubt: guide dogs who are leading blind or partially sighted people are doing a job and they learned that they have not to be absent minded while they are working. A they also know, they are responsible for their own life and of the life of their human companion. A guide dog is not "the only working dog", but it is perhaps the most important among all of them; it is more important than a police dog and more important than dogs belonging to the dog units of search and rescue teams,

drug units, Civil protection units etc., since it is a dog for a person with a disability and it is also considered like an aid. This is the reason why, a guide dog must not be disturbed when it is working, above all when it is ready to cross the street or to go up or down a stairwell. It is like someone “switches off” your eyes, when you are ready to do the same things. Therefore, playing with a guide dog is like to play with someone else’s eyes.

Anyway, your help can be very precious for a visually impaired person with his or her guide dog> for example, if you see them at the end of the pavement, you can help them in crossing the street. So, do not hesitate and ask the blind person if they need some help, give your arm to him/her and lead them to their destination. It is important to talk to the blind person with a clear voice, before touching him or her, because the dog could misunderstand your intention and react in a very bad way. Do not mind if the blind person refuses to take your arm: there are guide dogs who understand you want to help, but they do not like anybody approaches to their human companion. Do not also mind if the blind person refuses to be helped: everybody is free, even disabled or not. The most important thing is to offer your help in a good way and to follow the suggestions we have given you before. (Speaking before touching the visually impaired person and helping him or her, after he or she gave you their permission).

Seeing a guide dog at work usually warmth your hearts and you may become curious, because of the guiding harness that it is wearing: many people want to go near the dog and touch it. If you really do not resist, we advise you to ask the blind person if you may say “hello” to the dog, in order to avoid any bad reaction, since guide dogs usually do not like being touched while they are working; and to avoid any bad reaction of the blind person, since she or he cannot see your face and understand your good intentions.

Pay attention: guide dogs can be touched if they are in “pause mode” for example: the dog is always wearing the guiding harness, but is laying quietly on the ground, while the human companion is waiting for the bus or the tube, or is in a shop, ect...

## **2. DISCRETION AND REPROACHES**

We will never stop saying: the work of guide dogs for visually impaired people (blind or partially sighted people) is a very important job, since their own lives and the lives of their human companions, depend only on their attention and concentration.

That’s why,, the human companion has to correct the dog, if it makes very dangerous mistakes. So please, do not interfere and do not humiliate the blind person, saying to him or her that she or he is mistreating the dog. Think about that: how many times happen to us, that our boss is angry, because we made a terrible mistake at the job?

You have also to consider that guide dogs are not only the mean of independence for visually impaired people and not only the other main characters of “a very special relationship”: A guide dog is also a big sacrifice, since the blind person has to take care of it, maintain and cure it. You have to remember that a guide dog “is” the eyes of the blind person, and nobody would injure his or her own eyes. Every strict reaction of the blind person towards the guide dog has only the purpose to teach something to the dog: it is a training lesson, a training that perhaps could save the life of both of them in the future.

The schools for guide dogs would never give one of their precious guides to anybody who does not love and respect them. Moreover, Love and respect are the main rules

of these schools: you can apply for a dog to them thousand times, but if you do not respect these main rules, you will never get one dog from them.

On the other hand, if you see a blind person who is really mistreating the guide dog,, please you must immediately get in touch with the schools, which will take the dog away and proceed against the blind person.

Please get in touch with Blindsight Project too. (See Contacts section below)

### **3. FOOD**

Please, do not give any food to the guide dog, before asking to the human companion and even if the dog is trying to tempt you. Do not look the dog in the eyes while showing any food to it and do not throw any food near it. The guide dog is used to eat at home. The special relationship with the blind companion depend from its health. If guide dogs eat something else than their dog food, which maintain them fit and healthy, they will feel sick or have diarrhoea, and then, the person who has to clean up, is their visually impaired companion. However, the consequences could be worse: if the guide dog is allergic to that food? You could cause its death and the death of its visually impaired companion too. So, all that we have already said in Rule 1, sounds good for this particular case too: ask to the visually impaired companion if you can give some food to the dog and do not try to insist, if the answer is no. Now, you know why.

### **4. LEASH AND MUZZLE**

If you are a dog owner, you must know that the length of the leash must not be more than 150 cm. (5 ft. more or less); see rules approved in 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2009 “Urgent and necessary regulations, regarding the defence of the public safety from dogs aggressions. Particularly, in article 1 is reported that every owner of a dog, has to take the dog on a leash... If your dog is free, do not let it go towards a guide dog who is leading a visually impaired person, because your dog disturbs both. Even if your dog is barking in a friendly way, the guide dog could react in a bad way, since your dog is disturbing its work; the visually impaired person could be disturbed and scared too, and could lose the way, because he or she does not see and cannot understand if your dog is approaching in a friendly or in a bad way. Put your dog on the leash, and free it, when the couple guide dog – visually impaired person has gone away. You have to behave yourself in the same way, if you see the guide dog with an assistant for visually impaired people, or if you see a future guide dog, led by the trainer or by its puppy walker.

The article n. 5 says that service dogs belonging to the civil protection, to the police and assistance dogs for people affected with disabilities do not have to wear any muzzle. Moreover, this article specifies the duties that a dog owner has towards other people, things and animals.

### **5. HYGEENE AND “DOG BUSINESSES”**

The owners of family dogs must remove the excrements of their dogs; this is not a general rule,, belonging to the moral sense but the law prescribes it: “Everybody who is walking the dog in an urban zone, must clean the dog’s excrements and must

have the right tools to do it.”. (Art. 2.4 of the rulements published the 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2009 in the Official Journal, book n.68)

Who does not see, has more chances to put the feet on dogs excrements than a sighted person does, even if a guide dog leads him or her.

The rule reported above, says also that visually impaired people must not clean up. But, there are also visually impaired people who are able to do it anyway, even if guide dogs are usually trained to potty in specific zones, e.g.: grass or earth. So, we ask to everybody who is sighted for cooperation, in order to make the life of everybody better and limit the state of pollution and dirtiness, which is a usual peculiarity of a lot of Italian cities and it is caused by laziness or Ignorance; spread out our campaign for cleaning up, which Blindsight launched some time ago:” Italy is not a ssxxxxing country”

## **6. SOME ADVICE TO THE PEDESTRIANS**

Try to imagine a group of pedestrians, staying on the pavement in such away, which does not allow to a visually impaired person and his or her guide dog to pass by. When the group realises that a person led by a guide dog is coming towards them, they have immediately to clear the way, in order to let the couple pass by; there is also no need to show the way to the dog; it knows exactly where it has to go, it is only waiting that you move over. It does not matter if you are standing on a passage or on the bus: the rule is always the same: keep clear if you see a guide dog leading a visually impaired person.

the Highway Code says that a person who uses a white cane or a guide dog has always the right of way. Moreover: red stripes on a white cane, indicate that this person is both blind and deaf. Please, pay attention to this kind of cane, since the dog who is leading this person is more concentrated than a guide dog who is leading someone who is only visually impaired.

## **7. CARS, MOTORCYCLE, SCOOTERS, BICYCLES, , ETC.**

- a) Law 37&1974 allows guide dog in public transportation, such as buses, trains, ferryboats, tubes, airplanes, taxis and private taxis too.

Sometimes, it is necessary to use an escalator, a tapis roulant or a lift (if there is anyone, an if it is working (in order to reach the stops or the stations of those means of transport. We remind you then, a person with A disability has always the RIGHT OF WAY and that you have to keep clear, in order to allow somebody sitting on a wheelchair or lead by a guide dog to pass by.

B) When you are driving, you are not a pedestrian anymore, but you are stronger. Moreover, you are a criminal if you park your vehicle on pedestrian areas, like pavements or on the zebra crossing.

Scooters and cars parked on the pavements are an insuperable Obstacles for any pedestrian, does not matter if he or she is disabled or not. For people with disability and mothers with a baby sitting in the pram, this rough behaviour implies that everybody has to get of the pavement, get round the obstacle and go ap the pavement again. In some cases, this behaviour could put the people in danger, since some streets are very congested by the traffic. So, when you are parking, please think that you are not the only humeng being in the world, that everyone is different from the other. The only thing, which is the same for everybody, is that everybody

has to pay taxes. Taxes in order to get Pedestrian areas and zebra crossing, a thing established by the UNO Convention for people with disabilities.

It is also forbidden, to ride the bicycle or the scooter on the pavement. If you do not resist doing it, please stop and clear the way to the pedestrians, above all to those who are affected with a disability. Please, stop the engine, do not speed along the pavement and do not ride too near to a working guide dog.

Obviously, a guide dog learns to cross the street only on the zebra crossing, so, how will the dog find them, if you park your vehicle “only for a little while” on the zebra crossing? If you do that, you oblige A guide dog and the blind companion (but also somebody on the wheelchair, an old man or a mother with her baby) to cross in the middle of the street, putting them in danger. Blindsight ask you to spread out the campaign Free Pedestrian , and ask you too, to go out for a walk, in order to live the “amazing life of a pedestrian”.

## 8. CONTACT US

If you have a guide dog and want to give us some suggestions and advice, in order to improve the life of everybody who is led and “sees” by a guide dog,

If you have any questions and want some information about rulements, laws rights and duties, to signalise any problem or discrimination contact Blindsight Project:

[info@blindsight.eu](mailto:info@blindsight.eu)

Blindsight Project ONLUS for sensorial disabled people

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