



GUIDE DOGS
SINGAPORE
ENABLING THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED

Guide Dogs Singapore (GDS) is a social service organisation accorded Charity status by the Commissioner of Charities.

We are dedicated to helping the blind and vision impaired (VI) people to achieve their fullest potential within society.

Common Types of Vision Impairment

Peripheral Vision Loss (Tunnel Vision)



Glaucoma, Early Stage



Glaucoma, Late Stage

Floater/Spots/
Distorted Vision

Cloudiness

Central Vision Loss



Diabetic Retinopathy



Cataract



Age-related Macular Degeneration, AMD

FACTS

Some vision impaired (VI) persons are **trained in independent travel skills** and are **confident in road crossing, and the use of escalators and stairs.**

A VI person may deliberately walk towards a pillar with a cane because **they use the pillar as a landmark to know their current position in a location, as well as to provide directional information.** (E.g. After locating the pillar, they will be able to find the entrance to a building)

About Guide Dogs...

Guide dogs are trained by professionals to provide services for the vision impaired person to improve their mobility and safety while acting as their companions. Distractions may put both the user and their guide dog in danger.



Training: Trained for almost 2 years before being matched with a user.



Routine: Guide dogs are given access to food, drinks and toileting at designated times. This means that guide dogs will not be fed casually in F&B places.

Breed: Guide dogs are specially bred from a lineage of guide dogs, and the ones in Singapore are typically Labradors and Golden Retrievers, or a mix of both.

Working Life: 7-9 years.

Behavioural Traits: Guide dogs are docile, quiet, attentive, and exhibit self-control in distracting situations. They toilet on command.

How to Identify a Guide Dog Team

GDS Guide Dog Team Identification Card

Card ID No.: GD004/16-26755
Issue Date: 1 May 2019
Expiry Date: 30 Apr 2020

The Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF) supports the use of guide dogs as a form of mobility guide for blind persons and the access of guide-dogs into public places in Singapore.

The use of accredited guide dogs in Singapore is overseen by the Guide Dogs Singapore Limited ("GDS").

If found, please return this card to GDS by contacting admin@guidedogs.org.sg



Identification Card

Administered by GDS and endorsed by various government agencies.

Given to fully-trained guide dog teams under GDS who are residing in Singapore.

Note: There are some independent guide dog teams/visitors in Singapore who are not trained nor formed by GDS. In such cases, the users will not have this identification card.



The Guide Dog's Harness

The harness sleeve serves as a reminder for members of the public to not distract the guide dog when it is working.

Note: Not all guide dogs wear the same harness and harness sleeve.

Legislation



The Islamic Religious Council of Singapore (Majlis Ugama Islam Singapura) supports the use of guide dogs



Guide dogs are permitted on public transport Regulation 8(1), (3) of the RAPID TRANSIT SYSTEMS REGULATIONS (Cap 263A)



Guide dogs are permitted in food establishments or private market Regulation 29(3), (13) of the ENVIRONMENTAL PUBLIC HEALTH (Food Hygiene) REGULATIONS (Cap95)

When Meeting a Guide Dog...



DOs



Only speak to the guide dog user, and they will give commands to the guide dog.



Be a Guide Dog Friendly Establishment and welcome them into your premises.



DON'Ts



Do not distract, feed, or pat a working guide dog!



Never tell a guide dog what to do or take the dog's harness from the user.



Do not allow your pet to interact with the guide dog.

Guide Dogs in Public



1

Guide dogs are well-trained, docile, and only toilet on command.

2

As part of their intensive training in GDS, our guide dogs and their users follow a strict protocol when they are in public places. Guide dogs are always on leash and wearing their working harness in public.

3

Guide dogs are trained to stay by their users' side at all times and will not disturb members of the public.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Are Guide Dogs permitted in F&B outlets?



Guide dogs are service animals that are specially trained to provide assistance to people with vision impairment. Thus, guide dogs are allowed in all restaurants and cafes. They are also allowed in Halal-certified F&B outlets. F&B outlets do not have to separately apply for a license to allow for guide dogs as the legislation has an exemption for them.

Refer to the following links for more information:

1. [Advisory by the Singapore Food Agency \(SFA\)](#)
2. [Advisory by MUIS](#)
3. [Joint circular issued by SFA, the Ministry of Social and Family Development and SG Enable](#)
4. [Post by Halal Cafe & Restaurants Facebook Page](#)



GUIDE DOGS ACCOMPANYING BLIND OR VISUALLY IMPAIRED PERSONS ARE PERMITTED IN FOOD RETAIL ESTABLISHMENTS

This circular seeks to remind all food retail establishment operators that guide dogs accompanying blind or visually impaired persons are permitted in food retail establishments under current legislation.

Guide dogs are permitted in food retail establishments under the regulations

2 Under the Environmental Public Health (Food Hygiene) Regulations, live animals such as pets are not permitted to be brought into or kept in a food establishment, with the exception of pet cafés¹. However, a food establishment licensee **may permit any guide dog accompanying a blind or visually impaired person to be brought into the dining or refreshment area or toilets of the licensed premises.**

Extract from a joint circular issued by the Singapore Food Agency, the Ministry of Social and Family Development, and SG Enable.

This information was circulated to remind all food retail establishment operators that guide dogs are permitted in food retail establishments under current legislation.

(3) Notwithstanding paragraph (1), the licensee of a food establishment or private market may permit any Guide Dog accompanying a blind or visually impaired person to be brought into the dining or refreshment area or any toilet of the licensed premises if the Guide Dog is:

- Kept under proper control.
- Restrained from straying or causing annoyance or nuisance to any person or animal, or damage to any property.
- Held in a leash.

(4) Where the licensee of a food establishment or private market permits guide dogs accompanying blind or visually impaired persons to be brought into his licensed premises under paragraph (3), the notice referred to in paragraph (2) shall specify that guide dogs are permitted within the licensed premises.



Are Guide Dogs permitted in Halal-certified places?



The Office of the Mufti of the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore (MUIS) supports the use of guide dogs. **This means that guide dogs are allowed in all restaurants and cafes, including Halal-certified F&B outlets.**

“If the guide dogs are brought to public places such as restaurants, public transport etc which are shared by all users of different backgrounds; and if one walks past an area where the guide dog may have rested or walked past it, then this falls under the concept of umumul balwa, and a person does not need to cleanse himself using the sertu method.”

“Islam commands us to do good to all creatures, including animals. Hence, we are very much encouraged to be kind to those who need to use guide dogs to get around. Do not react in any way which may offend the owners of the guide dogs or hurt the dog itself...”

[Extract from the Advisory.](#)

“It has been part of MUIS Halal Certification Conditions that guide dogs are indeed allowable to enter halal-certified premises. Owners or Operators of such premises are very much encouraged to facilitate patrons with guide dogs to enter and possibly consume food with ease and comfort for all diners. There are also guidelines to minimise the occurrence of cross contamination involving the guide dog.

There are many ways operators and owners of MUIS halal-certified premises can accommodate patrons with guide dogs, while ensuring ease and comfort for all other diners.

As for patrons of halal-certified eateries, do not be alarmed if such guide dogs entered the premises as you are dining. Guide dogs are well-trained and they are also well behaved.

As for personnel of MUIS halal-certified eateries, it is highly recommended to check with the Halal Team Leader on the relevant Halal Certification Conditions if they were unsure. One thing is sure, guide dogs are allowable in halal-certified premises.”

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

What if patrons are not comfortable being seated near the guide dogs due to allergy or fear?



Check with the surrounding patrons if they are comfortable being situated near a guide dog or have any allergies. If there are any reasonable concerns from the patrons, do share these concerns with the guide dog user and provide appropriate seating arrangement alternatives.



What if other patrons in the restaurant raise issues about the guide dog?

Such patrons are usually unaware of the legislation for guide dogs.

- Kindly inform them that guide dogs are service animals and are permitted in all F&B outlets, including halal-certified outlets.
- When necessary, show them the advisories by [SFA](#) and [MUIS](#), or [Guide Dogs Singapore website](#).

Should I seat the guide dog user at outdoor tables?



Treat the guide dog user the same as you would with other patrons. **We strongly encourage service staff to seat them in an area that the guide dog user has requested**, and not in an isolated section of the restaurant or outside, unless it creates a safety hazard. Guide dogs are not affected by fast movements or loud sounds as they are trained to ignore such distractions.



Will the guide dog bite or bark at other patrons?

Guide dogs are well-trained and docile. They will not bite or bark at other patrons. **If you see a guide dog, do not pat, talk, feed or distract the guide dog as it will put both the user and the guide dog in danger.**

What if the vision impaired user feeds his/her guide dog?

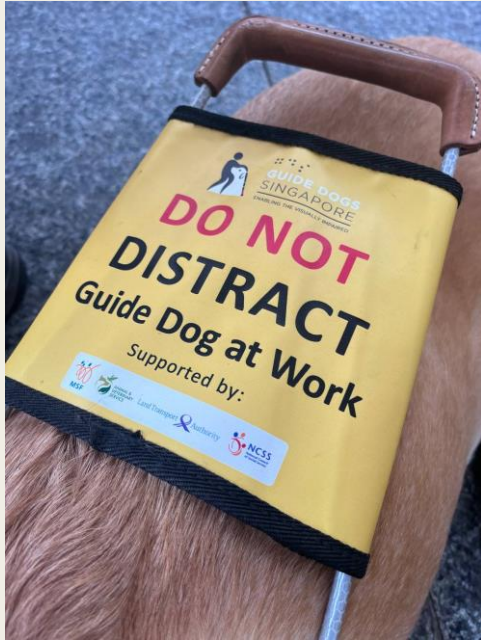


As part of their intensive training in GDS, our guide dogs and their users follow a strict protocol when they are in public places. Guide dogs are fed at designated times and only when they are not working. This means that guide dogs will not be fed casually while their vision impaired user dines in F&B places.



How do I know it is a guide dog?

All guide dogs wear a working harness with the words “Do Not Distract”. This indicates that the guide dog is focused on guiding their vision impaired user and should not be distracted.



The harness has the logo of the Guide Dog organisation it belongs to and is supported by the following government agencies.



For the Guide Dog Teams who are with Guide Dogs Singapore, they are also identifiable by a guide dog team ID card.



Guide Dogs in F&B places



Guide dogs are tucked quietly beneath their user's seat or under the table. They will not interact or bark at other patrons in the restaurant.

Guide Dogs in Public Transport / Private Hire Vehicles



Guide dogs are trained to sit quietly under or near their user and do not disturb members of the public.

Best Practices as a Guide Dog Friendly Establishment



1) Educate on-the-ground staff about guide dogs and the legislation. **Guide dog friendly decals can be placed visibly** to assure the staff that guide dogs are permitted. This also helps to instil confidence in the staff when managing queries from the patrons in the restaurant.

2) You can **check with the guide dog user** if they prefer to be seated indoors or outdoors (if available). **Treat the guide dog user just like any other patron.** Their guide dog is the vision impaired person's choice of mobility aid that helps them with safe and efficient travel.

3) Most people understand what a guide dog does and have no major concerns about being in the same space as them. However, if the surrounding patrons seem uncomfortable being situated near a guide dog due to reasonable concerns, such as allergies, **inform the guide dog user and provide appropriate seating alternatives.**

4) **There is no need to separately apply for a license to allow for guide dogs,** as they are working animals and not pets, therefore the Singapore legislation has an exemption for them.

5) **The Office of the Mufti of the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore (MUIS) supports the use of guide dogs** and has released an irsyad, or religious guidance, that cleansing is not compulsory if a person comes into contact with dogs kept out of necessity, such as guide dogs.



If you have any questions on guide dog access in establishments, you may contact us at admin@guidedogs.org.sg / 6339 7900

What are some challenges vision impaired (VI) persons may face at F&B outlets?

HELP

If they are dining alone, they may face challenges such as:

- Having an obstructed walkway from chairs and tables
- Locating a table to sit at
- Reading the items on a printed menu
- Ordering and collecting their food from the counter
- Knowing where the cashier is to make payment

As an F&B staff, how can I assist VI customers?



At the entrance of the F&B Establishment:

1. Speak to the VI person directly and not their companion (if any).
2. Offer to guide them towards their table.
3. Ensure that their pathway is clear of any obstructions such as pulled-out chairs.



Menu:

1. Offer to read out the items on the printed menu for the VI person.
 - List out the various categories of dishes (e.g. pasta, proteins) and ask for their preference.
 - You may then list out the items under that category.
2. For tech-savvy VI persons, direct them to the menu QR code and they will be able to read the menu on their mobile phone.



Collection of food:

1. If the food is to be collected at the counter, assist them in bringing it to their table.
2. When placing the food on their table, use a clock face to indicate their position (e.g. the glass of water is at your 3 o'clock)



Payment:

1. Some VI persons use e-payment apps.
2. If payment is made in cash, inform them of the amount collected and the change that is given.
3. If a signature is required, guide their pen to the receipt.

How to be a Sighted Guide?

1



Introduce yourself and **ALWAYS** ask if they need help before offering.

Do not grab, push or pull them as it can be disorientating.

Tap them on the shoulder and ask if they need help. Some VI people may not require any assistance as they are in a familiar environment and know how to get around.

2



If they ask for assistance, stand on the hand-free side and guide them to hold your arm above the elbow.

Do not grab their cane or drag them along. Walk **half a step ahead** and at a **comfortable pace** for both yourself and the VI person

For **guide dog users**, you may guide them by standing on their hand-free side and do the same.

3



When navigating, communicate clearly.

Inform them when turning left or right, **provide advance warning** if there are obstacles ahead, and **use the clock face** to indicate directions.

For example, 'The food court is at your ten o'clock, about 20 metres from here'.



Staircases, Escalators & Slopes

1. Stop at the first step and inform them if you are going up or down
2. Remain one step in front of them
3. Stop at the end of the stairs and inform the VI person when you have arrived at the last step



Narrow Walkways

1. Inform them that you will be going through a narrow walkway
2. Move your guiding arm behind your back; they will continue holding your arm and walk behind you in a single file



Rows of Seats

1. Describe the chair (e.g. Does it have wheels? Backrest?)
2. Place your guiding hand on the back of the chair and inform them
3. They will follow your arm with their hand to locate the chair
4. Allow them to seat themselves

4

Inform them when you have reached their destination.

Communicate and describe the surroundings clearly so they can orientate themselves, and **inform them when you leave**.