

**Chapter 24: Store Work**

In this chapter we will discuss different methods of working with your guide dog in stores, including working your dog, getting assistance, and going with friends or family.

**If you plan on working your guide dog:**

* It is very important to know the lay out of the store so you will be able to give your dog proper direction.
* During times when you are browsing items, it is good to put your dog in a sit or down position in front of you. This helps keep them out of the way of other shoppers and keeps them safe.
* Be aware that some areas may be too congested to safely work your dog through and in those cases, it may be better to heel them.
* Many people find a backpack helpful to use as it keeps both hands free.
* You can work your dog and carry a hand basket. Please just keep in mind this inhibits the ability to give hand signals or be able to use the leash. It may take your dog some time to adjust to you working them while carrying the basket.

**If you plan on getting assistance in the store or help from friends and family:**

* Once inside, work your dog to the customer service counter to ask for assistance.
* It is your choice whether you would prefer to go sighted guide, work your dog with directional help from someone, or use a cart. Be clear in what your preference is with the staff, friends, or family.
* If using a cart, you and your guide dog will stand at the back and hold onto the handle while the other person pulls the cart. Your dog will heel next to you. It is important to give them enough leash so that their paws are clear of the wheels, but not so much that they are far away from you.

**Checking out at stores:**

When you are ready to check out, you can work your dog up to the check-out line. Once there you may have to heel your dog as it is often a narrow area with a lot of stopping and starting as the line progresses. When you are stopped and ready to pay it is a good idea to place your dog in a sit or down in front of you, putting them between yourself and the counter. This keeps them safe and eliminates the opportunity for them to wander and check things out on their own, such as the candy and food that is often on display.

**Things to consider:**

* Remember that your dog needs to be well groomed and under control or you can be asked to leave any store, restaurant etc.
* Supermarkets can be highly distracting areas for dogs, and often have food at their level. Your first initial work outs in these areas may require some handling and reworking to keep your dog focused.
* If your store is a standalone store or in a shopping plaza, you’ll need to think about what the safest route there and back might be. If you need to cross a parking lot to get to/from your store, be very careful and have clear landmarks you can ask your dog to target in order to help establish the route. Remember that the most direct way may not be the best way when using a guide dog. If there are no real landmarks to target, it will be difficult to remain oriented. Sometimes, the longer way may be the easier, safer, and less stressful way for both you and your dog.

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