

Charlie Bear magic and snowflakes on noses, Squeaky toy soundtracks and cute photo poses, brown chewy packages tied up with string, these are a few of my favorite things. Snuggles on couches and carols we are singing, tails are wagging and doorbells are ringing, guide dogs that fly with the moon on their wings, these are a few of my favorite things.

Read on for tips on how to enjoy some of your favorite things this holiday season.

Airplanes may not be as cool as Santa's sleigh, but they will take us where we need to go for the holiday! If you plan on traveling, make sure you fill out your Department of Transportation (DOT) Form, required on all airlines to fly with your favorite reindeer, at least 48 hours in advance of your flight. Please visit our Guide to Airline Travel for more information. <https://www.guidingeyes.org/guide-to-airline-travel/>

Pack your candy canes, and your white cane too! Certain weather conditions and/or festive outings may not be suitable for your guide dog. Pack extra dog food, booties, medication, and other essentials in case Inclement weather causes transportation delays.

If visiting another person's house, be mindful that their expectations may differ from yours. Have a polite conversation with your friends and loved ones in advance to provide them with specific guidelines to create a safe space for your dog, like those you use in your own home to promote good house manners. For example, all trash cans should be picked up off the floor or stored in closed cabinets, all food should be kept out of curious nose's reach, and table scraps should not be offered to the dog. Save all the cookies for Santa! However, while everyone should respect your wishes as a handler, you should also respect any reasonable preferences your hosts may have as well. For example, while your dog is allowed to sleep on the couch or bed in your home, your host may ask you to keep the dog off of furniture.

Our guides can sometimes push boundaries when in new environments, especially when sensing the excitement of the holiday season around them. It may be helpful to revert to standard practices you utilized when first returning home from training with your dog, such as keeping them on-leash, on tie down, or in a collapsable crate to monitor behavior. As your hosts or other guests come and go, they may leave doors open for extended periods of time or neglect to close them securely. Ensure that you do not have an escape artist guide dog, or shall we say, rebel elf, on your hands.

If there are other dogs in the host's home, you should introduce the two dogs on leash in a neutral area in case the pet dog is territorial or possessive. Ask a family member or friend to hold the pet dog so you can manage your guide. Allow the two dogs to greet briefly, then

move away from each other. Depending on the dogs, you may need to do this a few times until both dogs seem relaxed. Interactions between the dogs should be closely monitored until they have fully acclimated to one another. Dogs should be separated during feeding times to prevent any food guarding or stealing. Pay close attention to all dogs' behavior and signals. If you find that you need to separate the dogs for a period of time, use a crate or baby gate to confine one dog to a separate room. If your host leaves their dog or cat's food on the floor for continuous access, kindly ask that they pick it up to prevent your four-legged vacuum from taking advantage, or consider keeping your dog on leash, tie down, or in a crate.

Wrapping paper, candy canes, ornaments, oh my! While many of us enjoy these festive staples, our dogs' stomachs will not. Whether you are spending your holiday at home or away, make sure these items are kept out of your pup's reach. Hang candy canes on higher Christmas tree branches and avoid hanging breakable and/or tasty-looking ornaments, such as wood or paper, on lower branches. Dispose of all wrapping and tissue paper scraps immediately after opening presents. Be aware of poisonous plants that are plentiful around the holidays, such as poinsettias, holly, and mistletoe. No one wants to end up on the veterinarian's naughty list; they may be checking it twice! For further information, please visit our Safety Considerations resource guide. <https://www.guidingeyes.org/safety-considerations/>

The holidays are full of cheer, and the energy is palpable. While your guide may embrace the excitement, and certainly enjoys receiving attention and gifts, too much activity may sometimes feel overwhelming. Stress can manifest in various ways, such as excessive panting, pacing, and/or acting out. If you notice your dog appears to be stressed or withdrawn, find a quieter and safer space for the dog to rest, such as in a closed off bedroom and/or crate. Consider planning exercise or destination routes over the holidays to help curb excessive energy and engage your dog in a positive activity.

Dashing through the snow, a guide dog leads the way, through the streets we go, wagging through the day. Bells on collars ring, making spirits bright, what fun it is to guide and feel the teamwork of tonight. May you and your pup have a safe and joyous holiday season!