

## **Guide Dog Etiquette Article**

A Letter from Hyra Cohen

Hi, I'm Hyra, a guide dog for Anita Cohen. I am a working dog protected under the Americans with Disabilities Act. You may have seen me around the shul. You can help me while on the job by following these simple requests:

1. Please ignore me while I'm in harness and working. This includes no eye contact, stooping down, or reaching out to pet me. Certainly, feel free to talk to Anita, as she is a very nice person.

I am always happy to see you, but when I am working, it is very important that I keep my focus. It is important for both Anita's safety and mine. It is important that I do not expect or look forward to the distractions of being petted in synagogue.

2. Please do not call out my name, give me commands, use a high pitched voice, or move around in a way meant to get me excited or distracted. I am like a skilled musician focusing on completion of a symphony. I get plenty of time to play when my work is over every day. And boy, do I play! When the harness is put on, though, I know that it is time to work and focus, and I am trained to take my work seriously.

3. Please do not ever reach out and touch my harness or leash. If Anita needs help getting somewhere, she will ask. Then she may take you by the arm, above the elbow, as you act as what we call a sighted guide. I am then told to heel and I just follow along. Thanks for helping.

4. I am on a food/water/relieve schedule so I do not need offers of food or water. Anita is really careful with this. I have this great diet that keeps me in optimum condition. Other food is not only unnecessary, but can give me a terrible stomach ache. Thank you for thinking of me, though.

5. These things are really helpful for me and Anita. I do want you to know that there will be special, pre-arranged times when I am available for petting, and Anita will let you know about them. Until then, lots of wags,

Hyra