



Companion Paws Therapy Dog Evaluation

1. Appearance and Grooming

The handler walks the dog over to the evaluator. The evaluator checks the dogs grooming by brushing / combing the dog, checking its paws, fur, body, mouth/teeth for cleanliness and health.

This practical test demonstrates that the dog will accept being groomed and examined and will permit a stranger to do so.

Handler and Dog

- The handler will provide the evaluator with the grooming tool before the test begins.
- The dog is not required to maintain a sitting position.
- The handler may encourage the dog during the test.
- The handler may use light collar pressure in positioning the dog, but no physical restraint.

Dogs that exhibit the following will be rated as “Not Ready”:

- The dog exhibits fear, aggression.
- The dog is not clean, well groomed, does not appear healthy or in good weight.

2. Obeying Commands: Stay / Come / Sit / Down

Start Line: Set out two cones about 10 feet apart in between which the dog and handler will stand. Two volunteers stand about 10 feet apart, 4 paces in front of start line, through which the handler and then dog walk. Dog will sit at start line. When instructed by the Evaluator, the handler tells the dog to stay and walks forward 5 paces. Then they turn and call the dog. The dog will come even with distraction of two people standing on either side of the route between the line and the owner. The dog will be asked to sit for a few seconds and then lie down beside handler for a few seconds.

This test demonstrates that the dog will come when called by the handler and that the dog has training, will respond to the handler’s commands to sit and down, and will remain in the place commanded by the handler.

Handler and Dog

- The dog may drop its head to sniff, but must continue towards the handler.
- The dog may change position but must remain in place when awaiting the come command.
- When called, the dog must come at a reasonable speed without stopping to sniff or wandering off.
- The handler may use body motions and verbal encouragement.
- The handler may take a reasonable amount of time and may use more than one command to sit or down the dog.
- The handler may gently touch the dog in an effort to assist the dog in assuming either the sit or down position.
- The handler may not physically place or force the dog into position.

Dogs that exhibit the following will be rated as ‘Not Ready’:

- The dog does not remain in place when the handler walks away.
- The dog does not come on command at a reasonable speed.

- The dog sniffs or wanders off (It is acceptable if the dog drops its head to sniff, but continues toward the handler.)

3. Figure Eight Loose Leash Control

The handler will walk in a figure 8 around 2 cones set up about 6-10 paces apart and the dog will follow on a loose leash.

This test demonstrates that the handler is in control of the dog, the dog has training and will respond to the handler's commands. The dog can be on either side of the handler, whichever the handler prefers.

Dogs that exhibit the following will be rated as 'Not Ready':

- The dog does not follow handler in figure of 8 or pulls on leash.

4. Reaction to Distraction (clipboard)

Two volunteers stand at station 4, one with a clipboard or similar in hand. The handler and dog will go to station 3. Two people standing there will talk very loudly while in front of dog and handler. Then one of the people will drop the clipboard so it makes a loud sound on the floor.

This test demonstrates that the dog is confident at all times when faced with common distracting situations. The dog may express a natural interest and curiosity and/or appear slightly startled, but should not panic, try to run away, show aggressiveness or bark.

Handler and Dog

- The handler may speak encouragingly to the dog, but may not steer the dog with the leash nor attempt to restrain the dog.
- The dog may startle but should recover quickly.
- The dog may express natural interest and curiosity.

Dogs that exhibit the following will be rated as 'Not Ready':

- The dog shows panic, tries to run away or shows aggressiveness.
- The dog does not respond to the handler's commands.
- The dog shows fear.
- The dog barks at volunteers or clipboard.

5. Reaction to Crutches

A volunteer with crutches stands at station 5. The handler and dog approach station 5 and the three walk together to station 6, a distance of around 6 paces. The person on crutches should be within 3 feet of the dog, stumble a bit and be a little unsure and erratic in their motions.

This test demonstrates reactions to common health care equipment, which would ordinarily be found in a facility.

Handler and Dog

- The handler may command the dog to walk at heel.
- The handler may speak encouragingly to the dog, but may not steer the dog with the leash nor attempt to restrain the dog.
- The dog may startle but should recover quickly.
- The dog may express natural interest and curiosity.

Dogs that exhibit the following will be treated as 'Not Ready':

- The dog shows panic, tries to run away or shows aggressiveness
- The dog does not respond to the handler's commands
- The dog shows fear
- The dog barks

6. Reaction to Wheelchair

A volunteer in a wheelchair waits at station 6. The handler and dog approach station 6 and the three walk / roll together back to station 5, a distance of around 6 paces. The person in wheelchair should be within 3 feet of the dog.

This test demonstrates reactions to common health care equipment which would ordinarily be found in a facility.

Handler and Dog

- The handler may command the dog to walk at heel.
- The handler may speak encouragingly to the dog, but may not steer the dog with the leash nor attempt to restrain the dog.
- The dog may startle but should recover quickly.
- The dog may express natural interest and curiosity.

Dogs that exhibit the following will be treated as 'Not Ready':

- The dog shows panic, tries to run away or shows aggressiveness.
- The dog does not respond to the handlers commands.
- The dog shows fear.
- The dog barks.

7. Accepting a Friendly Stranger

Three volunteers are at station 7. Handler and dog approach and they chat with each other for a moment. One volunteer will reach down and begin petting the dog. Then the other 2 will join in so that all three people are petting the dog at the same time.

This test demonstrates that the dog will allow multiple friendly strangers to touch it at the same time while it is out with its handler. The dog should sit at the handler's side as the Evaluator approaches and begins to pet the dog on the head and body only. The dog may stand in place to accept petting. The dog must not show shyness or try to get away.

Handler and Dog

- The dog is to be sitting beside the handler (either left or right side is acceptable).
- The handler may talk to his/her dog throughout the exercise.
- The dog does not have to maintain the sitting position but must remain in place.
- If the handler commands the dog to sit and the dog does not respond, the handler may lightly touch the dog on the hindquarters but may not physically force the dog into a sitting position.
- The handler may not physically restrain the dog either by use of the collar or any other method.

Dogs that exhibit the following will be rated as "Not Ready":

- The dog is not steady when a stranger goes to pet him/her
- The dog attempts to jump up

- The dog exhibits or shyness or tries to get away.

8. Accepting an Annoying Stranger

A volunteer sits on the floor at station 8. Handler and dog approach and the volunteer addresses dog as a small child might, lightly tugging on fur, tail and ears and lightly poking and prodding and exploring the dog.

This test demonstrates the dog's temperament around the way small children may treat it and around other people that are being aggravating.

Handler and Dog

- The handler may speak encouragingly to the dog, but may not steer the dog with the leash nor attempt to restrain the dog.
- The dog may startle but should recover quickly.
- The dog may express natural interest and curiosity.

Dogs that exhibit the following will be rated as "Not Ready":

- The dog tries to run away or shows aggressiveness.
- The dog does not respond to the handler's commands.
- The dog shows fear.
- The dog barks at volunteer.

9. Leave It (popcorn)

Popcorn is put on the floor at station 9. From across the room or roughly 6 paces away, the dog and handler walk past the popcorn (within 3 feet) at a leisurely walking pace, to the other side of the room or roughly 4 more paces past the popcorn.

This test demonstrates, upon command that the dog can ignore food that is out and available.

Handler and Dog

- The dog may be on either side of the handler.
- The handler may speak quietly to the dog throughout the test.
- The dog is required to walk near the handler without pulling or straining.
- The leash should be loose to demonstrate that the dog is under control and is not being steered by the handler.

Dogs that exhibit the following will be rated as "Not Ready":

- The dog does not respond to the handler's movements and commands.
- The handler must pull the leash taut to control the dog.
- The dog does not walk quietly without restraint.
- The dog is not attentive to the handler.
- The dog eats any of the food on the floor.

10. Leave it (people food)

"People food": Hot dogs or similar are often used. Anything that will not put the dog at risk if it eats it. The people food is put on the floor at station 9. From across the room or roughly 6 paces away, the dog and handler walk past the people food (within 3 feet) at a leisurely walking pace, to the other side of the room or roughly 4 more paces past the popcorn.

This test demonstrates, upon command that the dog can ignore food that is out and available.

Handler and Dog

- The dog may be on either side of the handler.
- The handler may speak quietly to the dog throughout the test.
- The dog is required to walk near the handler without pulling or straining.
- The leash should be loose to demonstrate that the dog is under control and is not being steered by the handler.

Dogs that exhibit the following will be rated as “Not Ready”:

- The dog does not respond to the handler’s movements and commands.
- The handler must pull the leash taut to control the dog.
- The dog does not walk quietly without restraint.
- The dog is not attentive to the handler.
- The dog eats any of the food on the floor.

11. Say Hello

Walk up to station 11 and have the dog sit. A volunteer will come up from behind the dog and lightly touch them with their foot. Then the volunteer will move around to the front of the dog and look at the handler, pet the dog for a moment, engage in short conversation and then walk away. (Small dogs can be placed on the seated volunteer’s lap or can be held.)

This test demonstrates the willingness of the dog to visit a person and that the dog can be accessible for petting.

Handler and Dog

- The handler may use any combination of verbal praise, and playful postures, gestures or actions.
- If needing to calm the dog, the handler’s voice may be firm but must not be loud or angry.
- The handler may use more than one command to calm the dog but the dog must display an attitude of controlled behavior following calming efforts on the part of the handler.

Dogs that exhibit the following will be rated as “Not Ready”:

- The handler is using forcible leash pressure to calm the dog.
- The dog does not settle quickly.
- The handler does not have control of the dog.

12. No Mark Manners

At Station 12 there is some grass with fresh dog urine on it. From about 5 paces away, the handler leisurely walks the dog on a loose leash past the urine grass (within 3 feet) to around 5 paces past the grass. (The pee should not be from a female in season.)

This test demonstrates the dog will not try to mark.

Handler and Dog

- The dog may be on either side of the handler.
- The handler may speak quietly to the dog throughout the test.
- The dog is required to walk near the handler without pulling or straining.

- The leash should be loose to demonstrate that the dog is under control and is not being steered by the handler.

Dogs that exhibit the following will be rated as “Not Ready”:

- The dog does not respond to the handler’s movements and commands.
- The handler must pull the leash taut to control the dog.
- The dog does not walk quietly without restraint.
- The dog is not attentive to the handler
- The dog attempts to pee on the pee smelling grass or area

13. Reaction to Distraction (Person)

A volunteer walks with the handler and dog for about 8 paces from station 13. The volunteer is asked to walk in an unusual and erratic way, arms swinging, limping and breathing heavily, coughing, wheezing and generally acting strange and distracting.

This test demonstrates the dog’s confidence when faced with common distracting situations and exposed to people walking with an uneven gait, or other distractions, which may be encountered in a facility.

Handler and Dog

- The handler may command the dog to walk at heel while walking with volunteer.
- The handler may speak encouragingly to the dog, but may not steer the dog with the leash nor attempt to restrain the dog.
- The dog may startle but should recover quickly.
- The dog may express natural interest and curiosity.
- The dog may walk on either side of handler.

Dogs that exhibit the following will be rated as “Not Ready”:

- The dog shows panic, tries to run away or shows aggressiveness.
- The dog does not respond to the handler’s commands.
- The dog shows fear.
- The dog barks at volunteer.

14. Walking Through a Crowd

A group of volunteers (as many as are available in the room at the time; 6 or more volunteers) will be waiting in between station 14 and 15. The handler will walk the dog from 13 through the crowd to get to 14.

This test demonstrates that the dog can move about politely in pedestrian traffic and is under control in public places.

Handler and Dog

- The dog is not required to maintain a heeling position beside the handler but may not be so far ahead or behind the handler as to create an impediment to individuals walking by.
- The handler may talk to the dog and provide verbal encouragement and praise during the test.
- The handler may not steer the dog with the leash.
- The dog may show mild interest in the strangers but should not go to them.
- The dog should not be straining at the leash.

Dogs that exhibit the following will be rated as “Not Ready”:

- The dog displays more than mild interest in the strangers or goes to them.
- The dog is straining on the leash and excessive exuberance.
- The dog exhibits shyness, or is jumping.
- The handler is unable to control the dog.
- The dog becomes stressed or unruly.

15. Out for a Walk Without Handler

A volunteer waits at station 15. Handler and dog approach volunteer. The handler passes the volunteer the leash and the volunteer and dog walk at least 8 paces away from handler who stays at station 15. (Ideally the two walk to a place where the dog cannot see its handler anymore.) The volunteer will take the dog on a walk that involves a left turn, a right turn, a stop and sit for a few seconds, and then a 180 degree turn and return to station 15.

This test demonstrates that a dog can be left with a trusted person, if necessary, and will maintain its training and good manners.

Volunteer and Dog

- The dog may be on either side of the volunteer.
- The volunteer may speak quietly to the dog throughout the test.
- The dog is required to walk near the volunteer without pulling or straining.
- The leash should be loose to demonstrate that the dog is under control and is not being steered by the volunteer.
- The volunteer & dog are required to walk a straight line, make at least one right and left turn as well as 180-degree turn.
- The dog is not required to sit when the volunteer stops walking.

Dogs that exhibit the following will be rated as “Not Ready”:

- The dog does not respond to the volunteer’s movements and changes in direction.
- The volunteer must pull the leash taut to control the dog.
- The dog does not walk quietly without restraint.
- The dog is not attentive to the volunteer.

16. Reaction to Another Dog

A volunteer with perfectly trained dog on leash is waiting at station 16. The handler and dog approach the station and the handler instructs the dog to sit and then chats with the volunteer for about ten seconds. The dogs should show no more than a casual interest in each other.

This test demonstrates that the dog can behave politely around other dogs.

Handler and Dog

- The handler should command the dog to heel before beginning to walk toward the other volunteer/dog team.
- Upon reaching the other team, the handler should command the dog to sit, thereafter greeting the other handler and chatting briefly (10 seconds).
- The dog may not be restrained.
- The dog may show mild interest in the other handler and dog but may not move excitedly or aggressively toward the other dog, or exhibit shy or scared behavior.
- The handler may use additional commands to ensure a response from the dog but may not jerk or grab it.

Dogs that exhibit the following will be rated as “Not Ready”:

- The dog does not respond to the handler's instructions.
- The handler is forced to jerk or grab the dog.
- The dog moves excitedly or aggressively toward the other dog.

17. Supervised Separation

Handler and dog wait at station 1. The Evaluator or an assistant approach, and asks: "Would you like me to watch your dog?" Handler answers yes and gives the Evaluator the leash. The handler walks away, out of sight for 5 – 10 seconds. The dog does not have to stay in position but should not show signs of elevated distress or nervousness.

This test demonstrates that a dog can be left with a trusted person, if necessary, and will maintain its training and good manners.

Handler and Dog

- The dog does not have to maintain position or place with the assistant evaluator.
- The dog may not show signs of excessive stress.
- Mild stress or nervousness is acceptable behavior.

Dogs that exhibit the following will be rated as "Not Ready":

- The dog attempts to climb on the assistant/evaluator.
- The dog continually barks, whines, howls, paces, and pants excessively.
- The dog pulls on the leash in an attempt to get away.