

Companion Paws Testing Guidelines for Handlers

The Companion Paws Therapy Dog Final Evaluation has 17 individual tests and additional exercises within each test. The temperament evaluation is not included in this number.

To qualify as a therapy dog, the dog must have no aggression towards people or other dogs (including un-neutered male dogs). The dog must be friendly, gentle and loving.

The dog must have basic therapy obedience and manners training completed and be fully house broken prior to the temperament assessment and final evaluation.

Furthermore, everyone at Companion Paws is a dog lover. As such, we only qualify Assisted and Visiting Therapy Dogs who enjoy interacting with strangers to protect dogs who don't from being over-stressed or forced into such activities.

During testing, there will be people and dogs standing inside the testing area. Kids will be included in one or more of the individual tests.

Testing Requirements Evaluation Summary:

Accepting a Friendly Stranger
Sitting Politely for Petting
Out for a Walk (Walking on a close leash)
Walking Through a Crowd
Sit and Down on Command (Staying in one place)
Coming When Called
Reaction to Another Dog
Reactions to Distractions x 2
Reaction to Medical Equipment x 2
Leave It x 2
Supervised Separation (time - one minute)
Say Hello
No Mark Manners
Appearance and Grooming

A Brief Summary of the Formal Evaluation

The dog must be on a fixed-length (no more than six feet) leather, nylon, or fabric leash. Retractable leashes are not allowed. The dog will wear a leather, nylon, or fabric collar with a metal buckle or plastic quick-snap closure or harness. Halters, slip collars, metal collars, choke chains and special training collars (e.g. "pinch", "spike", prong, electric, or spray collars) are not allowed during the evaluation.

The trainer can use verbal and/or hand signals to communicate with the dog. This is not an obedience competition; therefore, the handler is encouraged to talk to the dog during the entire evaluation. In addition, the handler can bring the dog's own comb for the grooming exercise.

Remember, you are the dog's advocate. If at any point during the evaluation, you feel that the exercise is too stressful for the dog, you should let the evaluator(s) know. You may withdraw from the evaluation at any time.

You are not allowed to give the dog any treat during the entire evaluation. Furthermore, the trainer may not physically force the dog to perform an action during the evaluation.

What constitutes a pass/not ready is often a judgment call and will be at the discretion of the experienced evaluators from CPC. After the evaluation, the evaluator(s) will be happy to discuss the results with you and answer any questions.

Note: During the evaluation, you can talk to the dog at any time but treats are not allowed. The dog will be on leash with the handler at all times except during a test.

Visiting or Assisted teams will not pass if the dog (or you/handler) displays any sign of aggression or extreme stress.

- 1) Greeting the Infirm:
the dog will greet a stranger in a wheelchair etc. It should not be shy of or resent the interaction or petting
- 2) All-Over Body Touch:
the dog will be touched all over its body. Small dogs will need to sit on the lap of each evaluation assistant.
- 3) Restraining Interactions:
includes tight hugging, gentle ear-pulling, gentle tail-pulling, and gentle leg-pulling
- 4) Clumsy petting:
includes on the head as well as the body. The evaluation with children also includes finger poking.
- 5) Awkward movements:
includes awkward arm-swinging and walking
- 6) Bumping from behind:
the dog will be bumped gently from behind while walking with its handler
- 7) Yelling and other loud noises:
includes arguments between 2 evaluation assistants and dropping of an object in front of the dog to create a loud noise
- 8) Crowded Petting:
the dog will be petted simultaneously by multiple evaluation assistants

Often, handlers find that the dogs can pass all the required tests at home but fail to perform at the evaluation facility. This is not surprising since a dog can behave very differently in a new environment. The presence of new smells, healthcare equipment, strangers, and other dogs will easily distract the dog.

To qualify as a Companion Paws therapy dog, the dog must pass all the required tests while being evaluated, in both the temperament assessment and final evaluations, with others in a new environment by a CPC evaluator. This is to simulate the situations the dog will (or may) run into.

Waiting Period

You and your dog must arrive at least 30 minutes before the evaluation starts. At any time, any Companion Paws volunteer/assistant may interact with or observe the dog. If the dog displays any aggression or releases itself inside the evaluation facility, the team will fail the evaluation immediately.

ADDITIONAL RULES FOR TESTING

1. Greyhounds are not required to sit for testing

RATINGS

All evaluator decisions are final.

Any of the following behaviors may result in a rating of "Not Ready":

- Dogs sniffing excessively, so as to interfere with appropriate walking on a leash
- Handlers who use force or an excessively loud voice in an attempt to control the dog
- Dogs exhibiting excessive shyness
- Dogs barking or vocalizing excessively
- Dogs urinating or defecating during testing
- Dogs charging ahead of the handler going through the door

UNRULY BEHAVIOR

Any dog that displays unruly behavior at any time is to be automatically disqualified and immediately removed from the test area. Unruly behavior is defined as aggression, growling, or lunging at people and/or dogs, biting or attempting to bite and fighting. Usually a dog jumping on people or other dogs will be rated "Not Ready".

ADDITIONAL

- A dog that displays unruly behavior at any time will be immediately disqualified and removed from the test area. Unruly behavior is defined as aggression, growling, or lunging at people and/or dogs, biting or attempting to bite and fighting.
- Handlers who shout or mishandle their dogs will be cautioned that such conduct is not acceptable and will not earn certification if such handling continues.
- Handlers of dogs, which receive a "Not Ready" rating, will be encouraged to continue working with their dogs and given tips on how to improve the dog's performance.
- Heavy collar pressure or jerking on the leash or collar to maintain control is not acceptable and will be rated as "Not Ready".
- Neither food nor toys or other training aids may be offered or carried during testing. A treat after the test has been completed is acceptable.
- Dogs are rated as "Pass" or "Not Ready".
- The LifeLine Canada Foundation issues a Companion Paws vest, identification card and certificate for dogs rated "Passed" in the evaluation.

- A dog's skills diminish without practice. It is important for owners to continue to work with the dog long after the test date has passed, not only to maintain peak performance, but for the satisfaction of both owner and dog.

