

# 2nd Temperament Assessment

## Outline for Adjudicators

Companion Paws Canada  
The Lifeline Canada Foundation



This document provides an overview of the Temperament Assessment (TA) process for dog-handler teams (DHTs) seeking certification as therapy dogs with Companion Paws. It outlines what to expect during the assessment, its purpose, and an outline of testing.

This 20-minute assessment aims to:

- **Understand the dog's temperament:** We assess for characteristics like calmness, friendliness, patience, confidence, gentleness, and adaptability to various situations.
- **Ensure comfort and enjoyment:** The dog should actively engage and enjoy the assessment activities, free from excessive pawing, leaping, licking, or body slamming.
- **Promote safety and suitability:** We evaluate the dog's behavior and how well they are trained to ensure it poses no risk and determine the compatibility of both the dog and handler for therapy roles.

## WHAT TO BRING WITH YOU

### Leash and Collar Requirements:

- **Leash:** Must be a fixed-length leash (no more than 6 feet) and made of leather, nylon, or fabric.
  - *Retractable leashes are strictly prohibited during the evaluation.*
- **Collar:** Must be made of leather, nylon, or fabric with a metal buckle or plastic quick-snap closure.
  - *Halters, slip collars, metal collars, choke chains, and special training collars (e.g., "pinch," "spike," prong, electric, or spray collars) are not allowed.*
- **Harness:** Optional — made of leather, nylon, or fabric.
  - *Should be comfortable for the dog, not restricting range of motion and should be 'fixed' (no tightening component with leash tension).*

### Additional Items:

- **Dog's favorite toy:** Bring the dog's favorite toy for use during the assessment.
- **High-value treats:** Bring small, high-value treats that your dog loves and responds well to.
- **Food and food bowl:** Please bring a small amount of their usual food and a bowl. A water bowl will be there for all dogs.

## ASSESSMENT FORMAT

- **Indoor Setting:** The assessment takes place in a controlled indoor environment.
- **Stations:** You will visit various stations designed to test the dog's behavior in different scenarios, such as greeting people, interacting with another dog, and resisting food temptations.
- **Safety First:** Our top priority is safety. If your dog shows any signs of aggression or potential danger, the assessment will be stopped immediately, and the dog will not be eligible for our therapy program.
- **Handler Assessment:** While the focus is on the dog's temperament, we also evaluate the handler's ability to control and handle the dog effectively.
- **Dog-Human Connection:**
  - **Visiting and Assisted Therapy Dogs:** These dogs should demonstrate a strong affection for people and actively seek interaction and connection.
  - **Personal Therapy Dogs:** These dogs can be more reserved and focused on their individual handler, if the "Personal" designation is the only one requested.

# 2nd Temperament Assessment

Handler's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Dog's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## DESIGNATION REQUEST

☐ Visiting ☐ Assisted ☐ Personal

## STAGE

☐ Second Assessment

## ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

- |                       |                                                      |                               |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Approach           | 5. Responsiveness to Redirection                     | 9. Noise                      |
| 2. Touch and Handling | 6. Obeying Commands:<br>Come / Sit / Lie Down / Stay | 10a) Food: Manners            |
| 3. Pressure Stimuli   | 7. Figure Eight Loose Leash<br>Control               | 10b) Food: Leave It           |
| 4. Possession         | 8. Out for a Walk Without Handler                    | 11a) Dog to Dog: Food Issues  |
|                       |                                                      | 11b) Dog to Dog: Handler Meet |

Please note: If any of the negative responses is marked during the TA, the dog will not qualify for our program.

## 1. Approach

### *On Leash*

Approach the dog slowly and wait patiently, observing his/her behavior. If the dog makes eye contact, stop, turn sideways, and crouch at a distance of at least 6 feet. Speak to the dog in a calm, soothing voice while keeping your face averted. Continue observing the dog's reaction throughout the interaction.

### *Positive Responses:*

- ☐ Approaches with calming signals and soft wagging tail
- ☐ Reaches for contact (e.g., leans in, nudges hand)
- ☐ Relaxed and playful demeanor
- ☐ Exhibits an excitable response upon meeting new people, including jumping (or attempt) and pawing

### *Negative Responses:*

- ☐ Withdrawal without signs of fear or aggression (adjudicator's discretion if this is something that can be worked on or a flagged item)
- ☐ Freeze (tense, still)
- ☐ Withdraws with growling
- ☐ Growls or barks, and/or pulls towards assessor(s): may be accompanied by baring teeth, hackles, stiff posture, hard eyes locked on

*Assessor Notes:*

## 2. Touch and Handling

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### *On Leash*

Gently touch the dog's head and body. Touch the backside and underneath the dog — both front and back. Apply slight pressure to the shoulders, back, and hips. Stroke the tail and hold for a moment. Rub the ears and cover one eye. Approach the dog from the side.

#### *Positive Responses:*

- ☐ Softens with petting and engages with adjudicator. Licks, nuzzles, seeks attention, rolls onto back.
- ☐ Moves away in a relaxed manner.
- ☐ Accepts touch in a relaxed manner but does not seek additional contact.

#### *Negative Responses:*

- ☐ Puts mouth on hand.
- ☐ Appears skittish, avoids touches, including on hindquarters and/or tail.
- ☐ Actively avoids, freezes, or flinches when approached or touched.
- ☐ Growls, freezes, or snaps (assessor must cease interaction and discontinue the assessment).

#### *Assessor Notes:*

## 3. Pressure Stimuli

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### *On Leash*

Push down slightly on the dog's shoulders using hands and/or forearm. Maintain pressure for two seconds.

#### *Positive Responses:*

- ☐ Melts under slight pressure or appears submissive.
- ☐ Remains neutral.

#### *Negative Responses:*

- ☐ Stiffens uncomfortably or defensively.
- ☐ Becomes tense and turns towards the assessor.
- ☐ Growls or snaps at the assessor (assessor must cease interaction and discontinue the assessment).

#### *Assessor Notes:*

## 4. Possession

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### *On Leash*

Use a toy or ball with a rope attached to one end, or the dog's favorite toy that the handler brought. Once the dog is engaged, ask the dog to give up the toy while your hand is on the toy. If necessary, offer the dog a treat in exchange for the toy.

#### *Positive Responses:*

- ☐ Easily gives up; may display overall playful attitude.
- ☐ Shows slight resistance to toy removal but ultimately gives up the toy.
- ☐ Plays keep-away but will trade for treats.
- ☐ Exhibits possessiveness over the toy with strong resistance but no aggression.
- ☐ Engages in playful growling.

#### *Negative Responses:*

- ☐ Takes the toy and hides or runs away, displaying avoidance or stress signals.
- ☐ Growls, freezes, or snaps (assessor must cease interaction and discontinue the assessment).

#### *Assessor Notes:*

## 5. Responsiveness to Redirection

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### *On Leash*

Walk the dog near other people and distractions. Let him/her sniff or become interested in something for five seconds, then give a verbal redirection such as 'Puppy-puppy, this way!' in a high-pitched (inviting) voice. If necessary, gently apply slight tension on the leash.

Please note: This is not a correction for doing anything wrong. We are only looking for a reaction to the pressure on the leash.

#### *Positive Responses:*

- ☐ Easily directs to handler and is compliant.
- ☐ Is slow to follow and needs a second or multiple encouragements to comply.

#### *Negative Responses:*

- ☐ Drops into a fear-driven, defensive posture.
- ☐ Becomes unresponsive.
- ☐ Fights against correction and becomes stubborn to comply.
- ☐ Redirects aggressively towards the assessor and attempts to or does bite.
- ☐ Ignores the assessor's redirection and continues engaging in the distraction. (Adjudicator's discretion: this is a behavior skill, not temperament, which can be worked on before the Final Evaluation.)

#### *Assessor Notes:*

## 6. Obeying Commands: Come / Sit / Lie Down / Stay

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### *On Leash*

Set out two cones (or chairs) about 10 feet apart, between which the dog and handler will stand (at the start line). Two volunteers stand about 10 feet apart, 4 paces in front of the start line, through which the DHT will walk. The dog will sit at the start line. When instructed by the assessor, the handler asks the dog to stay and walks forward 5 paces. Then they turn and call the dog. Once the dog reaches the handler, they ask their dog to sit for a few seconds. Then they ask the dog to lie down beside them for a few seconds.

### *Positive Responses:*

- ☐ Dog does all the above cues with no issues.
- ☐ Dog does the above cues with slight hesitation but fulfills the requests.

(The below are behavior skills, not temperament, which can be worked on before the Final Evaluation and would not cause the dog to become 'unsuitable'.)

- ☐ The dog does not remain in place when the handler walks away.
- ☐ The dog does not come when called at a reasonable speed.
- ☐ The dog sniffs or wanders off (it is acceptable if the dog drops his/her head to sniff but continues toward the handler).
- ☐ The dog does not follow the handler with any of the requests.

### *Assessor Notes:*

## 7. Figure Eight Loose Leash Control

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### *On Leash*

With two cones (or chairs) about 10 feet apart still, have the DHT walk in a figure-8 between the obstacles, crossing the middle 3 times. The dog will walk on a loose leash beside the handler (within 1.5 ft).

### *Positive Responses:*

- ☐ The dog performs figure-8s with a loose leash with no issues.
- ☐ The dog performs figure-8s with slight hesitation but fulfills the requests with a loose leash.

(The below are behavior skills, not temperament, which can be worked on before the Final Evaluation and would not cause the dog to become 'unsuitable'.)

- ☐ The dog does not walk beside the handler within 1.5 ft.
- ☐ The dog (or handler) adds tension on the leash.
- ☐ The dog is distracted and pulls on the leash.

### *Assessor Notes:*

## 8. Out for a Walk Without Handler

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### *On Leash*

Have a volunteer wait near a door/exit of the room. The DHT approaches the volunteer, and the handler passes the leash to the volunteer. The volunteer and dog walk at least 8 paces away from the handler, who remains where they are standing. The volunteer and dog proceed to a place where the dog cannot see his/her handler anymore (if possible, out of the room). The volunteer then takes the dog on a walk that includes a left turn, a right turn, a stop and sit for a few seconds, and finally a 180-degree turn, returning to the starting point.

### *Positive Responses:*

- ☐ The dog goes willingly with the volunteer and responds well to the cues with no issues.
- ☐ The dog shows slight hesitation with some of the cues but fulfills them.

(The below are behavior skills, not temperament, which can be worked on before the Final Evaluation and would not cause the dog to become 'unsuitable'.)

- ☐ 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.

### *Assessor Notes:*

## 9. Noise

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Drop a metal bowl and then shake a container with rocks. It's okay for the dog to be startled and react to the noise; the focus is on their ability to recover quickly and become neutral afterward.

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

- ☐ The dog panics, tries to run away, or shows aggressiveness.
- ☐ The dog does not respond to the handler's cues.
- ☐ The dog exhibits fear.
- ☐ The dog continues to bark.

### *Assessor Notes:*

## 10a). Food: Manners

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### *Off Leash*

Offer the dog a treat and allow the dog to take it. Offer another treat, and as the dog begins to eat, gently remove or pull back the treat. Drop a treat on the ground. When the dog sees it, cover it with your foot. While the dog is eating the treat, begin some mild general handling.

### *Positive Responses:*

- ☐ Shows no reaction or invites petting or play from the adjudicator.
- ☐ Makes soft eye contact.
- ☐ Digs at the treat, gets pushy for the treat, follows the treat with focus, but does not jump up or pull it out of the assessor's hand.

### *Negative Responses:*

- ☐ Growls, freezes, or snaps (assessor must cease interaction and discontinue the assessment).

### *Assessor Notes:*

## 10b). Food: Leave It

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### *Off Leash*

The handler shows the dog the treat, then while holding the dog's attention, asks the dog to 'leave it' (or any cue that the handler uses) and drops the treat on the floor. If the dog takes the treat, try again up to 3 times.

### *Positive Responses:*

- ☐ The dog does not take the treat and awaits its next cue.
- ☐ The dog goes for the treat, and after cueing the dog to 'leave it' again, does not take the treat and awaits his/her next cue.

### *Negative Responses:*

- ☐ The dog lunges for the treat and eats it without any control.
- ☐ The dog goes for the treat and, despite appearing to listen to the cue, ignores it and eats the treat.

### *Assessor Notes:*

## 11a). Dog to Dog: Food Issues

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### *On Leash*

Through a fence / row of chairs, etc. Bring the decoy dog into the immediate vicinity of the assessed dog. Face-to-face on opposite sides of the fence/barrier and drop treats, first for the decoy dog (while the assessed dog watches) and then BOTH together.

### *Positive Responses:*

- ☐ Ignores treats while the other dog eats.
- ☐ Does not react when the decoy dog is eating.
- ☐ The dog calmly takes the treats from the ground.

### *Negative Responses:*

- ☐ Lunges or pushes towards the decoy dog for its treats.
- ☐ Barks or growls at the decoy dog.

### *Assessor Notes:*

## 11b). Dog to Dog: Handler Meet

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### *On Leash*

The DHT should simulate needing directions while pretending to be lost, encountering someone walking their dog. This scenario is not intended for a meet and greet, and there should be no concern about the dog attempting to interact with the other dog. The focus should solely be on obtaining directions and listening to the person's instructions. Both teams approach each other and instruct their dogs to sit or lie down (standing is also acceptable, but it may be more challenging for the dog to remain in place). The DHT requests directions, and the decoy team provides them. Following this, the two handlers can shake hands, fist bump, or the decoy team can hand a piece of paper to the testing handler.

### *Positive Responses:*

- ☐ Dog is relaxed and quiet and does not seek attention.
- ☐ Dog easily listens to handler and either sits/lies down and is relaxed and quiet.

### *Negative Responses:*

- ☐ Dog seeks attention and interrupts the conversation.
- ☐ Dog starts to bark or make noises, interrupting the conversation.

### *Assessor Notes:*

## OVERALL BEHAVIOR

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General observations and your thoughts of the interaction with the dog during the assessment.

*Positive:*

- ☐ Relaxed, friendly, easy to handle, calm, and playful.
- ☐ Shows no signs of stress.
- ☐ Not seeking attention, neutral, cautious, slow to engage, and calm.

*Negative:*

- ☐ Displays signs of stress or anxiety, such as spinning or pacing.
- ☐ Jumps on the assessor or is mouthy.
- ☐ Appears checked out, shaking, hiding, avoiding interaction, or fearful.
- ☐ Interacts aggressively or aggresses towards the assessor or pursues the assessor aggressively (assessor must cease interaction and discontinue the assessment).

*Assessor Notes:*

Assessor's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Pass

☐ Pass Pending

☐ Not Ready