

# Temperament Assessment Handbook

April 2024



## Why do we temperament assess?

It's simple. Safety. Safety for your dog and safety for service users. Therapy dogs should enjoy their work and not be under excess stress. Service users are often vulnerable (e.g., elderly, children, immunocompromised) and deserve to be safe around therapy dogs. If something bad happens because a dog is nervous, ill, or not suited to being a therapy dog, it is not fair for us to put them in that situation. We respect our dogs' autonomy and right to not want to engage with strange people. Therefore, one of the **requirements** of a therapy dog is to love people. This means that some dogs are suited for therapy dog work, and other are not, and **that is ok**, it certainly does not mean that they are not an amazing family pet.

## Dogs should be able to





Walk on a flat collar on a relaxed lead without excessive pulling. Therapy Dogs need to be under their owner's control at all times, without relying on the use of training or behaviour correction aids.



Accept being stroked and handled and having their paws, tails and ears checked by the assessor. Therapy dogs are sometimes even vigorously patted by service users. They need to not worry about having their paws, ears, or tail handled by a stranger. Dogs should be well groomed and their nails trimmed short.

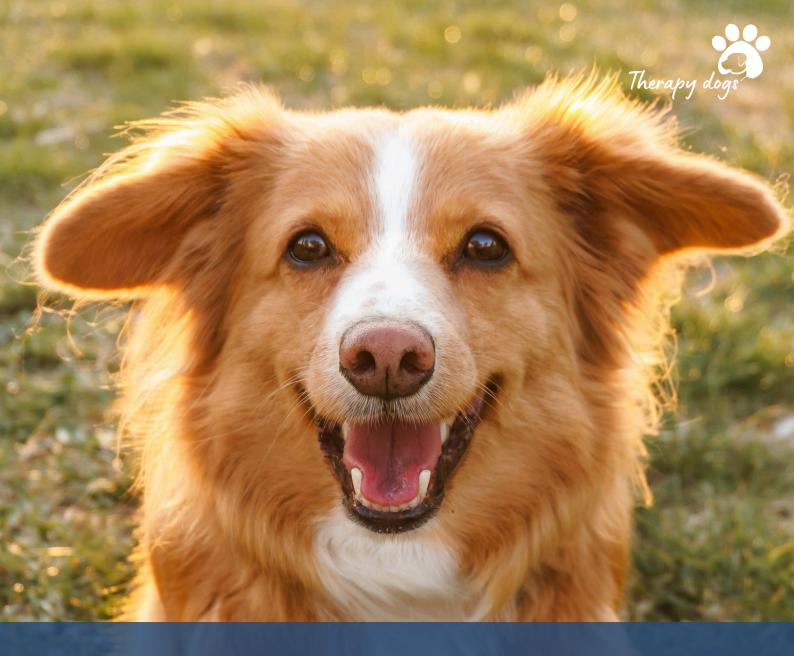


Take a food treat gently without snatching from the assessor. Service users love to be able to give Therapy Dogs a treat. It is important that they do not snatch it because some service users may be sensitive or have fragile skin.



Respond appropriately to a sudden noise or disturbance in the room. Therapy dogs encounter lots of new and unexpected stimuli - they should recover quickly from a fright.





### Handlers should be able to



Demonstrate control of their dog on the lead whilst holding a conversation with the assessor. Volunteers spend time talking to different people and dogs need to be able to wait patiently under the owner's control at all times



Groom their dog's back, chest, stomach, and tail. If the dog readily accepts grooming by its owner, it demonstrates that the owner has control over their dog's behaviour and the dog is willing to accept their authority.



Demonstrate that they can restrict their dog by holding its collar or holding him/her firmly. Therapy dogs may need restraint in case of an emergency in the establishment or if the owner needs to quickly withdraw their dog from a service users.



Present their dog in a fit, clean, and healthy condition. with collar identitification Fit and healthy dogs behave appropriately as therapy dogs under demanding social and physical situations. A well-groomed and clean dog is a sign of a responsible owner.

## More about the test

Dogs are tested in an unfamiliar environment which simulates a therapy dog visit. You will check in at the office/front desk, where your dog must sit and wait while you sign in. You will then walk into a room with various people whom your dog will greet. Dogs must remain on a reasonably loose leash under your control and demonstrate good manners (see next page for reasons for deferrals). Your dog will walk past another friendly dog and must remain under your control. The assessor will greet your dog, feed your dog a treat, and pet them on their paws, back, ears, and tail. At any point in the assessment, a loud object will be dropped on the floor to check your dog's recovery from startling. Once confident that the dog is safe, a demo child will run past and greet your dog, who must remain under your control.

The therapy dog test can result in three outcomes: [1] pass, [2] deferral, and [3] fail. Dogs who present with aggressive behaviour, have a bite history, or are scared easily in new environments will fail the test. Dogs who are deferred have the opportunity to re-attempt the temperament assessment following at least a three-month period, which gives them the opportunity to work on key areas of training. Dogs who pass the test earn their Therapy Dog "volunteer" bandana, and working dogs who pass will "earn the vest".

## Common reasons for deferral

Below are the main reasons why dogs are deferred, which you should consider before presenting your dog for assessment. Deferals are discussed and considered carefully by Therapy Dogs. We are very cautious that our dogs do not pose an unacceptable risk to the service users we are visiting. When deferred, you will have the opportunity to take the temperament assessment again following at least three months in which you can work further on training. The below is not a comprehensive list.

- Jumping up
- o Pawing, or putting paws up
- Pulling on lead
- Reluctance/backing away when being fussed
- Vocalisations such as barking or growling
- Mouthing
- Licking
- Taking food greedily

## Recommended Resources

Click on the coloured boxes to access the resource links. As you will see, we love using expert approaches that focus on you working with your dog continually. Dog training is an ongoing committment where you build a working relationship with your dog. We do not recommend or condone using coercion to force your dog to work with you. In therapy dog work, you need to be able to trust your dog just as your dog needs to turst you. We look to see that dogs WANT to work with their owners.

#### Guide Dogs for the Blind Puppy Raising Manual

"Although this manual is designed for guide dog puppies, its principles are applicable to dogs of all ages. It can guide you through progressing from basic training to advanced levels, including public access, socialization, and mastering the '3Ds': distance, distraction, and duration."

#### Susan Garret's Dog Training Blog

Susan Garrett is renowned for her agility expertise. Her courses for pet dogs can build recall, increase confidence, reduce anxiety, and enhance focus and self-control in dogs. Garrett's methods make training fun for your dog and for you, aiming to strengthen the bond between dogs and their owners.

### Karen Pryor's Clicker Training Blog

Karen Pryor is the pioneer of clicker training. Her blog features tips and tricks explaining clicker training works, its potential pitfalls, and step-by-step guides on how to effectively implement the techniques. She offers a variety of comprehensive paid online courses for serious enthusiasts.

### Absolute Dogs' Programs

Veterinary behaviourist Dr Tom Mitchell and agility champion Lauren Langman founded Absolute Dogs, which uses three-minute, games-based sessions to make training both enjoyable for you and your dog. Their website will guide you to the correct course best suited to your goals.



## Appropriate equipment

Dogs should be walked on a flat collar or harness (as appropriate for small dogs). No corrective devices (e.g., choke chains, slip leads) may be worn. We allow dogs "in training" for public access to wear The Gentle Leader headcollar as following Guide Dogs for the Blind's training program. However, this is not allowed for dogs wanting to pass the temperament assessment and begin volunteering. The leash should be sturdy leather or nylon, no chains are permitted. Your dog may wear a bandana or outfit that does not bother them or hinder their movements, but this is not necessary. Owners should dress appropriately as if they were visiting on a therapy dog visit (i.e. no short shorts, revealing clothing, or low cut tops).

## Frequently Asked Questions

#### Can any dog be a therapy dog?

No. While dogs do not need highly specialized training to be Therapy Dogs, they need to possess the right temperament and level of behaviour. Dogs who have a history of aggression towards other people, who are defensive of their owners, or are scared of strangers are not suitable candidates for therapy dog work. Therapy Dogs need to first and foremost love people, and possess a good level of impulse control to behave in public.

#### What is my time commitment?

We are grateful for your help. As a volunteer team, you can decide on your schedule in agreement with Therapy Dogs and your hosting organisation.

#### Can I use any of my dogs for a visit?

Only temperament assessed dogs which are approved by Therapy Dogs are allowed to go on visits with you. If you have more than one approved dog, you can choose ONE to go with you on each visit.

#### If I have multiple assessed dogs, can a family member help me visit?

No, you are assessed as a dog-handler team. No unauthorised individuals are allowed to assist with dogs on visits. The new family member is required to sit a temperament assessment with the dog so that we can assess whether they have the skills and relationship with the dog to safely conduct Therapy Dog visits.

#### Is there any further training?

Yes, all handlers are required to read our handbook and take our brief exam on our policies and procedures which ensures the safety of you, your dog, and our service users, and that international standards are upheld.

#### Am I insured on Therapy Dog visits?

All registered teams that volunteer with Therapy Dogs are insured by GFA insurance provided that they follow every regulation stated by Therapy Dogs. This includes conducting temperament assessments every 6 months (your insurance is only valid for this six month period), only visiting organisations that are approved and have an agreement with Therapy dogs, ensuring that all vaccinations and parasitic treatments are up to date, reporting any incidents or odd behaviours to Therapy Dogs, etc. Further details can be found in the Volunteer Handbook.

#### How many times can I take the Temperament Assessment?

If your outcome is "deferred", you can take the Therapy Dogs assessment as many times as is necessary to pass, provided that there are three month intervals in between for you and your dog to work on developing the skills and training necessary to pass the assessment.

#### Do you provide training assistance?

While we do not provide weekly training classes, we hold workshops a few times a year to work on developing specific skills. We can also provide you with resources to assist your training.

Can you train my dog for me? No, as you are a dog-handler team, it is important for you to develop the training and handling skills so that you can safely, and effectively work with your dog.

### take it again?

If I "fail" the assessment, can I if the assessment results in "failed" we will not allow you to re-take the assessment. "Failed" outcomes result from dogs which display intense, aggressive, or fearful behaviour or have a bite history. Therapy Dogs should enjoy their work and be safe around others.



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## Temperament Assessment

Owner's full name		Dog's Name					
Phone number	Dog's D.O.B						
Email address Address		Microchip No. Breed					
<u>Therapy Dog Test (I=ideal; A=acceptable; D=Deferral)</u>	T1 T2						
Shows controlled exit from vehicle		<u>Undesirable behaviours (tick if demonstrated)</u>	T1 T2				
Waits patiently while owner checks in		Jumping up					
Greets stranger politely		Pawing or putting paws up					
Allows owner to groom their whole body		Pulling on the lead					
Allows stranger to groom their whole body		Reluctance/backing away when being fussed					
Startle response & recovery from loud sound		Vocalisations such as barking or growling					
Concentration in new, distracting environment		Mouthing					
Basic positions sit, down, stand, and stay		Licking					
Loose lead walking under handler's control		Taking food greedily					
Takes food gently from handler and stranger		Unhealthy or ungroomed appearance					
Owner can have a conversation while dog waits		Dog is wearing innappropriate equipment					
Owner can restrain dog using their collar							
Dog's appearance and physical condition							
Dog's demeanour towards people							
Response around a strange dog							
Comments							

Signature

Assessor 2

Signature
Assessor 1



## Track my training\_V1

This resource helps to focus your training steps to prepare for your next temperament assessment or improve your training skills. We recommend re-filling this sheet every two weeks so that you can reflect on your goals and progress. This sheet is provided by Guide Dogs For the Blind. A guide for marking the sheet can be found in their Puppy Raising Manual. Our recommendation is to work on two goals at a time.

Dog's Name			Age		
Form completed by			Date		
Category	Behavior	1	Α	N	Comments
Trained	Audible Marker Response – "Nice"				
Dehaviers and					

Category	Behavior	I	Α	N	Comments
Trained	Audible Marker Response – "Nice"				
Behaviors and Cued Responses	Food Reward Acceptance				
	Enjoyment of Secondary Reinforcement				
	Environmental Food Debris Avoidance				
	"Sit"/ "Stand"/ "Down"				
	"Stay"				
	"Wait"				
	"Come"				
	"Go to Bed"				
	"Let's Go" / Leash Walking Behavior				
	"Okay"				
	"Kennel" - Crate Behavior				
	"That's Enough"				
Life Management	Public Settling Behavior				
Skills	Tether Behavior				
	Vehicle Riding				
	Relieving – "Do Your Business"				
	Equipment Acceptance				
Husbandry –	Grooming / Examination				
Grooming / Care / Body Handling	Nail Clipping / Ear Cleaning / Eye Cleaning / Teeth Cleaning / Pilling				
	Bathing				
	Body Handling / Layover				
Environmental	Distractions (e.g. dogs, people, food)				
Skills	Traffic				
	Noise				
	Objects				
	Surfaces				
	People				
	People Greetings When Allowed				
	Dogs				
	Animals (other than dogs)				
	Odors				
Home Behavior /	Home Settling Behavior				
House Manners	Off Leash Household Demeanor				
	In Home Play Behavior				
	Unsupervised Behavior at Home				
	Other Pets in the Home				
	Resource Sharing				
	Home Greeting Behaviors				

Notes





## Track my training\_V2

This resource helps to focus your training steps to prepare for your next temperament assessment or improve your training skills. We recommend re-filling this sheet every two weeks so that you can reflect on your goals and progress. Set your own goals using this sheet. We recommend using the same categories found in the Guide Dogs sheet or using "impulse control" "commands" "distrations/socialization" "tricks".

Dog's Name			Age			
Form completed by			Date	Date		
Category	Behaviour	ı	А	N	Comments	
Notes						
					Therapy dogs	