

APDT Good Companion Assessments

Core Elements

All participants need to pass the following assessments before moving on to the 'Choices'. All exercises must comply with the APDT Code of Practice and positive motivational methods must be employed at all times. Clickers, food and toys may be used wherever needed and appropriate at this stage for rewarding, but not luring, behaviour.

Please note: Instructor Notes in Green/italics

1. Response to name

The dog should show a clear response to the handler when their name is called.

- *A 'clear response' is at your discretion since a blind dog may not make immediate eye contact for example*
- *this can be assessed as part of other exercises e.g. "Rover (dog pays attention).....sit"*

2. Greeting Behaviour

The dog on lead held by the handler should behave appropriately when another person approaches.

- *It is expected that many dogs taking this assessment will still be very young and/or inexperienced while others may be anxious about meeting new people. This is then a test of how the handler is managing and training this aspect of their dog's behaviour. The handler is permitted to instruct the person approaching e.g. "please stop and step backwards if she goes to jump up" or "please don't make eye contact as you approach" or "please don't have food on you when you approach" and so forth.*

3. Lead Walking

The handler and dog will walk for between two and three minutes with one to three dogs also walking on lead in the immediate vicinity (5-10 metres). The walk should demonstrate that the dog understands that the lead should be loose when walking. The dog should maintain a fairly steady position at the handler's side with no cutting in front (possibly for treats) or lagging behind. At this stage, pulling towards other dogs/people may still happen occasionally

and if this happens (max of twice in a three minute walk), the handler will be assessed with regards to how they manage and train the behaviour.

- *Any equipment permitted under the APDT Code of Practice may be used, but the dog should always be comfortable. For example, excessive scratching of the face or nose diving when wearing a headcollar is not considered comfortable.*
- *Clickers and food are permitted and a short on the spot play break is fine for puppies taking this assessment. Handlers should be encouraged to engage with their dogs, talk to them and thus motivate them.*
- *Demonstrating understanding may simply be the dog walking well throughout or self-correcting when reaching the end of the lead or responding to spoken cue e.g. 'heel'. A spoken cue is not obligatory as many people teach their dogs that the lead itself is the cue to walk nicely.*
- *The other dogs and people in the vicinity should be chosen so as to enable the subject dog to pass the assessment, so an adolescent dog's best playmates are not advised for example, nor are dogs who lunge, bark etc and other people around should be calm.*

4. Recall

The dog will return to the handler with enthusiasm and speed (relative to age, size and breed) with mild distractions in the immediate environment. The recall should be over the longest reasonable distance.

- *The 'longest reasonable distance' for recall is at the instructor's discretion but wherever possible should be outside in a safe space (long lines if needed) but as some instructors do not have access to an outside area, the distance cannot be specific. Mild distractions should be agreed with the handler after assessment of the dog's needs. For example: for some dogs a recall with 6 other dogs on lead within 5 metres would be a mild distraction, but for another dog it could be frightening. Another dog could recall with children playing ball close by while for another ball crazy dog this would represent high distractions.*
- *The dog may be permitted a warm up recall.*
- *The dog must recall with enthusiasm and be rewarded warmly, a sit on arrival is not necessary at this stage.*
- *The recall can be to a word, phrase or a whistle or body gesture (arms open wide for example) or any combination as long as the dog clearly knows what it means and the recall cue is issued in a motivational manner.*

5. Positions

The dog will demonstrate good understanding of two out of the following three positions: SIT. DOWN, STAND

Sit

The dog will sit, on cue, first time

- a. in front of the handler
 - b. to the side as if at a roadside
 - c. in a position of the handler's choice
- *The dog's name or eye contact cue may be used first to get attention.*
 - *'On cue' means to demonstrate understanding of the word or hand signal.*
 - *It is intended that 'a position of the handler's choice' will further demonstrate the understanding of the word and encourage creativity and fun e.g. handler standing with back to the dog, leaning on a wall, standing on one leg or another position which the handler is comfortable with.*

Down

The dog will lie down, on cue, first time

- a. in front of the handler from sit
 - b. from stand
 - c. in a position of the handler's choice
- *The dog's name or eye contact cue may be used first to get attention.*
 - *'On cue' means to demonstrate understanding of the word or hand signal.*
 - *It is intended that 'a position of the handler's choice' will further demonstrate the understanding of the word and encourage creativity and fun as discussed in "sit" above.*

Stand

The dog will stand, on cue, first time

- a. from sit

b. from down

c. in a position of the handler's choice

- *The dog's name or eye contact cue may be used first to get attention.*
- *'On cue' means to demonstrate understanding of the word or hand signal.*
- *It is intended that 'a position of the handler's choice' will further demonstrate the understanding of the word and encourage creativity and fun as discussed in "sit" above.*

6. Self Control

The dog will complete **three** out of the following **four** options

Food Manners

The dog will wait while a bowl of food is placed in front of him and only proceed to eat it when cued to do so by the handler (minimum 10 second wait).

- *It is entirely optional whether to cue the dog to 'wait' as many people teach the dog that a food bowl is the cue to wait to be told when to eat it. It is necessary for the handler to demonstrate that the dog fully understands the behaviour required. This is a black and white behaviour, either the dog is waiting or he isn't i.e. he's either still or he's moving - still = pass, moving = fail. This is why the 'wait' time is short at this stage - it is better to have a solid 10 second 'wait' than a poor 2 minutes.*

Door safety

The dog will approach the door with the handler, and wait while the handler walks through the door and only proceed to join the handler when requested.

- *In this instance the dog should understand a cue word (e.g. wait/sit/stay)/signal since it is unlikely that many dogs will be taught that any door is a cue to wait.*
- *This is a black and white behaviour, either the dog is waiting or he isn't i.e. he's either still or he's moving - still = pass, moving = fail.*
- *The dog should only move when cued, not for example when the handler steps over the threshold or turns round .*

Vehicle Entry and Exit

The dog will remain under control getting in and out of a vehicle. The dog will therefore only enter the vehicle when cued to do so and only exit the vehicle when cued to do so. The handler should be able to move around and hold a quiet conversation while the dog waits in the car.

- *This can be taught as 'on cue' behaviour or a 'default' behaviour.*
- *This is a black and white behaviour, either the dog is waiting or he isn't i.e. he's either still or he's moving - still = pass, moving = fail.*
- *Situations where the dog only waits when the handler is making firm eye contact, pointing and repeating the cue word are to be avoided. The dog should understand his behaviour as separate from the handler and should release on a specific cue to ensure proper safety.*

Play Manners

The dog will either:

1. Wait while a ball/toy is thrown and fetch it when released by the handler after a minimum of 5 seconds, or
 2. Wait in front of the handler while a tuggy toy is jiggled around considerably for a minimum of 5 seconds and only take the toy when cued to do so.
- *For safety, balls shouldn't be thrown in close proximity to other dogs.*
 - *This is a black and white behaviour, either the dog is waiting or he isn't i.e. he's either still or he's moving - still = pass, moving = fail.*

Choice Elements

2 out of the following 4 should be added to the core elements

Leave

The dog will, on lead while walking, leave (on cue) two separate, moderately interesting items on the floor.

- *While Foundation Level is at 'mild' distraction level, these items should be of moderate value as the dog is on lead. At later levels for example the item could be low value but the dog off lead.*
- *What is considered 'moderate' must be planned beforehand with the handler and the handler should know the location of the items along the short route (markers may be used) so that the handler can adjust position so the dog is aware of the item but not right on top of it (possibly increasing its value).*

- *The handler should be encouraged to imagine the items are dangerous things on a pavement.*
- *The dog should show immediate clear response to the cue word, without the handler pulling on the dog's lead.*

Stay

The dog will perform two 'stay' exercises

1. The dog will stay in a sit, down or stand for 30 seconds while the handler does mildly distracting things approximately 3 metres away. The handler will go back to the dog and release him with a verbal cue/hand signal.

2. The dog will stay in a different position for 20 seconds while the handler does mildly distracting things approximately 5 metres away and then the handler will release (verbal cue/hand signal) the dog from that distance, and call the dog to him.

- *The purpose is for the dog to demonstrate understanding that his behaviour is separate from the handler's, so full eye contact, pointing at the dog, walking backwards and repeating the cue word are not acceptable.*
- *Mildly distracting could be the handler having a conversation, tying his shoelaces, reading a newspaper etc.*
- *The dog may be cued to stay using any word or phrase e.g. sit, stay, wait, down stay etc*

Play

The dog will either play:

1. Retrieve - waiting while the ball or other toy/object is thrown, retrieving the item when released and bringing it back to hand x 2

2. Tuggy - the dog will wait while the toy is wiggled, take it when asked, play enthusiastically and give it back when asked x 2

- For safety, ball/toy should not be thrown in close proximity to other dogs

Full Examination

The dog will allow the instructor to conduct an all over body examination including eyes, ears, nose, teeth, tail area, belly, paws etc while remaining reasonably calm.

- *It is expected that the instructor will be familiar to the dog and therefore a full examination will not cause any distress to the dog. If an outside*

assessor is being used it is acceptable for either the handler or instructor to make the examination rather than the assessor who will be unfamiliar to the dog.