

Can any dog be a Therapy Dog?

Therapy dogs come in all sizes and breeds. The most important aspect to consider is that your dog has a good temperament. A good therapy dog must be friendly, patient, confident, at ease in all situations, and gentle. Therapy dogs must enjoy human contact and be content to be petted and handled, sometimes clumsily.

A therapy dog's primary job is to allow unfamiliar people to interact and make physical contact with him and to enjoy that contact. Children in particular enjoy hugging animals; adults usually enjoy simply petting the dog. Many of our dogs add to the visiting experience by performing small tricks for their audiences or by playing carefully structured games.

The Peninsula Humane Society & SPCA, provides testing and evaluation for its therapy dogs. The first step requires that a dog pass the American Kennel Club's CGC (Canine Good Citizen) 10 step test.

What are the 10 steps to pass the CGC test?

Test 1: Accepting a friendly stranger

Test 2: Sitting politely for petting

Test 3: Appearance and grooming

Test 4: Out for a walk (walking on a loose lead)

Test 5: Walking through a crowd (politely, under the handlers control)

Test 6: Sit and down on command and Staying in place

Test 7: Coming when called

Test 8: Reaction to another dog (behave politely around other dogs).

Test 9: Reaction to distraction (confident at all times when faced with common distracting situations)

Test 10: Supervised separation (dog can be left with a trusted person, if necessary, and will maintain training and good manners)

More Testing

In addition to passing the CGC test, Peninsula Humane Society & SPCA requires all of our Pet Assisted Therapy teams to pass a behavior temperament evaluation that includes requirements specific to the environments in which the dogs will be working. Typical evaluations ensure that a dog can be touched and hugged, handle sudden loud or strange noises, walk on assorted unfamiliar surfaces comfortably, is not frightened by people with canes, wheelchairs, or unusual styles of walking or moving and gets along well with children and with the elderly.