

Therapy-Dog Work

Self-Evaluation of You and Your Dog

If you are considering doing therapy-dog work, take this self-evaluation to get valuable information about you and your dog's readiness:

About Your Dog

Place an x along the line to indicate how you would rate your dog in each of the following areas along a continuum from A to B:

A = Is never interested in meeting or being with strangers

B = Always, consistently, and actively seeks out the company of humans

A ----- B

A = Extremely high energy and hyperactive

B = Extraordinarily calm, mellow, and relaxed

A ----- B

A = Afraid of anything and everything outside of his/her normal environment

B = Quickly adjusts to all new environments, sounds, strangers, etc. with no problem

A ----- B

How often does your dog have significant interaction with people outside of your home?

A = Never

B = Several hours each day

A ----- B

How often does your dog do the following, where A = All the time and B = Never

Paw people: A ----- B

Jump up on people: A ----- B

Lick people: A ----- B

Vocalize (whine, bark, "talk," etc.): A ----- B

How does your dog behave at the veterinarian or groomer?

A = Nervous, shaking, pacing, panting, etc.

B = Calm, cool and collected

A ----- B

How does your dog react when seeing another dog?

A = Growls, snarls, lunges

B = Mildly curious, but still pays attention to me

A ----- B

About You

Are you able to attend every training session? *(Some programs have a single day-long orientation. Other programs have trainings that meet once or twice a week for one or two months.)*

Do you have the time to work with your companion animal on a regular and on-going basis to train and maintain the behaviors necessary for making safe visits? *(An hour per week could be a reasonable amount of time.)*

Can you commit to consistently making your scheduled visits for at least one year? *(Some programs ask for one visit per week.)*

Do you have the time (or the money for a professional groomer) to commit to thoroughly bathing and grooming your animal partner within 24 hours prior to every visit? *(Many programs require that your animal is bathed and groomed within 24 hours prior to each visit.)*

Can you commit to attending the group's membership meetings? *(Many groups have mandatory meetings for continuing education and support that meet monthly or every-other month.)*

Yes	No

Place an x along the line to indicate how you would rate yourself in the following areas along a continuum from A to B:

A = I have trouble doing what I say I'm going to do, even though I have the best intentions

B = If I say I am going to do something, I do it.

A ----- B

A = I have never been on time for an appointment in my life

B = I have never been late for an appointment in my life

A ----- B

A = I am uncomfortable meeting and interacting with strangers

B = I LOVE meeting new people of all kinds and making small talk

A ----- B

A = I feel most comfortable when I have close supervision; I am uncomfortable making decisions on my own

B = I am completely confident working on my own and prefer making decisions on my own

A ----- B

Scoring

As you've probably already guessed, scores which fall in the red zone mean you or your dog are not ready (or suitable) for therapy-dog work. Scores in the yellow zone mean you or your dog need some consistent, hard work, but you have potential. Scores in the green zone mean that you or your dog are good candidates. As a team, you're only as strong as your weakest link. If you're still interested in therapy-dog work, do the work to get you both in the green zone.