



Pet Access League Society Evaluation Requirements – Dogs

PALS new evaluation for dogs is divided into two assessment phases: skills and reaction. It has 13 individual testing exercises. The evaluation is designed to simulate visitations at a facility with a therapy dog.

Skills Assessment

In the skills assessment, you will be asked to get your dog to perform simple tasks which demonstrate obedience. We are seeking dogs that can remain relaxed and attentive through each exercise. You may use verbal praise to encourage your dog during the exercises, but no food rewards. Your dog needs to be under control at all times.

Test 1: Accepting a friendly stranger and sitting politely for stroking & inspection

The dog/handler teams will enter the facility in a polite manner prepared to check in. The evaluator will greet each person and dog. At the same time, the collars will be checked as well as nails, ears and grooming. The dogs must permit the evaluator to check the collar, all four paws, ears and tail must be lifted if applicable. The dog must be friendly and outgoing upon meeting the evaluator, willing to visit without being invasive and show manners.

Test 2: Out for a walk

Dog/handlers will walk in a straight line 10 metres on a loose leash. Dog does not need to maintain a heel position for this exercise but must not reach the end of the lead/put tension on the lead in any direction.

Test 3: Changing floor surfaces

The dog/handler team is ready to enter a door to the facility. The handler must put the dog into a sit or stand, let someone through the door in advance and then proceed calmly through the door ahead of their leashed dog onto a new floor surface i.e.) carpet to lino, cement to hardwood etc.

Test 4: Come when called

This exercise is done on a long lead. Handler will be asked to wait until your dog wanders a short distance away and not looking at the handler. The handler will call the dog and they should return quickly. You can use words and praise or move position or posture to encourage your dog to return.

Test 5: Group sit/stay

The evaluator will ask all participants to line up with their dogs in a heel position with 8 feet between each team. The handlers will put their dogs in a sit/stay position. When the evaluator tells handlers to leave their dogs, they will turn and walk to the end of their 6 foot leash and wait for the evaluators command to return to their dogs.

The Reaction Assessment

This assessment evaluates a dog's ability to cope with noise and distractions during visits. The evaluator will consider the dog's confidence when faced with the unusual. It is normal for a dog to be curious and, at times, apprehensive, but we do not want dogs to show excessive startling, try to escape, become aggressive, jump or bark. Dogs need to remain engaged (sitting, standing, walking or laying down) without moving away or showing signs of nervousness to any of the distractions.

Test 6: Exuberant and clumsy petting

Your evaluator will begin by patting your dog's head and gradually move their hands up and dog your dog's body, including the tail and ears and become increasingly clumsy with their handling.

Test 7: Walking through a crowd

You and your dog will be ask to walk through ha moving crowd of at least four people (both men and women – one of whom will be wearing a ball cap and another will have a stroller). Your dog will need to remain close at your side. Your dog can show some interest in strangers, without appearing overly excited (i.e. jumping), shy or fearful (i.e. pulling away on the lead or backing away). You will not be able to pull the lead or physically move your dog through the people. The second time you and your dog pass through the crowd, the crowd will make some noise. The crowd may talk to each other and clap.

Test 8: Crowded or patted in a group: At least three people will gather closely around your dog and gently begin to touch it. All people will be talking and all will try to gain your dog's attention. Your dog will need to accept the attention without signs of nervousness.

Test 9: Distractions

The dog handler team must be walking in a straight line. The dog can be on either side, or slightly behind the handler, the leash must not be tight. The following distractions will be added in the path of the dog's walking:

- a) Passing a person on crutches;
- b) Passing a person with a walker;
- c) Passing a person in a wheelchair;
- d) Visiting with a patient: The dog should show a willingness to visit a person and demonstrated it can be made readily accessible for petting i.e.) small dogs can be placed on a person's lap or held. Medium or larger dogs can sit on a chair or stand close to the patient to be easily reached;
- e) An evaluator standing approximately two to three metres away from your dog will shout in an angry voice an wave their arms about.

Test 10: Gentle

The dog/handler team meets a person using a walker or wheelchair; the dog should approach the person and visit. The person will offer the dog a treat. The dog must take the treat gently, without mouthing or nipping or mouthing the evaluator's hand.

Test 11: Leave it

The evaluators will place food/treat on a plate on the ground. The dog/handler will walk within a meter of the plate and ask the dog to leave the food. You can use a word, hand signal or both but you will not be able to drag the dog away from the food or physically move them.

Test 12: Reaction to another dog

This involves another person and their dog (both dogs are on lead). You will be required to walk towards each other from about 5 meters away and then stop (person to person) about two metres apart. Dog will be asked to maintain a position while people have a brief conversation then continue walking. Both dogs should have not more than a passing interest in each other.

Test 13: Reaction to children

The last phase of the test shows if the dog will be able to work well around children. Initially, the child will run and shout at a distance 10 feet away from the dog. Then, the child will come and ask the handler to pet the dog. The dog is expected to accept calm petting and not lunge/bark or move towards the playing children.