

Pet Partners Evaluation Procedures

To be registered as a Pet Partners® team, you and your animal must be evaluated by a licensed Pet Partners® Evaluator. The evaluation process consists of the Pet Partners Skills Test (PPST) and the Pet Partners Aptitude Test (PPAT).

To test basic good behavior skills, animals and their handlers complete the PPST. This test was modeled, with permission, after the American Kennel Club's Canine Good Citizen (CGC) Test. Health care equipment, such as wheelchairs and walkers, has been added to the test. Skills are evaluated for how well the team can manage in an unfamiliar setting, such as a nursing home, hospital, school, etc. There are 12 items in the PPST.

The PPST is also used for screening cats and other animals. These animals do not perform all of the test items in the same way. For example, instead of walking on a leash, rabbits and cats must show that they can be carried in a basket or in the handler's arms.

The Pet Partners Aptitude Test (PPAT) determines if you and your animal have the ability, capacity, desire, and potential for participating in animal-assisted activities (AAA) and animal-assisted therapy (AAT) programs. This part of the evaluation is similar to what many people would call a temperament test. Pet Partners does not use the word "temperament" because so many people think that animals are born with a certain temperament and it can never be changed. We know that with training, many animals can learn to be reliable. For this reason, we use the word "aptitude" to suggest that the test applies to the animal's ability or potential for AAA/AAT. The PPAT also evaluates the aptitude of the animal/handler team.

The PPAT is a combination of scenarios in which the individual exercises flow from one to another. The order of the exercises allows for escalation of stressors during testing. During the PPAT, the handler and animal should interact (i.e., role play) with the evaluator and assistants as though they are people being visited at a facility. The handler should be able to work with the animal while at the same time interacting socially with the "client" (evaluator and assistants) as if on a visit.

Pet Partners Evaluation Requirements

- ❖ Food treats cannot be used during the test.
- ❖ The team may be given up to 3 attempts to successfully complete skills of the PPST, but only if the mistake is due to handler error. Each attempt must be on a different day. Individual exercises may be attempted only one time per evaluation, unless the a problem is caused by the evaluator.
- ❖ Collars and Leashes may not have any chain type material.
- ❖ Head collars may not be used.
- ❖ Slip collars may not be used.

Pet Partners Skills Test

Exercise 1 - Review Handler Questionnaire

Purpose: This exercise helps the evaluator and team become more familiar with each other.

Procedure: Information exchanged about the team during this exercise may alert the evaluator to circumstances that may affect the evaluation. While the evaluator reviews the questionnaire, you should walk around and become familiar with the testing area.

Exercise 2 - Accepting a Friendly Stranger

Purpose: This exercise demonstrates that the team can greet strangers appropriately.

Procedure: The evaluator and handler shake hands and exchange pleasantries. The animal should allow the evaluator to approach; the handler should be relaxed and friendly. The animal may change position, but must remain next to the handler and neither approach nor shy away from the evaluator.

Exercise 3 - Accepting Petting

Purpose: This exercise demonstrates that the team has suitable social skills and control for visits.

Procedure: The evaluator will ask to pet your animal. The evaluator pets the animal and then circles the animal and handler. The animal may change position, but must remain next to the handler and neither approach nor shy away from the evaluator.

Exercise 4 - Appearance and Grooming

Purpose: This exercise demonstrates that the team's appearance is clean and appropriate for visits and that the animal welcomes being groomed and examined, even by a stranger. It also demonstrates the handler's care, concern, and responsibility.

Procedure: The evaluator will first ask you for your pet's brush, then lightly brush your animal and examine its feet and ears. The evaluator inspects the animal, then combs or brushes the animal and lightly examines the ears and each front foot. Unclean animals will be scored as "Not Ready".

Exercise 5 - Out For a Walk (Walking on a Loose Leash)

Purpose: This exercise demonstrates that the handler is in control of the animal and the animal is comfortable moving with the handler.

Procedure: The handler and animal walk a short course. Dogs are supposed to walk on a loose leash; other animals are carried as they would be when visiting. All animals must be wearing a collar or harness and be on leash. The animal should walk on a loose leash or be carried without:

- ❖ Pulling

- ❖ Jumping
- ❖ Struggling
- ❖ Barking or crying
- ❖ Excessive Sniffing
- ❖ Refusing to walk past medical equipment

Exercise 6 - Walking Through a Crowd

Purpose: This exercise helps simulate a crowded corridor and demonstrates that the team can move about politely in pedestrian traffic and under control in public places.

Procedure: The handler and animal walk through a "crowd" of three people, passing close by them. The animal may show some interest in the strangers, but not appear over-exuberant, shy, frightened, or resentful. Dogs walk (unless small) and other animals are carried. The handler should be aware of the animal's behavior and help the animal in a friendly tone.

Exercise 7 - Reaction to Distractions

Purpose: This exercise demonstrates that the animal remains calm and confident when faced with common distractions.

Procedure: While walking back to the beginning location from Exercise 6, the team will be exposed to one visual and one auditory distraction from a distance of no closer than 10 feet. The distractions may include a person who is running, rolling in a wheelchair, dropping a crutch, pushing a metal cart, or dropping noisy items. The animal may express a natural interest and curiosity and may appear slightly startled, but should not:

- ❖ Panic
- ❖ Struggle or try to run away
- ❖ Vocalize
- ❖ Show aggressiveness
- ❖ Eliminate

The handler should be aware of the animal's needs and give praise or encouragement as needed.

Exercise 8-10 - Sit, Down, and Stay on Command

Purpose: For larger dogs, this exercise demonstrates that a dog will sit, lie down, and stay on the handler's cue. For small dogs and other animals, these exercises demonstrate that the animal will accept being passed from one person to another and will remain where placed.

Procedure: For dogs (except small dogs that will be carried):

There are three elements to this exercise. First, the handler cues the dog to sit, then waits for the evaluator's signal to release the dog (after no more than three seconds). Next, the handler cues the dog to lay down, then waits for the evaluator's signal to release the dog (after no more than three seconds). Finally, the handler replaces the dog's leash with a 10-foot light line and places the dog in a sit, down, or stand (handler's choice), then cues the dog to stay. The handler will walk to the end of the line, at all times holding onto the line, pause for two to three seconds, and return to the dog. The handler may not force the animal into position, use a loud voice, or jerk on the leash. The handler may take a reasonable amount of time and use more than one command in a friendly tone.

For other animals (including small dogs that will be carried on visits):

Sit and Down - The animal will be passed to three strangers. The handler can talk to and pet the animal during this portion of the exercise.

Stay in Place - The animal is placed in a stranger's lap or on a table for 30 seconds. The animal must stay where placed. Standing next to the animal, the handler continues to hold the animal's lead and may reassure the animal, but not pet it. During the 30-second wait, the evaluator or an assistant pets the animal.

Exercise 11 - Come When Called (for dogs only)

Purpose: This exercise demonstrates that the dog will come to the handler and allow the handler to attach a leash, even while being pleasantly distracted.

Procedure: The handler will attach a 10-foot light line to the dog. The handler will cue the dog to stay and walk to the end of the line. The evaluator will attempt to distract the dog by petting it. When signaled by the evaluator, the handler will call the dog. The handler may pat the floor and use verbal encouragement, but no food or toys, to bring the dog close enough. When the dog reaches the handler, they must reattach the dog's leash and remove the 10-foot line, without letting go of the dog.

(Very small dogs that have been carried during other parts of the evaluation must complete this floor exercise on the floor.)

Exercise 12 - Reaction to a Neutral Dog

Purpose: This exercise demonstrates that the handler is aware of the animal's potential response to a dog, and can help the animal succeed while still being polite and friendly to a stranger.

Procedure: Two handlers and their animals approach each other from a distance of about 10 yards, stop, shake hands, and exchange pleasantries, and continue on for about five yards.

The handler must be aware of the animal's potential response to a dog, help the animal succeed, and at the same time, be polite and friendly to a stranger. If the test is done with two dogs, they should show no more than a casual interest in each other. A dog that crosses the vertical mid-line of the handler, either

in front or behind, to try and reach the neutral dog will be scored a "Not Ready". (Small dogs may be carried for this exercise.) Cats and other animals can be held by the handler or placed in a carrier and walked past a dog. The animal should not:

- ❖ Growl or bite
- ❖ Stare
- ❖ Bark or cry
- ❖ Chase
- ❖ Raise its hackles
- ❖ Attack
- ❖ Attempt to jump on a person or an animal

Pet Partners Aptitude Test

Exercise A - Overall Exam

Purpose: This exercise demonstrates that the animal will accept and is comfortable being examined by a strangers. It also shows that the handler knows how to present the animal on a visit and how to help the animal welcome being touched all over.

Procedure: The evaluator will look in the animal's ears, hold its tail, put fingers in its mouth, and handle its feet.

Exercise B - Exuberant and Clumsy Petting

Purpose: This exercise demonstrates that the animal will maintain self-control and will tolerate clumsy petting by people with different physical abilities or who do not know how to handle and animal properly. It also shows that the handler knows how to work with the animal to help it accept such attention.

Procedure: The evaluator will use elbows and clenched hands to pet the animal, making sure not to pet too hard or to injure it in any way. The evaluator will also speak vowel sounds in a monotone (simulating speech difficulty). If the team is enjoying the interactions and handling them well, the evaluator will extend the exercise a few moments and increase the level of exuberance to that of an excited child or adult.

Exercise C - Restraining Hug

Purpose: This exercise demonstrates that the animal will accept or welcome restraint and that the handler can assist the animal to accept or welcome such a situation

Procedure: The evaluator will unexpectedly give the animal a full body hug that restricts its movement. If the animal is a bird or other small animal, the evaluator will not hug the animal but will restrain its movement with both hands.

Exercise D - Staggering/Gesturing Individual

Purpose: This exercise demonstrates that the animal will exhibit confidence when a person acting in an unusual manner approaches. It also shows that the handler has the social skills to interact with a stranger while attending to the animal.

Procedure: A person with an unsteady gait and wearing a shawl, or someone using an assistive device such as a walker, will approach the animal, gesturing wildly, and/or wailing. The person will stop staggering, then call the animal to approach or will otherwise attract the animal's attention. If the animal appears comfortable, the person will pet the animal.

Exercise E - Angry Yelling

Purpose: This exercise demonstrates that the animal will not be upset when someone exhibits strong emotions and that the handler can help the animal tolerate such a situation.

Procedure: Two people will begin to shout angrily at each other and wave their arms. The "Angry Yelling" will not be directed at the handler or the animal; it will take place approximately 6 feet to one side of them. The animal may startle but should recover. The duo will stop yelling and begin to act "neutral". One of the people will then call the animal to see if it will approach.

Exercise F - Bumped from Behind

Purpose: This exercise demonstrates that the animal is able to recover when a person bumps into it. It also shows that the handler can both tolerate the animal being bumped and assist the animal to recover from the surprise.

Procedure: The evaluator may use their leg or ankle to bump the dog. For animals that are being carried, the evaluator bumps the handler lightly on the opposite side of where the animal is carried.

Exercise G - Crowded and Petted by Several People

Purpose: This exercise demonstrates that the animal will tolerate crowding and petting by several people at once. The handler must have the social skills to interact with the group while attending to the animal and looking out for its well-being.

Procedure: At least three people, arriving one at a time, will gather closely around the animal and begin to touch it. One of them will be using healthcare equipment. If the team seems to be enjoying the interaction, the evaluator may increase the intensity of the interaction to help aid in proper placement of the team (e.g. Predictable vs. Complex).

Exercise H - Leave It

Purpose: This exercise demonstrates that the animal will ignore a toy when cued to do so. It also demonstrates that the handler is aware of the animal's position and behavior, and is able to prevent the animal from mouthing or picking up the toy. Some sniffing of the toy is acceptable.

Procedure: The team is directed to walk 10-feet forward past the toy and then walk on another 10 feet and stop. The team must walk past the toy, which is positioned so that the animal is on the same side as the toy.

Very small dogs must walk on the floor during this exercise, even if they are carried during other parts of the test. Cats should be handled as they will be on a visit, either carried in arms or a basket or walking on a leash on the floor, as the handler chooses. If the cat is carried, the evaluator or assistant will approach the team with a toy as the team walks by to determine the cat's reaction.

Exercise I - Offered a Treat

Purpose: This exercise demonstrates the animal will take a treat politely. The handler may provide the treats to be offered to their own animal, and may take steps to calm the animal if the animal becomes over stimulated. The handler may choose not to have the animal take the treat. If the animal takes the treat, it must do so gently.

Procedure: The evaluator will ask the handler if they can give the animal a treat. They will then give the treat to the animal, assuming the handler says yes.

Exercise J - Overall Assessment

Purpose: The evaluator scores the overall reaction of the team to the test as a whole.

Procedure: The evaluator will score the test, noting whether the handler is proactive, reactive, or inactive in the handling and management of the animal. In addition, the evaluator notes whether the team has developed the level of trust and understanding needed to work well together in unpredictable environments. During the PPAT, the handler and animal should interact with the evaluator and assistants as though they are people being visited at a facility. The handler should be able to work with the animal while at the same time interacting socially with the "client" (evaluator and assistants) as if on a visit.

The test results possible are:

- ❖ Not Suitable for Visiting: This would eliminate a team from becoming a Pet Partner.
- ❖ Not Ready: This indicates that the team is not ready for visiting. With practice, a team can try again at another time.
- ❖ Predictable: This indicates that the team has passed the test, but should refrain from visiting complex environments as determined by the facility matrix.

- ❖ Complex: This indicates that the team has passed the test, and is ready for visiting all levels of complexity as determined by the facility matrix.