



Veronica Morris, PhD

Elaine Malkin

BOARD OF DIRECTORS  
Linden Gue

Heather Walker

Bradley W. Morris, MA, CPhil

1651 Sandpiper Drive  
Rock Hill, SC 29732  
USA

(805) 876-4256  
info@psych.dog  
www.psych.dog

## Public Access Test

Dog's name: \_\_\_\_\_ Handler's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of test: \_\_\_\_\_ Tester's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Result:  Pass  No pass

Tester's signature: \_\_\_\_\_

### Purpose

The purpose of this public access test (PAT) is to help evaluate service dog team behavior in public, no-pets places. This PAT is a minimum community standard for use with any type of service dog team.

A service dog must be trained to do work or a task to help its disabled person, but universal PATs do not usually test that disability assistance training. Once a service dog in training is reliably able to help with a person's disability, teams commonly use a PAT to decide whether they are ready to graduate to service dog status. PSDP recommends this, as well as using our Service Dog in Training Manners Evaluation leading up to the PAT.

Service dog testing is not required by law in the United States, and PSDP believes this is appropriate. A history of focused and safe training development is always more meaningful than passing a PAT on a single day, and behavior in each ongoing moment is key. Training and responsible handling are lifelong activities.

PSDP does not certify service dog teams. Individuals are welcome to use this voluntary PAT with a knowledgeable tester for the purposes of service dog training or evaluation. PSDP is not liable for any risks or consequences of using this free public resource.

### Scoring and organization

This test is divided between guidelines and activities. Guidelines apply throughout the test, while activities are separate events for individual evaluation.

The test items are in a yes-or-no format. *The team must be successful on all items to pass.* However, dogs and humans are not robots. If there is a minor mistake—for example, a dog is accidentally placed immediately next to a french fry under the table and samples it—the tester may use their discretion to give the team a second chance with the test item. Egregious mistakes (including aggression) are not allowed.

The tester may also use their discretion to adjust or omit test items that are not available in the tester's general area (like elevators) or that are unreasonable due to a handler's disability (such as shopping cart or stair use).

### Basic requirements for service dog teams

Some teams can pass a PAT on a good day, but the dog does not yet have the mental stability to work full-time as a service dog. This can be because the dog does not have enough training, the dog is too young, or the dog does not have a temperament (personality/mindset) that enables it to work safely or comfortably.

Public access training usually takes 1–3 years of effort. This does not mainly happen in the kind of classes pet dogs take, but is focused specifically on safely developing a dog's resilience and attention in a wide variety of unpredictable situations.

Teams can try safely taking a PAT (or PSDP's Service Dog in Training Manners Evaluation) whenever they like, in order to gauge how the dog is at the moment. Generally, we advise waiting until *at least* 18 months of age to use a PAT to graduate a dog as a service dog. Before this age, dogs are prone to suddenly forgetting their training during "fear periods" or "teenager stages" that can last for months at a time. Many dogs trained as puppies for the purpose are not ready to graduate until 2 to 3 years of age.

Dogs should be the appropriate size and temperament for the work required of them. Dogs used for mobility work need to be at least two years old and should receive clearance from a veterinarian.

A service dog should present a professional image by being well-groomed and cared for, and should be licensed in accordance with local laws. The dog's basic needs (food, water, elimination, and rest) should always be a top priority for the handler. Secondary needs are also important (exercise, mental stimulation, socializing/bonding, playtime, veterinary/health care, etc.).

PSDP highly recommends using working gear that identifies the team as a service dog team as a gesture of courtesy to the public. However, this is not required under United States federal law. The handler should provide protective clothing for the dog when appropriate. This can include warming, cooling, and rainproof jackets, properly fitted boots, and goggles.

---

## Guidelines

Guidelines apply throughout the evaluation. After or throughout the testing, the tester should indicate whether the team meets each guideline, noting anything exceptional or useful.

### G1. Training/controlling aids

PSDP encourages training throughout the lifetime of the dog. However, the PAT is designed to give a good snapshot of how the dog can be expected to behave without intensive training aids, so handlers are not allowed to use treats during the test. Additionally, leash corrections or other physical corrections are not permitted.

This does not mean the dog must be handled like a robot. Handlers can definitely use praise and petting to reward good behavior in public. This can be important for maintaining a bond and encouraging the dog to enjoy working.

This PAT prohibits the dog from being outfitted with any device designed to train or control by causing pain or fear (such as prong collars, choke collars, shock collars, and studded/prong harnesses). A head collar or non-prong, no-pull harness is acceptable only if the handler needs such an item due to their disability. This kind of device should only be used as an emergency failsafe (e.g., safety for balance issues), and cannot be relied on to control the dog during the test. Martingale and limited-slip collars are good for keeping a dog from backing out of its collar if the dog has a neck almost as wide as its head, but should not be used for corrections.

*Throughout the test, no treats, leash corrections, or training aids were used:*

Yes       No      Notes:

## **G2. Leash tension**

The dog should not continuously/repeatedly strain at the leash (it should normally form a "J"). Harness tension is okay if safe for the dog and actively needed for disability mitigation (e.g., mobility or guide work). Retractable leashes are acceptable only when needed for disability-specific work. In either of these cases, the handler should alert the tester to the need and always maintain control without the dog excessively pulling or wandering.

*Throughout the test, team had an appropriate level of looseness in the leash/harness:*

Yes       No      Notes:

## **G3. Inappropriate service dog conduct**

Inappropriate behaviors include but aren't limited to:

- growling or inappropriate, excessive barking
- nipping or biting
- showing or baring teeth
- lunging at other people or dogs
- being out of handler's control
- inappropriately eliminating (urinating or defecating)

*Throughout the test, dog did not display any inappropriate behaviors:*

Yes       No      Notes:

## **G4. Working position**

Each team's working position will be different to meet their disability requirements or the external situation. Acceptable working positions include a traditional heel, a forward heel, providing momentum pull, being carried in the arms or in a pouch or bag, or any other working position where the dog is within three feet of their handler and not causing a disturbance or danger to themselves or others by their position.

Note that unless indicated in the test item, small dogs who are justifiably carried as their normal working position may complete the activities from their carried position. Small dog teams should include a non-carried working position in their training when reasonable, in order to be prepared for unexpected situations. We encourage these teams to demonstrate this proficiency where they think it makes sense to on the PAT.

*Throughout the test, dog was safe, comfortable, and confident in an appropriate working position:*

Yes       No      Notes:

## **G5. Working with distractions**

The dog should be able to perform its duties and remain focused on the handler. If the dog becomes startled or distracted at any time, it should be able to quickly return its attention to the handler with very little or no redirection. The dog should not be

aggressive or fearful, or cause the handler to fall or stumble.

*Dog was able to work despite distractions encountered in normal working environment:*

Yes       No      Notes:

---

## Activities

Activities are separate events for individual evaluation. After each activity, the tester should indicate whether the team successfully completes the activity, noting anything exceptional or useful.

### A1. Information review

*Handler acknowledged reading and understanding the PAT sections above (Purpose, Scoring and organization, Basic requirements for service dog teams, and Guidelines):*

Yes       No      Notes:

### A2. Vehicles/public transportation

The dog should be able to wait until instructed to enter or exit the vehicle. The handler should be able to unload the dog and any other necessary equipment (wheelchair, walker, crutches, cane, etc.) with the dog following their instructions. The dog should be on a leash, harness, or other device when exiting the vehicle and stay with the handler and under control.

The dog should be trained to ride in vehicles without significant anxiety or otherwise being worked up. The dog should remain under control at all times without the need for coercion.

*Dog entered and exited a form of transportation in a safe manner:*

Yes       No

*Dog rode in a form of transportation in a controlled manner:*

Yes       No      Notes:

### A3. Parking lot behavior

The team should transit the parking lot safely. The dog should be able to remain in working position unless cued to do otherwise. The dog should be able to navigate a parking lot environment with confidence and remain focused on its handler.

*Team transited a parking lot safely:*

Yes       No      Notes:

### A4. Controlled entry into a building

The team should be able to enter a building in a controlled and safe manner. The dog should be confident when encountering varied types of flooring, the blasts of overhead blowers, automatic doors, and other sensations associated with places of business. If trained to do so for disability mitigation, the dog should be able to safely operate doors for the handler.

*Team entered a building in a controlled manner:*

Yes       No      Notes:

### **A5. Navigating a store**

The team should be able to move through stores together with the dog in working position. The dog should not attempt to solicit attention from others, knock into shelves, or interact with merchandise, such as by sniffing or licking. The dog should be able to walk past areas such as the bakery section, meat section, or pet food aisle, and be able to disregard such distractions to keep sufficient focus on the handler. \*If the dog has been trained specifically to sniff food to aid with the user's disability, then the dog can work at identifying the trigger by sniffing the food from a reasonable distance.\*

The handler should be able to interact with the public and remain in control of their dog at all times. Unless it is okayed beforehand with the handler and the other party, the dog should not solicit attention from others. If the dog happens to behave inappropriately, the handler should regain control quickly and respectfully.

Assuming the person can use a cart, the dog should be able to maintain a working position while the person uses the cart. Generally, it is not a reasonable accommodation for a service dog to be placed in a shopping cart.

*Team appropriately walked a short course in the store including a right turn, a left turn, and a u-turn (carried dogs must be on the ground for this item):*

Yes       No

*Dog did not bump into shelves or interact with merchandise:*

Yes       No

*Dog did not interact with other people unless instructed to do so:*

Yes       No

*Dog did not lick or closely sniff food or other items in store:\**

Yes       No

*Dog maintained a working position while handler uses a shopping cart:*

Yes       No      Notes:

### **A6. Obedience training**

Regardless of the dog's normal working position, the dog needs to perform the following basic obedience commands at least from the ground. Service dog teams do not have to follow obedience competition rules. Handlers are welcome to use praise, attention cues, leave-it cues, or similar positive, non-treat cues as they would in everyday life.

*Dog held a sit, down, or stand stay on cue for 30 seconds:*

Yes       No

*Dog came on cue from a distance of 6 feet or greater:*

Yes       No

*Dog focused on the handler on cue (dogs who are carried should demonstrate this both*

*on the ground and while in their normal working position):*

- Yes       No

*Dog walked past and left a food item on the ground; handler did not use leash to stop the dog from getting the food item:*

- Yes       No      Notes:

### **A7. Strangers**

It is common for people to approach and try to interact with a service dog, so a service dog must safely tolerate the general public. The dog should be able to greet a friendly stranger, ignore them, or move out of their way, whichever has been cued or trained. The dog should remain confident and calm and not get overly excited or show any signs of aggression or undue fear.

*Dog was able to ignore, greet, or get out of the way of a stranger—whichever the dog has been trained or cued to do:*

- Yes       No

*Dog did not exhibit any inappropriate behavior when touched by a stranger:*

- Yes       No      Notes:

### **A8. Elevator**

The team should be able to load into an elevator and travel up and down with the dog remaining calm in a sit, down, standing, or default carried position. The dog should not closely sniff anything on the floor or walls of the elevator, or interact with others without prior consent. The team should be able to enter and exit the elevator in a controlled manner. The team should use extreme caution to avoid being separated by the elevator doors.

*Team safely loaded into and out of an elevator and traveled both up and down, with the dog remaining calm in a sit, down, standing, or carried position:*

- Yes       No      Notes:

### **A9. Stairs**

This item only applies if the person is able to safely use stairs. The dog should maintain a position safe for all parties, which may differ from its usual working position. The dog should not cause the handler or others to fall or stumble.

*Team safely ascended and descended stairs:*

- Yes       No      Notes:

### **A10. Use of public restrooms**

Accessible stalls are often the right choice with a service dog, when such larger stalls are available. If necessary, a handler can place a large dog in a stay command just outside of the restroom stall, if it is too small for both to occupy. The handler should then maintain a connection with the dog by taking the leash under the stall door and keeping a hold on it.



The handler should not allow the dog to go under partitions into adjoining stalls, place its head into them, or look into them.

The handler is not expected to eliminate during the test. Standing/being in the stall for 30 seconds is enough.

*Dog acted appropriately and did not cause a disturbance in the restroom:*

Yes       No      Notes:

### **A11. Working around other dogs**

The dog should be able to focus on the handler while walking around for approximately one minute with other dog/handler pairs also randomly walking around. Multiple dog/handler pairs are preferred for this activity, but one other pair is acceptable if more are unavailable. The dogs should not be walked within three feet of one another. Mild interest in other dogs is fine, but the dog should remain under the handler's control and not greet, play with, or exhibit aggression toward the other dogs or people. All dogs should walk on the floor for this activity.

*Dog maintained a working mode while walking around other dogs:*

Yes       No      Notes:

### **A12. Restaurant**

The team should be able to enter a restaurant or eating area and the dog should not attempt to eat, lick, or closely sniff any food on the floor or on tables. The handler should ensure the dog's area is relatively free of food, which may mean asking staff to sweep under the table. \*Once again, if the dog has been trained specifically to sniff food to aid with the user's disability, then the dog can work at identifying the trigger by sniffing the food from a reasonable distance.\*

The dog should not beg from anyone or attempt to interact with others. The handler should be able to move and place the dog in a space that still allows the dog to perform its duties, but that minimally interferes with the coming and going of others. For most teams, this placement is lying under or beside the table. Dogs should not be allowed on tables, chairs or benches at any time. It is acceptable for a small dog to be in the handler's lap only if the dog does not attempt to eat, lick, or closely sniff at food or the table.

A handler should never feed their dog any food from the table.

*Dog did not beg or attempt to eat or closely sniff any food on the floor or on tables:\**

Yes       No

*Dog was reasonably positioned to cause the least obstruction to the flow traffic:*

Yes       No

*Dog was not on a table, chair, or bench, but was always either on the floor or in a lap:*

Yes       No

*Handler did not feed or water their dog from the table:*

Yes       No      Notes: