

Ottawa Therapy Dogs Test Requirements

Thank you for your interest in becoming a member of Ottawa Therapy Dogs (OTD). Before you may become a registered therapy dog team, you and your potential therapy dog need to be evaluated by a certified evaluator. Below is a list of the tasks and factors that you and your dog will be required to pass in order to be eligible to register with OTD.

1. **Accepting a Friendly Stranger:** This test demonstrates that the dog will allow a friendly stranger to approach it and speak to the handler in a natural, everyday situation. The Evaluator and handler shake hands and exchange pleasantries. The dog must show no sign of resentment or shyness, and must not break position or try to go to the Evaluator.
2. **Sitting Politely for Petting:** This test demonstrates that the dog will allow a friendly stranger to touch it while it is out with its handler. The dog should sit at the handler's side as the Evaluator approaches and begins to pet the dog on the head and body only. The dog may stand in place to accept petting. The dog must not show shyness or resentment.
3. **Appearance and Grooming:** This practical test demonstrates that the dog will welcome being groomed and examined and will permit a stranger, such as a veterinarian, groomer, or friend of the owner, to do so. It also demonstrates the owner's care, concern and sense of responsibility. The Evaluator inspects the dog, then combs or brushes the dog, and lightly examines the ears and each front foot. (Nails must be clipped short and be rounded smooth to avoid scratching fragile skin in those visited by OTD Therapy Dogs.)
4. **Out For a Walk (walking on a loose leash):** This test demonstrates that the handler is in control of the dog. The dog can be on either side of the handler, whichever the handler prefers. There must be a left turn, a right turn and an about turn, with at least one stop in between and another at the end. The dog need not be perfectly aligned with the handler and need not sit when the handler stops.
5. **Walking Through a Crowd:** This test demonstrates that the dog can move about politely in pedestrian traffic and is under control in public places. The dog and handler walk around and pass close to several people (at least three). The dog may show some interest in the strangers, without appearing over-exuberant, shy or resentful. The handler may talk to the dog and encourage or praise the dog throughout the test. The dog should not be straining at the leash.
6. **Sit/Down on Command/Staying in Place:** This test demonstrates that the dog has training, will respond to the handler's commands to sit and down, and will remain in the place commanded by the handler (sit or down position, whichever the handler prefers). The handler may take a reasonable amount of time and use more than one command to make the dog sit and then down. When instructed by the Evaluator, the handler tells the dog to stay and walks forward the length of a 20 foot line. The dog must remain in place, but may change position.

7. **Come When Called:** This test demonstrates that the dog will come when called by the handler. The handler will walk 10 feet from the dog, turn to face the dog, and call the dog. The handler may use encouragement to get the dog to come. Handlers may choose to tell the dog to "stay" or "wait" or they may simply walk away, giving no instructions to the dog as the Evaluator provides mild distraction (e.g., petting).
8. **Reaction to Another Dog:** This test demonstrated that the dog can behave politely around other dogs. Two handlers and their dogs approach each other from a distance of about 10 yards, stop, shake hands and exchange pleasantries, and continue on for about 5 yards. The dogs should show no more than a casual interest in each other.
9. **Reactions to Distractions:** This test demonstrates that the dog is confident at all times when faced with common distracting situations, such as the dropping of a large book or a jogger running in front of the dog. The dog may express a natural interest and curiosity and/or appear slightly startled, but should not panic, try to run away, show aggressiveness, or bark.
10. **Reaction to Medical Equipment:** The dog should be tested around medical equipment (such as a wheelchair, crutches, cane, walker, or other devices which would ordinarily be found in a facility) to judge the dog's reactions. At the discretion of the Evaluator, this test may be included in any of the following portions of the test.
11. **Leave It:** The handler with the dog on a loose leash walks past food on the ground (placed with a distance of three feet) and, upon command, the dog should ignore the food.
12. **Acclimation to Infirmities:** This test demonstrates the dog's confidence when exposed to people walking with an uneven gait, shuffling, breathing heavily, coughing, wheezing or other distractions that may be encountered in a facility.
13. **Supervised Separation:** This test demonstrates that a dog can be left with a trusted person, if necessary, and will maintain its training and good manners. Evaluators would say something like, "Would you like me to watch your dog?" and then take hold of the dog's leash. The owner will go out of sight for three minutes. The dog does not have to stay in position but should not continually bark, whine, or pace unnecessarily, or show anything stronger than mild agitation or nervousness.

A couple of notes:

- Dogs must be tested on a buckle collar.
- Greyhounds are not required to sit for the OTD test.