

Companion Dog, Worker, Citizen

Popular AKC program certifies dogs as sound community members.

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Is your dog a good citizen? Do you have the papers to prove it?

A program offered by the American Kennel Club provides just that for dog owners. The club's Canine Good Citizenship Program is often the first step toward participating in one of thousands of pet therapy programs around the country. Some owners use it to convince employers that their dog can handle a day at the office. Or it can just be a way to see how your dog stacks up.

No formal training is necessary to take the test, but eight-week classes are available in communities across the country to prepare dogs for the evaluation.

What does your dog have to do to prove he is a good citizen? Here's a look at the 10-part test:

1. Meeting friendly new people: Your dog will be expected to sit or stand calmly while you stop and speak to a stranger.
2. A pat on the head: Your dog must sit or stand while a stranger pets him.
3. A trip to the veterinarian/groomer: Your dog must permit a stranger to brush him and examine his paws and ears.
4. A walk in the park: Your dog will be asked to walk with you on a loose leash, including turning left, right and around and coming to a stop.
5. A walk in a crowd: Your dog must show he is at ease while you walk him in a crowd.
6. Staying put: Your dog must perform a Sit and/or Down and then remain in place while you walk away from him.
7. Answering a call: Your dog must come when you command.
8. Dog to dog: When meeting another dog, your dog must show only casual interest.
9. Accepting the unexpected: Your dog must not panic when confronted by common distractions, such as a loud noise or a passing jogger.
10. Dog-sitters welcome: Your dog should behave when a friendly stranger takes his leash and you disappear for three minutes.