



Team Evaluation Renewal Tips

Pet Partners believes strongly in the re-evaluation of teams every two years to ensure animals and their handlers have maintained the necessary skills and aptitude for AAA/AAT work. Even though you are an experienced team, you must still fully participate in and successfully pass your evaluation in order to renew. The following are some tips that may help you prepare for success.

Practice Makes Perfect

Even experienced teams benefit from practicing before their evaluation. Dog teams must have a reliable: “Sit”, “Down”, “Stay”, “Come” and “Leave It” and should walk with a loose leash. Check with your evaluator about skill requirements for other species. As a handler, you can work on being observant, anticipating your animal’s responses, behavior and positions, and then redirecting, as needed. You should be actively involved and engaged while you visit and evaluate. Don’t let your animal do all the work.

Don’t Forget to Role Play

An evaluation is a simulated visit in many ways and evaluators are watching the human end of the leash as well as your animal. Fully participating in the evaluation includes role playing interactions with ‘clients’ in the evaluation exercises. Your interactions may be in the form of questions, responses to the evaluator and evaluator’s comments, eye contact, smiling, head nodding, directing the animal to interact, or other verbal and nonverbal methods of communicating.

Actively Support Your Animal

During your skills and aptitude test, your evaluator will be looking for how you support and interact with your animal. Remember, you are your animal’s best advocate – or YAYABA. This means you are putting the health, safety and well-being of your animal first through your actions. You will also want to be actively practicing *PETS* (proximity/eye contact/touch/speech). This means reassuring and supporting your animal through your presence, an encouraging word, a gentle pet or simply making eye contact.

Arrive Prepared

Do you have everything you need with you? This includes items such as your [handler’s questionnaire](#) and your animal’s brush and proof of rabies vaccination. Review the [evaluation checklist](#) for renewing teams closely to make sure you are prepared. If you are requesting an accommodation for the evaluation, this must be discussed with your evaluator at least two weeks in advance of your evaluation date, so that it may be submitted to Pet Partners for approval.

Review the Policies and Procedures

Part of the volunteer agreement you will sign when you submit your registration indicates that you are responsible for keeping up to date on all Pet Partners [policies and procedures](#). While preparing for your re-evaluation it is a great time to review these guidelines and make sure you are informed and ready to be successful.

Put Your Best Foot/Paw Forward

You'll be treating this like a visit, so remember to dress appropriately with close toed shoes and to bathe and groom your animal as though you were going on a visit. If you're considering changing your equipment, be sure to review the [equipment standards](#) before arriving at your evaluation. You will be evaluating in the same equipment you plan to visit in. Some evaluators may ask that your animal does not wear a vest or scarf during the evaluation, so ask ahead of time.

You're On!

Your team evaluation session starts as soon as get out of your car, and does not finish until you leave the testing premises. Observed behaviors such as a handler dropping the animal's leash or an animal having an aggressive interaction with another animal outside the evaluation exercises will impact the evaluation outcome.

Common Re-Evaluation Challenges

Even the most seasoned teams can receive a "Not Ready." Although preparing for your evaluation can help, everyone can have their off days - both animals and people. Remember, your previous experience as a team does not influence the score of your re-evaluation.

If you do receive a "Not Ready" at your evaluation:

- You can still try again and schedule another evaluation
- You may not visit as a team until you have successfully re-evaluated
- Talk to your evaluator, and discuss areas you should practice
- Consider if you have gotten complacent in some of your skills

The following are the most common exercises scored as "Not Ready" and tips for scoring well.

Pet Partners® Skills Test [PPST]	Pet Partners® Aptitude Test [PPAT]
1. Review Handler Questionnaire *	A. Overall Examination
2. Accepting a Friendly Stranger *	B. Exuberant and Clumsy Petting *
3. Accepting Petting	C. Restraining Hug *
4. Appearance and Grooming	D. Staggering, Gesturing [Individual]
5. Out for a Walk	E. Angry Yelling
6. Walk Through a Crowd	F. Bumped From Behind
7. Reaction to Distractions	G. Crowded and Petting by Several People
8. Animal Passed to 3 Assistant [Small Animals]	H. "Leave It" [with toy] *
9. Sit on Command & Down on Command	I. Offer Treat *
10. Place on Lap or Table [Small Animals] or Stay in Place	J. Overall Assessment of Handler
11. Come when Called [For Dogs] *	
12. Reaction to Neutral Dog *	KEY: *High Rate: of "Not Ready"[NR]

Review Handlers Questionnaire

Evaluators are looking to see how you identify and manage stress in your animal. You should be able to describe your animal's stress signals. Remember stress signals are a form of communication and are normal.

Accepting a Friendly Stranger

At the beginning of the evaluation nerves can come into play – relax, smile, breathe, and support your animal. We want you and your animal to be successful.

Come when Called Exercise

For practicing use a 10 foot leash or rope to practice the “stay” command. Consider using a timer to set a limited ‘wait’ time during practice.

Neutral Dog Exercise

Practice on-leash approaches toward other dogs. Invite a co-worker and their dog to meet you in a quiet parking lot. Dog parks are generally not a good place to practice as the dog park is your dog's ultimate “meet and greet” venue. When approaching a dog, position your animal first before you meet and greet. Remember, the evaluator will be watching to make sure your dog does not cross either in front of you, or at the back, to meet the neutral dog.

Exuberant and Clumsy Petting / Restraining Hug

Desensitize your animal, as needed, to noise as well as touching feet and other sensitive areas such as under the tail, teeth and ears. No mouthing, excessive licking or vocalization, or jumping is allowed. The most successful handlers are proactive and redirect their animal's behavior before they can interact inappropriately.

Leave It

Consider visiting places like pet stores to get your animal used to slippery floor surfaces, strange noises and tempting toys. You do not have to tempt your dog with the toy. It is acceptable for you to walk briskly by the toy, proactively asking your dog to “Leave-It” as you approach the toy.

Offer Treat

Handlers can either accept or decline the offer of a treat. If you are going to decline the offer of a treat, have an explanation why you are declining ready for the client such as “Thank you, but my animal is on a special diet.” If you are going to allow treats on visits a proactive handler will instruct how the treat should be offered, such as on an open palm at nose height. Animals must take the treat gently, with no jumping up on people or mouthing.