

# CANINE GOOD CITIZEN® PROGRAM

## ABOUT THE CANINE GOOD CITIZEN PROGRAM

Welcome to the American Kennel Club Canine Good Citizen (CGC) Program.

The CGC Program is a two part program that is designed to:

- 1) teach responsible dog ownership to owners and;
- 2) certify dogs that have the training and behaviors needed to be reliable, well-behaved members of their families and communities.

The purpose of the CGC Program is to ensure that our favorite companion, the dog, can be a respected member of the community because it has been trained to be well behaved in the home, in public places, and in the presence of other dogs. The CGC Program welcomes both purebred and mixed breed dogs. The CGC Test is noncompetitive and dogs are not required to perform with the same precision required in formal obedience. Dogs that pass all 10 items of the CGC test, including purebreds and mixed breeds, are listed in the CGC records at the American Kennel Club. Owners of dogs that pass all 10 items of the CGC test may order an official CGC certificate from the American Kennel Club.

Handlers may talk to their dogs throughout the test and the atmosphere should be relaxed. Praise should be given to dogs throughout the test, and you may need to remind handlers who are nervous to reassure their dogs with praise, smiles, hugs and pats.

## AGE REQUIREMENTS FOR DOGS

There is no age limit for dogs taking the CGC test. Because we support owners who wish to socialize and introduce their dogs to training as early as possible, dogs are welcome to participate in CGC tests when they are old enough to have completed all vaccinations. Owners who bring young dogs to CGC tests become acquainted with qualified trainers and the CGC test can be used to identify future training goals.

There are several exceptions to having no age limit at a CGC test. The Match Regulations of the American Kennel Club (Chapter 2) impose minimum age requirements of at least 6 months for A, OA and OB sanctioned matches and at least 2 months at B matches. When CGC tests are given in conjunction with AKC events, clubs enforce the regulations for all activities.

Another exception to having no age limit for dogs taking the CGC test is when the test is specifically designed to evaluate dogs for use in therapy work. In this case, some test giving agencies, at the direction of therapy dog groups might require that dogs be at least 1 year of age to be evaluated. We would like to stress that when a dog is tested and passes the CGC test as a puppy, it is important for the owners to have the dog re-tested as an adult. This is because behavior and temperament can change over time. Further, the responsible owner will have dogs re-evaluated on CGC skills periodically (e.g., every 2 years) to demonstrate that training and good manners are maintained. If dogs are re-tested, owners may choose to order an updated certificate or they may simply keep their old certificate along with updated CGC test paperwork showing more recent proof of passing the test.

## BITING OR GROWLING INCIDENTS

Any dog that growls or snaps at, bites, attacks, or attempts to attack another person or another dog is not a good citizen and must be dismissed from the test. If an Evaluator observes any signs of aggression (biting, snapping, growling, attempting to attack) the testing should not be continued.

Further, if any of these behaviors are observed in the immediate testing area prior to or after testing, the Evaluator should send a written report to the AKC CGC Department. If you witness a dog engaging in an aggressive incident after passing the test, you should NOTIFY THE AKC.

**ON THE GROUNDS OF AN AKC SHOW:** If there is an aggressive incident (biting, growling, snapping) in your CGC ring and the test is held in conjunction with an AKC event, dismiss the dog from the test and notify the Show Superintendent and AKC Field Representative immediately!!

Evaluators should use good judgement when a dog shows signs of aggression. Do not attempt to work through an aggression problem in a CGC test. If the dog engages in any aggression, testing should stop. As an Evaluator, if you are having a difficult time reading the dog and you feel uncomfortable; you should instruct the owner to handle the dog in a manner that ensures your safety. For example, it is acceptable for Evaluators to ask owners to lift the dog's leg for you so that you may handle the foot. Evaluators can instruct owners to steady a dog's head or provide the dog with reassurance during the exam and grooming exercises. If the dog is making you feel so uncomfortable that you feel unsafe, the dog should not pass the CGC test. AKC Conformation judges have provided some of our CGC Evaluators with good tips on how to approach difficult-to-read dogs. Some of these tips include: approach the dog from the front at a slight angle rather than directly head-on, avoid staring at the dog, talk in a reassuring, confident voice, and give the handler specific, direct instructions for particular exercises ("I need to check the feet, could you help me by lifting each leg?").

## **COLLAR, LEASHES AND EQUIPMENT**

All tests must be performed on leash. Dogs should wear well-fitting buckle or slip collars (including martingales) made of leather, fabric, or chain. Special training equipment such as harnesses, pinch collars and head collars are not permitted. The leash should be made of either leather or fabric.

We recognize that special training collars may be valuable equipment in the beginning stages of dog training, however, we feel that dogs are ready to be tested after they have been transitioned to a slip or buckle collar.

## **CORRECTIONS**

The Canine Good Citizen Program is a program that encourages owners to have fun with their dogs. Harsh corrections are not permitted in the test and are grounds for dismissal.

## **DISABILITIES-DOGS**

Dogs with disabilities such as the loss of a leg, deafness, or blindness in one eye are welcome in the Canine Good Citizen Test. Dogs must perform all of the 10 items to pass the test, however, handlers may use hand signals, gestures, or other cues to which the dog has been trained to respond. There are no breed specific exceptions to the test requirements (e.g., dogs may not skip the sit exercise because "this breed doesn't like to sit.")

## **DISABILITIES- HANDLERS**

Handlers with disabilities are encouraged to participate in the Canine Good Citizen Test. Sometimes, it may be necessary to make minor changes to standard procedures to accommodate handlers with disabilities

## **ELIMINATING (URINATING/DEFECATING) DURING TESTING**

Any dog that eliminates during testing should not pass the test. The only exceptions to this are that elimination is allowed between exercises (e.g., the dog urinates on a bush as he is being walked to the next test station) and in Test 10 when the test is held outdoors.

## **FOOD**

Handlers are not permitted to use food as a reward during the CGC Test. While we recognize that food can be effectively used as a reinforcer during training, it is considered a training aid and should not be used in the CGC test. The purpose of the CGC Test is to determine if the dog has learned all of the skills on the test and if the dog can be controlled by the handler if no special incentives are offered.

## **RETESTING**

Evaluators may choose to allow dogs who have only missed one test item to take the test again at the end of the day's testing.

## **THERAPY DOGS**

Several of this country's largest therapy dog organizations use the CGC Test as a partial screening tool for therapy dogs. In most cases, for therapy dog screening, the CGC Test is given with some additional testing. For example, in the test involving a crowd, therapy dog groups might require that someone in the crowd use health care equipment

such as a walker, cane, or crutches. Additional paperwork is provided by and submitted to the therapy dog group. Some therapy dog groups also require that their evaluators be certified through the therapy dog organization.

### **TITLE-IS CGC A TITLE?**

Canine Good Citizen (CGC) is not an official AKC title like Ch. Or C.D. It is meant to reward dogs for having good manners, which enhances the public acceptance of dogs. CGC may be used for advertising or pedigrees, but the AKC does not add CGC to the dog's official registration papers. "CGC" is an award and not a title.

### **VACCINES AND LICENSES**

As of June 2003, evaluators no longer must require proof of vaccines. Owners sign the Responsible Dog Owner's Pledge to attest that their dogs are in the care of a qualified veterinarian. The vaccine (rabies, etc.) requirement was changed because the veterinary community has changed its thinking about vaccines. Some vets are moving away from annual vaccines. Owners should work with a veterinarian to make their best informed decision about what is right for their dogs.

Because so many municipalities do not do licensing, we no longer enforce it in the CGC Program due to Evaluator concerns that it was difficult to verify.

### **ITEM 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 walks up to the dog and handler and greets the handler in a friendly manner, ignoring the dog. The test begins with the dog seated at the handler's side. The Evaluator and handler shake hands and exchange pleasantries (e.g., "Hello, it's good to see you again," as they shake hands). In this test, the Evaluator does not interact with the dog.

### **ITEM 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. With the dog sitting at the handler's side, (either side is permissible) to begin the test, the Evaluator approaches and asks, "May I pet your dog?" The Evaluator then pets the dog on the head and body. The handler may talk to his or her dog throughout the exercise. After petting the dog, the Evaluator may circle the dog, or simply back away to begin the next test.

### **ITEM 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. This test also demonstrates the owner's care, concern and sense of responsibility. The Evaluator inspects the dog to determine if it is clean and groomed. The dog must appear to be in healthy condition (i.e., proper weight, clean, healthy and alert). The handler should supply the comb or brush commonly used on the dog. The Evaluator softly combs or brushes the dog and, in a natural manner, lightly examines the ears and gently picks up each front foot.

### **ITEM 4: OUT FOR A WALK (WALKING ON A LOOSE LEASH)**

This test demonstrates that the handler is in control of the dog. The dog may be on either side of the handler, whichever the handler prefers. (NOTE: The left side position is required in all AKC obedience competitions). The Evaluator may use a preplanned course or may direct the handler by calling out instructions (e.g., "right turn"). Whichever format is used, there must be a right turn, left turn, and about turn, with at least one stop in between and one at the end. The handler may talk to the dog throughout the "walk" to encourage it and may give praise. The handler may also give the dog a command to sit at the stop, if desired.

### **ITEM 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 (at least three) people. The Evaluator can be

counted as one of the three people in the crowd. Children may act as members of the crowd, however, when children participate in the test, they must be instructed on their role and be supervised by an adult. Some of the members of the crowd may be standing still; however, some crowd members should be moving about. This test simulates settings such as busy sidewalks or walking through a crowd at a dog show or public event. If the CGC is being given for therapy dog certification (which is not an AKC activity), most national therapy dog groups require that at least one person in the crowd use some health-care equipment such as walkers, canes, wheelchairs, etc. There may be one dog in the crowd, but the dog must be on-leash, well mannered, and not attempt to initiate contact with dogs that are being tested.

#### **ITEM 6: SIT AND DOWN ON COMMAND/STAYING IN PLACE**

This test demonstrates that the dog has training and will respond to the handler's commands to sit and down, and will remain in the place commanded by the handler. The dog needs to 1) sit on command 2) and down on command 3) then, stay in a sit or down. For the Stay in Place test, the handler may choose to leave the dog in a sit or down position. Prior to this test, the dog's leash is removed and replaced with a 20-ft. line (or a 15-ft. line attached to the dog's leash). The handler may take a reasonable amount of time and use more than one command to make the dog sit and then down. The Evaluator must determine if the dog has responded to the handler's commands. The handler may not use excessive force to put the dog into either position, but may touch the dog to offer gentle guidance. When instructed by the Evaluator, the handler tells the dog to stay and walks to the end of the 20- ft. line, turns and **returns immediately to the dog at a normal pace**, at which time the Evaluator instructs the handler to release the dog. The dog must remain in the place it was left (it may change position such as stand up) until the Evaluator instructs the handler to release the dog. The dog may be released from the front or side.

#### **ITEM 7: COMING WHEN CALLED**

This test demonstrates that the dog will come when called by the handler. With the dog still on the 20-ft. line from Item 6, the handler will walk 10-ft. from the dog, turn to face the dog, and will call the dog. The handler may use body language and e n c o u r a g e - m e n t when calling the dog. Handlers may tell the dog to "stay" or "wait" (or another similar command) or they may simply walk away. The dog may be left in the sit, down, or standing position. If a dog attempts to follow the handler, the Evaluator may distract the dog (e.g., petting) until the handler is 10 feet away. This exercise does not test "stay"; this exercise tests whether or not the dog will come when called. The test is complete when the dog comes to the handler and the handler attaches the dog's own leash.

#### **ITEM 8: REACTION TO ANOTHER DOG**

This test demonstrates that the dog can behave politely around other dogs. Two handlers and their dogs approach each other from a distance of about 15-feet, stop, shake hands and exchange pleasantries, and continue on.

#### **ITEM 9: REACTION TO DISTRACTIONS**

This test demonstrates that the dog is confident at all times when faced with common distracting situations. The Evaluator will select two distracters from among the following: (Since some dogs are sensitive to sound and others to visual distractions, it is preferable to choose one sound and one visual distraction.) A note about distractions: Distractions such as gunshot, the rapid opening of an umbrella close to the dog, walking on a metal grid, etc. are temperament test items that are typically seen on formal temperament tests. The CGC Test should not be confused with temperament testing. While instructors may use a variety of distractions (e.g., a person in scuba gear) in training classes, in the CGC test, distractions should be items that are common occurrences in the community.

#### **ITEM 10: SUPERVISED SEPARATION**

This test demonstrates that a dog can be left in the presence of a trusted person and will maintain its training and good manners. Evaluators are encouraged to say something like, "Would you like for me to watch your dog?" An Evaluator will hold the leash of the dog while the owner goes out of sight for 3 minutes. In the early days of the CGC Program, evaluators were asked to not talk to the dog so that the testing of this skill could be standardized across evaluators. We realize that most owners would not leave their dogs with someone who did not talk to the dog. Evaluators may talk to and pet the dog but should refrain from giving the dog excessive attention, playing with the dog, etc.