

Canine Good Citizen (CGC) Exercises

1. Meeting and accepting a friendly stranger:

This test demonstrates that your dog will allow a friendly stranger to approach it and speak to you in a natural, everyday situation. The evaluator will walk up to your dog and you and greet you in a friendly manner, ignoring your dog. The evaluator and you will shake hands and exchange pleasantries. Your dog must show no sign of resentment or shyness, and must not break position or try to go to the evaluator.

How to practice:

Take your dog out and about with you. Many pet stores allow dogs to accompany you while you shop. Home Depot allows “dogs in training” to accompany you while browsing through the store. Or, when you are out for a walk – greet passer bys with a “hello.” Treat your dog as he passes them calmly and waits while you exchange pleasantries with the other person. Take your dog to visit the vet – EVEN when he doesn’t need a check up! Sign you dog up for an obedience class. What better way to get you dog WELL socialized but in a controlled setting!

2. Sitting politely for petting:

This test demonstrates that your dog will allow a friendly stranger to touch it while it is out with you. With the dog sitting at your side, to begin the exercise, the evaluator pets your dog on the head and body. You may talk to your dog throughout the exercise. Your dog may stand in place as it is petted. Your dog must not show shyness or resentment.

How to practice:

When meeting passer bys, have your dog sit to be greeted. Use a happy voice and lots of treats. If your dog starts to jump or be rambunctious – turn your back and walk away from the greeter – then turn around and try it again. Patience, patience, patience. Your dog must meet people on YOUR terms.

3. Appearance and Grooming:

This practical test demonstrates that your dog will welcome being groomed and examined and will permit someone, such as a veterinarian, groomer or friend of yours, to do so. It also demonstrates your care, concern, and sense of responsibility for your pet. The evaluator inspects your dog to determine if it is clean and groomed. Your dog must appear to be in a healthy condition (i.e., proper weight, clean, healthy and alert). You should supply the comb or brush commonly used on your dog. The evaluator then softly combs or brushes your dog, and in a natural manner, lightly examines the ears and gently picks up each front foot. It is not necessary for the dog to hold a specific position during the examination, and you may talk to your dog, praise it and give encouragement throughout this exercise.

How to practice:

Have a friend over and ask them if they’d like to groom your dog. Have them softly comb or brush your dog using happy tones to their voice and LOTS of treats.

4. Out for a walk (walking on a loose lead):

This test demonstrates that you are in control of your dog. Your dog may be on either side of you. Your dog's position should leave no doubt that the dog is attentive to you and is responding to your movements and changes of direction. Your dog need not be perfectly aligned with your position, as handler and your dog need not sit when you stop. The evaluator may use a pre-plotted course of may direct you and your dog by issuing instructions or commands. In either case, there should be a right turn, left turn, and an about turn with at least one stop in between and another at the end. You may talk to your dog along the way, praise your dog, or give commands in a normal tone of voice. You may sit the dog at the halts if you desire.

How to practice:

Take your dog on daily walks. In the beginning use a Gentle Leader to practice loose leash walking. Be a "tree" if your dog is pulling. Only go forward when the leash is loose. Turning in various directions away from your dog is another way to get your dog to walk nearer to you. Have lots of luscious treats on you and reward your dog for being next to you. A happy tone to your voice will help make the experience even better for your dog.

5. Walking through a crowd:

This test demonstrates that your dog can move about politely in pedestrian traffic and is under control in public places. Your dog and you walk around and pass close to several people (at least three). Your dog may show some interest in the strangers but should continue to walk with you, without evidence of over-exuberance, shyness or resentment. You may talk to your dog and encourage or praise your dog throughout the test. Your dog should not jump on people in the crowd or strain on the leash.

How to practice:

Walk your dog in areas that there are people. Keep your dog's attention on you by bringing lots of tasty treats with you to reward your dog staying WITH you. As with #1 – go to stores that allow your dog. Pet stores do, and what a great place to practice walking in a crowd of people with their dogs!

6. Sit and down on command and staying in place:

This test demonstrates that your dog has training, will respond to your commands to sit and down, and will remain in the place commanded by you (sit or down position, whichever you prefer). Your dog must do sit AND down on command, then you choose the position for leaving your dog in the stay. Prior to this test, the dog's leash is replaced with a line 20 feet long. You may take a reasonable amount of time and use more than one command to get the dog to sit and then down. The evaluator must determine if your dog has responded to your commands. You may not force the dog into position but may touch your dog to offer gentle guidance. When instructed by the evaluator, you tell the dog to stay and walk forward the length of the line, turn and return to your dog at a natural pace. Your dog must remain in the place in which it was left (it may change position) until the evaluator instructs you to release your dog. Your dog may be released from the front or from the side.

How to practice:

Practice having your dog work on the sit and down commands. Remember to say the word ONCE, and wait. When the dog performs the command – reward! In the beginning you may want to lure your dog into the position with treats. Practice makes perfect. Have your dog sit in front of you then have them sit next to you. Do the same with the down command.

7. Coming when called:

This test demonstrates that your dog will come to you when called. You will walk 10 feet from your dog, turn to face your dog, and call your dog. You may use encouragement to get your dog to come. You may choose to tell your dog to “stay” or “wait” or you may simply walk away, giving no instructions to your dog.

How to practice:

While on your walks – be interesting and move in the opposite direction of your dog. Call your dog’s name.....as soon as he looks up say “come!” Throw a tasty treat behind you – move again in the opposite direction. Call your dog – throw a treat, and move away. Keep your dog interested in YOU!

8. Reaction to another dog:

This test demonstrates that your dog can behave politely around other dogs. You and another person and your dogs approach each other from a distance of about 20 feet, stop, shake hands, and exchange pleasantries, and continue on for about 10 feet. Neither dog should go to the other dog or its handler.

How to practice:

Practice the “watch me” exercise with your dog – especially when there are other dogs and their handlers present. You want to be MORE interesting than the other dog (it IS possible). Bring lots of treats with you (high-end treats) when you go out to practice this exercise. You see another person and their dog approaching – tell your dog to watch you and treat, treat, treat! Now walk on – again when you see that other person and their dog – say, “watch me” and treat! If you aren’t having any luck – practice at a distance (20 to 30 feet) and move closer as your dog becomes more in tune to YOU versus the other dog.

9. Reaction to distraction:

This test demonstrates that your dog is confident at all times when faced with common distracting situations. The evaluator will select and present two distractions. Examples of distractions include dropping a chair, rolling a crate dolly past your dog, having a jogger run in front of your dog, or dropping a crutch or cane. Your dog may express natural interest and curiosity and/or may appear slightly startled but should not panic, try to run away, show aggressiveness, or bark. You may talk to your dog and encourage or praise it throughout this exercise.

How to practice:

Take your dog walking where there are lots of distractions. At the shopping center, the pet store or hardware store. Walk in the parking lot where you will see lots of cars going by. Take your dog downtown where there may be skateboarders and joggers. Bring your treats. Use your watch me exercise when you and your dog approach the skateboarders or joggers. (Practice for this is very similar to #8 above.)

10. Supervised separation:

This test demonstrates that your dog can be left with a trusted person, if necessary, and will maintain training and good manners. Evaluators are encouraged to say something like, “Would you like me to watch your dog?” and then take hold of the dog’s leash. You will go out of sight for three minutes. Your 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. Evaluators may talk to the dog but should not engage in excessive talking, petting, or management attempts (e.g., “there, there, it’s alright”).

How to practice:

Use your friends or relatives to help you with this exercise. While on a walk, have them hold your dog while you go into a store, or while you walk around the block. Have them sit with your dog in the car while you go into a store, etc. **(NEVER TIE YOUR DOG OUT WHILE YOU GO INTO A STORE TO SHOP – ALWAYS LEAVE YOUR DOG WITH A RESPONSIBLE ADULT DURING THIS EXERCISE!)**