

Socialized Pet Obedience Test – SPOT

The United Kennel Club believes in “Real Dogs for Real People” and developed this program to reward one’s everyday life with dogs. The United Kennel Club feels strongly that every dog should be accepted in their community as a well-behaved canine companion. It is important that not only dogs, but their owners as well, set an example for responsible dog ownership in our modern world of increasingly urban and crowded environments.

Owning a dog is much different now than it was even 20 years ago. Methods in how we keep and live with dogs have changed drastically. Dogs and dog owners are no longer allowed the freedoms they once had. Learning appropriate behavior while on leash and in the presence of other dogs, and learning basic obedience skills, are essential for dog ownership today. Through the SPOT program, the United Kennel

Club offers owners a chance to prove that their dog is a well-behaved asset to their community by completing a series of exercises that demonstrate these valuable and necessary skills. Each exercise is designed to simulate an “everyday” life experience where the dog can demonstrate that they possess the skills, and have the behaviors necessary, to be considered a “SPOT” certified dog.

The SPOT program consists of 10 separate testing stations. At each station, the dog must perform a basic exercise. These exercises are used to demonstrate that the dog is capable of exhibiting desired behaviors that the general public would expect to see in a well-behaved dog. The dog will receive a rating at each station, varying from “Outstanding” to “Needs Practice”. Training for the SPOT can begin as early as you would like to start training your dog.

HOW OLD DOES MY DOG HAVE TO BE?

Dogs of any age can take the test; however, we do recommend that the dog be at least 6 months of age before attempting to take the test. At this age dogs will have had the proper vaccinations for them to safely be around multiple dogs, reducing the risk of spreading and/or contracting disease.

I HAVE A FEMALE IN SEASON. CAN SHE TAKE THE TEST?

Females in season are eligible to be evaluated. They will be tested after all other dogs participating in the test have been evaluated.

I AM A PHYSICALLY CHALLENGED HANDLER. CAN I TAKE THE TEST?

People with physical disabilities are welcome to participate and may do so with any mechanical assistance they require; i.e., wheelchairs, walkers, canes, etc. Blind handlers may have another person guide them through the test as long as they do not provide any assistance to the dog performing the required exercises. If a dog is a certified service dog, and the owner so chooses, the dog may take the test wearing its required service vest or other attire/equipment necessary for the dog to perform its work.

WHAT DO I NEED?

In order to participate in the test with your dog, you will need to bring some required equipment.

Equipment you will need:

- Flat/Buckle collar, slip collar, martingale, standard harness, head halter, or Gentle Leader®, prong collar (No-Pull harnesses are prohibited)
- 4' to 6' leash

Equipment provided by the host club or SPOT Evaluator:

- 1 small – 10' long line
- 1 medium/large – 10' long line
- Collapsible Chair
- 2 Toys
- Crate or pen
- At least 6 orange cones

WHERE DO I FIND A TEST?

SPOT can be found in conjunction with licensed UKC events that offer it, or tests can be offered any place where an approved SPOT Evaluator is offering the test. To find an upcoming SPOT held in conjunction with a UKC event, please visit our website at www.ukcdogs.com. UKC will recognize results from any test as long as it is being conducted by an approved SPOT Evaluator or team of Evaluators.

The UKC licensed club or SPOT Evaluator(s) hosting the test may charge an advertised fee. Please be aware that the method of payment accepted may vary when offered by different clubs or Evaluators; paying with cash will always be the most reliable. Be sure to check with the individuals offering the test to make sure you are aware of all fees or any special requirements that may affect your ability to participate in the test prior to taking the test.

HOW DOES MY DOG’S PERFORMANCE GET RATED?

There are 4 different levels to determine how your dog is rated during the test. These are Outstanding, Super, Good, and Needs Practice. The Outstanding rating is given to the dogs who can perform the required exercises in each station with very little difficulty. The rating system is designed to be flexible and fluid. It leaves much room for interpretation from the Evaluator because everyday situations can’t

be quantified into a set of described behaviors. Dogs who are Outstanding will be calm, unreactive and show willingness to interact with people, and are not overly stimulated by the presence of other dogs.

You may not discipline your dog at any time during the test. The dog may need multiple commands and extensive persuasion from you to complete the desired station, but you may not scold or give leash corrections during the test. Commands and verbal communication to the dog should never be harsh or intimidating. You may touch your dog at any time, but may not physically maneuver or force the dog into any position. If that happens the dog will receive a “Needs Practice” rating for that station. You may not use food or treats of any kind during the test. Favorite toys that your dog likes may not be used to motivate your dog during the test either.

The SPOT designation will be recorded on any UKC registered or UKC listed dog’s official awards’ record and pedigree. If you would like an official SPOT certificate and a free collar tag that proudly designates that your dog is a “SPOT DOG”, you can indicate this on your evaluation paperwork and send it in to UKC for a small fee to cover processing and mailing. Owners who are interested in getting their dog permanently registered with UKC have the option of doing so for a discounted registration or listing fee and will then receive the SPOT certificate and free collar tag once the dog is registered. All current fees and the mailing address are on the evaluation forms.

A dog that completes the test with an Outstanding rating at each station will be considered a “SPOT Outstanding Neighbor” or “SPOT-ON” dog. Those that pass the test with any combination of the ratings Good, Super, and Outstanding will receive the SPOT designation.

WHAT DOES MY DOG HAVE TO DO?

1. Walking on a Loose Leash Through a Designated Pattern.

This exercise demonstrates that the dog has been trained to walk appropriately on a leash. For this exercise the dog may start in any position as long as the dog is at your side, and there is obvious slack in the leash. The Evaluator will instruct you to, “Begin when you are ready.” The evaluation of this station will not start until you take your first step forward, and it will be complete when both you and your dog pass the last sign in the sequence. The dog is expected to remain under control, and the leash should have an adequate amount of slack throughout the exercise. You will follow a set pattern marked with signs. The pattern will be continuous and incorporate a left turn, a right turn, and a U-turn. There are no designated stops during this exercise. You can use any amount of verbal cues, hand signals, and praise that you would like. You may come to a complete stop in front of, or pause to read a sign, with no penalty assessed for stopping forward motion.

2. Leave It. For this exercise the dog may begin in any position at your side. The Evaluator will instruct you to, “Begin when you are ready.” When you are ready, you and your dog will begin walking toward the stationary distractions. You will weave in and out of the stationary distractions in a serpentine pattern. If your dog investigates the distractions, you should verbally tell your dog to leave the distraction using any commands or hand signals you feel necessary.

3. Doorway Manners. This exercise demonstrates that the dog can remain under control when entering or exiting a building, entranceway, or gated enclosure. For this exercise, the dog should begin at your side near the designated entranceway.

To complete this exercise you may choose to have the dog walk through with you at the same time or you may choose to pass through the entranceway while the dog waits and then release the dog to come through after you.

The Evaluator will tell you to, “Begin when you are ready”. The dog should remain in the starting position as you open the door or gate. The dog should wait calmly until you give the command and/or signal to walk through, either together or after you have already passed through the door. You must be the one to open the gate/door/entranceway to execute the exercise correctly, but if it will not remain open another person is allowed to hold it open while you and your dog are passing through.

4. Loading and Unloading. For this exercise the dog should begin at your side in close proximity to the holding area. The Evaluator will tell you to, “Begin when you are ready.” You and your dog will approach the designated holding area. It will usually be a crate of varying sizes or a small exercise pen that has a gate you can open. These are the most common types of objects used to create a holding area. It may vary depending on the resources of the Evaluator.

You will open the gate/door to the holding area. Once the holding area is open, you will then tell your dog to enter. Once your dog is securely in the holding area, you will remove the leash at your discretion and close the gate/door. Once the gate/door has been latched, a walking team consisting of a handler and dog will walk past the holding area twice. The first time they pass, the handler of the walking team will be closest to the holding area. For the second pass, the dog of the walking team will be closest to the holding area. After the walking team has passed twice, you may open the gate/door and leash your dog. Once the leash is secured (if you removed it), the dog may exit the holding area. The dog should remain calm while exiting the holding area for the best possible score.

The Walking Team: The walking team may consist of other test takers or by a volunteer team provided by the Evaluator. The walking team is not being evaluated at any time. There should be a minimum of a three foot distance between the walking team and the front of the holding area.

5. Moving Dog Distraction. For this exercise, you and your dog will set up diagonally across the testing area from the “demonstration team”. It will be set up so that the dogs will be on the outside when the two teams begin walking toward each other. Both teams will begin moving toward the center of the testing area at the same time. You and your dog will pass the distraction team and continue to the opposite side of the testing area. Once the opposite side is reached, you will turn around so that the dogs are now on the inside closest to each other. You and your dog will then proceed toward distraction team and pass them for a second time. There should be a minimum of three feet of space between the dogs. The exercise is complete once you and your dog reach your original starting point.

6. Manners with Distraction. This is a two-part exercise. If an individual is physically unable to or cannot complete the second part of the station safely, then the second part need not be performed and there will be no penalty. For all other test takers, effort should be made to complete the second part of this station. The first part of the exercise must be passed with a minimum of a Good rating to move on to the second part. Both parts of the exercise will be considered as one for the final rating.

Part 1: You and your dog will be positioned with you seated in the chair with your dog by your side. You will then put your dog in a sit or a down beside the chair you are seated in. The walking dog and handler team will approach you and your dog. The walking team will stop to speak with you; a brief exchange of greeting will take place while you are still sitting in the chair and your dog remains in position beside your chair. After the greeting is exchanged and the walking team has walked on, the dog may be released and set up for Part 2.

Part 2: You will ask your dog to now wait patiently while you stand and gather up your chair. You can ask your dog to wait for you in any position that you choose. Once you have gathered up the chair, you will proceed to walk 10-15 steps in the direction the Evaluator sends you with your dog walking beside you on a loose leash.

Greeting an Approaching Stranger. This exercise demonstrates that the dog is accepting of strangers and is a polite member of the community when approached. For this exercise the dog will need to be next to your side, and may be in any position that is comfortable for you and the dog, as long as all four feet are on the ground and remain there throughout the approach.

The Evaluator will ask if you are ready to start the station. Once you say you are ready, the Evaluator will start approaching you and your dog from approximately three feet away. While being approached, the dog is allowed to change positions. Once the approaching person has stopped, they will ask, “May I pet your dog?” You may ask the dog to sit to be petted if you wish; you can also gently place your hand in the dog’s collar when the Evaluator pets your dog. When you are ready for the dog to be petted, you will let the Evaluator know. Once you have given the okay, the Evaluator will pet the dog on or around the head.

Sit and Down on Command. This exercise demonstrates the dog has learned basic obedience skills. For this exercise the dog may begin in any position, as long as the dog is not starting in the same position as it will be in after you give the command. The Evaluator will instruct you to begin when ready. You will tell your dog to sit or down, depending on which position you want to start with. The dog must demonstrate that it knows both behaviors. You can use your voice and any necessary body movement to get your dog to sit or lie down.

Grooming Exam. This exercise demonstrates that the dog will submit easily to an examination of its physical condition. For this exercise the dog may begin in any position. You will indicate to the Evaluator when you are ready to begin. You may gently hold your dog’s collar if you wish.

The Evaluator will approach the dog from the front and lift one of the dog’s front feet. While holding the foot, the Evaluator will manipulate the dog’s toes and pads softly to ensure that the dog will tolerate its foot being handled. After examining the foot, the Evaluator will then lift the dog’s lip to check the dog’s teeth, and touch and glance inside the dog’s ears.

Stay in Place and Come on Command. This exercise demonstrates the dog has learned basic obedience skills. For this exercise you will use the long line. The dog should start beside you with the long line attached to its collar or harness. The Evaluator will instruct you to, “Begin when ready.” The dog should be left in a stay. Any position is acceptable. The dog may also change position so long as the dog remains where it was left until it has been commanded to come. You will walk a minimum of 10 feet away from your dog. You can remind and encourage the dog to wait or stay until you give the command to come. When you reach the end of the long line, you will give the command to come.