

Temperament Test for Puppies

This is the test we were given by PJ Roche founder of Freedom Service Dogs, Inc.

1. Take the puppies one at a time to an unfamiliar but comfortable setting for the test. Ideally the person handling the pups will be a stranger to them, possibly taking directions from someone who knows the test. It's important to handle each pup exactly the same. Videotaping is a good idea, along with taking notes.

2. Test the puppies more than once, because one test might catch some of them at an off time physically and give an inaccurate result. The puppies are jetting through critical development periods at these ages, too, and not all at the same pace.

3. A good breeder or caretaker will have many observations on each puppy to share with you, so listen carefully and consider these with the test results.

4. The breeder has that all-important genetic knowledge (or should have) that puts the test results into the context of what a puppy with those test results of that breed AND bloodline is likely to be like as an adult. The more you know—the more you'll know! Testing pups of known genetics is more accurate than testing pups from unknown bloodlines. Tests on mixed breed pups leave a lot of room for error.

5. Restraining the puppy gently with tummy up is a common test. You would want to see different responses depending on the temperament you need. As with many things in life, there is not just one "right" answer. Few handlers would be looking for the puppy who fights this restraint, but some people want the dog to struggle just a little before accepting it. They feel that shows certain working qualities. Reading the dog is important, too. The dog who just lays there might be relaxed — or frozen with fear.

6. Another test is to lift the puppy off the ground. You're looking for the degree and duration of resistance to being held in the air.

7. Young puppies tend to follow, and how much the pup follows you when you walk away can indicate the degree of interest in humans.

8. Kneeling or squatting and calling the puppy—remember to call each puppy exactly the same way—also shows the pup's interest in humans.

9. Touch sensitivity is sometimes tested with pressure of thumb and forefinger squeezing the webbing between two toes, counting slowly to ten as the pressure is increased. Fingernails are not used, and the pressure is stopped when the dog gives any reaction at all.

10. The tester may teach the pup a simple skill such as sitting for a treat, looking for trainability, response to praise, response to food, and other qualities.

11. Retrieving instinct can be tested by getting down on the ground with the puppy and tossing a light, appealing item forward a few feet. You gently restrain the pup and make sure the puppy is interested in the item first, and then you toss it in a way that causes the pup to visually track it. You release the pup to run to it.

You're looking for any part of the sequence: a) run to the item, b) pick up the item, c) carry the item, d) start back to you with the item, e) carry the item part or all of the way to you, and f) deliver the item to your hand. If the puppy does bring the item to you, give it right back

to the puppy to reinforce this terrific response. If the pup runs out and grabs it, you've got something to build on. If the puppy runs out, grabs it, and carries it, that's outstanding, too.

12. In a non-frightening way, pups are often tested with unusual sights, sounds, footing, and other experiences. These experiences, as well as the whole temperament evaluation, should be made enjoyable for the puppy. There is no excuse for hurting or frightening a puppy in the name of temperament testing! Puppies soak up learning like sponges, and temperament testing should contribute to a puppy's future, never detract from it.

Our Purpose in Temperament Testing our puppies

A great deal of time and research goes into each mating. Puppy temperament testing enhances our own knowledge of the litter. We strive to produce stable temperaments and puppies that will be a member of the family.

We spend many hours observing the puppies in other settings. We have a familiarity with each puppy and it helps us in the task of choosing the best one to join your family.