

# **Kisha's Kommands LLC**

## **Therapy Dog Test Preparation**

### **Evaluation Standards, Behavior Requirements & Test Items**

#### **Program Overview**

Therapy dogs are expected to be calm, friendly, confident, and neutral in public environments. Unlike service dogs, therapy dogs are trained to interact with the public appropriately and safely — including strangers, medical equipment, and unpredictable situations.

Kisha's Kommands Therapy Dog Prep is designed to help you and your dog build the obedience, manners, and stability required to successfully pass a Therapy Dog evaluation.

#### **Eligibility Requirements**

- Dog must be at least one (1) year old at the time of testing/certification.
- Dog must be healthy, clean, well-groomed, and free of parasites.
- Proof of current vaccinations is required (including rabies).
- City dog license may be required depending on your location.

#### **Equipment Requirements (Test Day)**

Therapy dog evaluations require specific equipment standards for safety and consistency.

Allowed equipment:

- Flat collar only (buckle or clip-snap in nylon or leather).

Not allowed during the test:

- Remote collars
- Choke chains
- Prong / pinch collars
- Fur savers
- Haltis / head collars
- Harnesses

#### **Recommended Items to Bring**

- Comb or brush
- 5–6 ft leash
- 2 ft traffic lead

- 20–30 ft long line

Helpful tip: Walk or exercise your dog before the test (ideally at least 30 minutes prior) so your dog is calm and focused.

## **Standards of Behavior (Required)**

Therapy dogs must demonstrate calm, friendly, stable behavior in public environments and must be safe and appropriate around vulnerable populations. Unlike service dogs, therapy dogs are expected to interact with the public — but they must do so with excellent manners, neutrality, and self-control.

## **Temperament & Public Behavior Standards**

Therapy dogs must:

- Be social, friendly, and confident with strangers.
- Remain calm when approached quickly or enthusiastically.
- Tolerate handling of ears, paws, tail, and body.
- Remain stable around loud noises, sudden movement, and unusual objects.
- Demonstrate emotional resilience (recover quickly if startled).
- Be safe around children, elderly individuals, and mobility equipment.

Therapy dogs must NOT:

- Show aggression of any kind (growling, snapping, lunging, biting).
- Show fear-based avoidance (cowering, hiding, shutting down, attempting to flee).
- Display excessive nervous behaviors (pacing, trembling, constant scanning).
- Bark excessively or vocalize repeatedly in public.
- Jump on people, mouth hands/clothing, or paw at strangers.
- Become over-aroused, frantic, or 'out of control friendly.'

## **Handling & Touch Tolerance Standards**

Therapy dogs must comfortably tolerate:

- Hugging (if appropriate and safe).
- Firm petting.
- Accidental bumps.
- Medical equipment contact (walker, cane, wheelchair, crutches).
- Multiple people reaching toward them.

Dogs must not flinch, snap, avoid, recoil, attempt to escape handling, or freeze stiffly under touch.

## **Leash Manners & Obedience Standards**

Therapy dogs must demonstrate:

- Loose leash walking through crowds.

- Ability to sit and down calmly near distractions.
- Ability to hold a stay with mild distractions.
- Ability to come when called (on long line during evaluation).
- Calm behavior when another dog passes nearby.

Therapy dogs must not pull strongly on leash, drag the handler through crowds, or lunge toward people, dogs, or equipment.

### **Neutrality Around Food & Distractions**

- Ignore dropped food.
- Ignore loud conversations, laughing, yelling, and sudden movement.
- Maintain calm behavior even when people act unpredictably.

### **Hygiene & Presentation Standards**

Because therapy dogs may work around vulnerable populations, dogs must arrive:

- Clean and well-groomed
- Free of parasites
- Nails trimmed
- No foul odor
- Coat brushed and free of heavy shedding buildup

### **Therapy Dog Work: What It Is (And What It Is Not)**

Therapy dogs provide comfort and emotional support in public service settings such as nursing homes, hospitals, schools, community programs, and reading programs.

Therapy dogs are not service dogs. Therapy dogs do not have public access rights under the ADA and are only permitted in approved facilities or programs.

### **Kisha's Kommands Professional Recommendation**

Not every friendly dog is a therapy dog candidate. Many dogs are too nervous, too excitable, too sensitive to touch, too reactive to movement/noise, or too easily overstimulated. Our job is to evaluate honestly, train fairly, and prepare dogs that are safe, stable, and appropriate for therapy environments.

## **Therapy Dog Test Items**

The following items evaluate your dog's temperament, obedience, stability, and ability to safely interact with people in a controlled public setting.

### **Test Item 1 — Initial Meeting & Handling**

The dog begins seated at the handler's left side. The evaluator approaches and greets the handler enthusiastically (handshake, pat on the arm, etc.). The evaluator may ask the dog's name, repeat the dog's name loudly, circle the team, and inspect the dog. The evaluator may pet the dog and touch ears, mouth, paws, and tail. This portion also evaluates cleanliness, grooming, overall health, parasites, and appropriate weight.

### **Test Item 2 — Cane / Awkward Stranger**

The dog remains seated at the handler's side while the evaluator approaches with hunched posture, an erratic cane, and an unusual voice. The evaluator may pet the dog and gently bump the dog with the cane.

### **Test Item 3 — Socialization Crowd Walk-Through**

A small group (2–5 people) forms a gathering. If possible, 1–2 dogs may be present. Medical equipment may also be present (wheelchair, walker, cane, crutches). The handler and dog walk through the group on a loose leash, weaving calmly through the crowd multiple times with casual turns and movement.

### **Test Item 4 — Food Refusal**

The dog is seated next to the handler facing the evaluator. The evaluator drops food on the floor. The handler is instructed to walk past the food with the dog at their side, turn and walk back, and pick up the food while the dog remains calm and controlled.

### **Test Item 5 — Walker**

The dog remains seated at the handler's side while the evaluator approaches noisily with a walker. The evaluator may pet the dog and gently bump the dog with the walker.

### **Test Item 6 — Basic Training Skills (Long Line)**

This portion is performed using a 20 ft long line, which is dropped on the ground. The evaluator will ask the handler to demonstrate: Sit, Down, Stay, and Come. More than one cue is allowed, and the handler may reset if needed. The handler may not physically force the dog into position.

### **Test Item 7 — Canine-to-Canine Interaction**

Two handlers and their dogs approach from approximately 15 feet away, stop and speak briefly, turn and line up facing the same direction, and walk forward about 10 feet. The dog must remain calm, neutral, and controlled.

### **Test Item 8 — Crutches**

The dog remains seated at the handler's side while the evaluator approaches using crutches as if disabled. The evaluator may pet the dog more firmly and gently bump the dog with a crutch.

### **Test Item 9 — Human-to-Canine Stability (Distractions)**

A group (2–5 people) forms a gathering. The handler and dog weave through the group on a loose leash while exposed to distractions such as a metal bowl dropped behind the team, loud laughing and talking, someone running, simulated shouting/argument, and an umbrella opening and closing. The dog must remain stable, calm, and under control.

### **Test Item 10 — Working Near Other Therapy Dogs**

An evaluator/test dog team approaches and positions about 5 feet away. The dog must remain seated calmly while holding position for 10 seconds. The evaluator team then moves into a parallel position (similar to long sits). Both teams hold position again for 10 seconds.

### **Test Item 11 — Wheelchair Interaction**

The handler and dog approach a wheelchair from about 5 feet away. The handler encourages the dog to interact appropriately with the evaluator. The evaluator may pet the dog gently and lightly bump the dog with the wheelchair. The dog must remain calm, friendly, and controlled.