

Study Guide for the Student Knowledge Assessment

As stated in the *Overview Handbook*, all students shall take a short test, the Student Knowledge Assessment, to assess their understanding of dog behavior and training. Passing the Knowledge Assessment is a requirement to qualify students to start earning C.L.A.S.S. certificates with their dogs.

The questions in the Student Knowledge Assessment are based on the following information. We recommend that students use this information to prepare for and refer to during the test. This Study Guide is in a question and answer format covering basic dog information that is helpful for every pet owner to know, from Dog Training and Learning, to Communication and Body Language, to Dog Ownership.

Student Knowledge Assessment Study Guide

DOG OWNERSHIP

Where can a student take a young puppy (8 – 12 weeks) who is current on all required vaccinations?

Socialization of young puppies ages 8 to 12 weeks is a very important part of having a well-rounded dog. At this age they should have received a minimum of their first series of vaccines for protection against infectious diseases, and all puppy classes should require this at the very least for admission. The risk of a dog dying from exposure to diseases should be weighed against the risk of a dog being relinquished to a shelter or euthanized because of behavioral issues that develop due to a lack of socialization. This period of puppy learning is a critical period to help influence good behavior of dogs. Places that you can take your puppy include your veterinary clinic, a puppy class that observes proper sanitization and vaccines protocols, and locations where your puppy can meet people and see new things without meeting strange dogs.

Why is picking up after my dog important?

Part of responsible dog ownership is being a good neighbor. Nobody enjoys the chore of picking up after their dogs in our own backyard. Imagine how your neighbors would feel if they had to pick up after dogs they do not even own! Picking up after or “curbing” your dog is a law in many places but perhaps more importantly you should be a good neighbor and good citizen no matter where you are with your dog; always carry waste bags with you.

Do dogs really need to be walked every day?

Dogs need exercise every day just like humans do. Taking a leash walk with your dog is not only great physical exercise for your dog, but it also provides great mental stimulation and helps with ongoing socialization to new places and scents. Taking leash walks with your dog can also contribute toward the two of you building a strong relationship as you walk and (work / explore) together.

What do I do if my dog is uncomfortable greeting another person?

It is common courtesy to have a person ask to pet your dog. As a responsible student you should always be proactive in protecting your dog from situations that may make them uncomfortable. This means that you might need to take the first step to help ensure that approaching people are respectful of your dog's space. Simply ask them to wait before reaching for your dog. You need to determine when—or if—your dog is comfortable enough for petting from a stranger. There is no need to be embarrassed or to feel rushed. Remember that just as there are some people who are a bit more shy and stand-offish, so are there dogs who may need to take some extra time to get to know a stranger. Some dogs may never enjoy meeting strangers and may need extra time and socialization to get used to a new person before allowing themselves to be touched. Always move at your dog's pace and comfort level.

How do I keep my dog safe if someone is trying to bring a dog over to greet and my dog is reactive?

Never rely on the actions of another person to keep your dog (and dogs around you) safe. As a responsible dog student you need do whatever it takes to immediately create distance between your dog and the other dog. Do not feel uncomfortable informing the other dog owner to please keep their dog away from yours and explain that your dog does not care for other dogs. If you have not already done so, consider consulting an expert in canine behavior modification to address your dog's reactive issues, too. Visit the APDT Trainer Search at www.apdt.com/petowners/ts to find a trainer near you who can be of assistance.

Why is crate training beneficial?

Having a doggie safe area such as a crate will provide your dog with his own personal space and is essential to many aspects of your training. Your dog's crate will be used during times when you cannot supervise him or when you just need a break. Dogs are den animals so when they are properly introduced to the crate they usually love them. Crate training can keep your dog out of trouble when you are away from home too. You will not have to worry about him chewing on your furniture, shoes or other valuable items and you will not need to worry about him having an accident in your home. Crates can also be a safe place when traveling. Your dog's crate can be a safe and fun place to be!

What is the best way to pick out treats or food for my dog?

There is such a variance of products available on the market. Marketing and advertising are very alluring to humans, but that does not mean the ingredients are as good as the package may look. As a responsible pet student you will want to be aware that some ingredients may not be good for your dog. It is important to educate yourself as to what it takes to maintain good health for your pet for a long and healthy life. Talk to your veterinarian about your dog's nutritional needs and about what ingredients you should look for, and which you should avoid, when selecting a brand of food for your dog.

Do I really need to trim my dog's nails if my dog does not like it?

Proper nail trims ensure that your dog maintains a healthy, natural gait. There is no need for this to be a stressful event for your dog! By hiring a positive reinforcement-based dog trainer, you can learn humane, low-stress methods that will help your dog to accept nail trims, regardless of whether they are done by a veterinarian, a groomer, or you.

If my dog does not like the leash, is it okay for me to just let him run loose?

Responsible dog ownership includes keeping your dog safe from environmental hazards; many city and state laws also require dogs to be on-leash when in public. Even if you live in a rural area where environmental hazards are minimal or city and state laws do not apply, it is wise to prepare your dog to happily accept a leash. This can be quickly achieved with reward-based, positive reinforcement training.

Why should a student check their dog's entire body every month?

There are many health issues that may go unnoticed if not checked for regularly. Dogs are also masters at hiding their discomfort or pain. Going over your dog's entire body closely once a month, including looking at his teeth and gums, can potentially help you identify a health issue early in its development which may save you from a large veterinary bill later. Noticing the small things early on in many instances may even save your dog's life. Going over your dog's body regularly is also useful for checking that your dog is at a healthy weight.

How is a dog's sense of smell and hearing different from a human's?

Dogs observe the world much differently than humans. We rely mostly on our sense of sight, followed by our sense of hearing. Dogs, on the other hand, have a much keener sense of smell than humans. Therefore, they gather much more information about their surroundings by sniffing. They also have a much greater sense of hearing than humans and can hear sounds from up to a mile away or deep in the ground. Dogs can hear a mole traveling underground and can smell a minute amount of explosives / drugs hidden in an entire warehouse.

Do all dogs of the same breed act the same? Are some breeds of dog inherently vicious and aggressive?

Each breed of dog has their own unique personality, individual quirks and some are genetically predisposed to certain behaviors such as retrieving or tracking. Within any breed, there will be a range of calm to high energy dogs. Contrary to popular opinion there are no inherently "bad" breeds, but there are irresponsible owners that allow antisocial behavior to develop whether due to indifference or actually teaching or allowing the dog to behave in an antisocial manner.

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COMMUNICATION AND BODY LANGUAGE

Why do dogs bark and how should I talk to my dog when he is barking?

Barking is as natural to a dog as eating, sleeping, and scratching. There are many different reasons why dogs bark. They bark to alert, out of frustration, because they are frightened, bored or even out of excitement during play. Many people do not realize that they may actually be contributing the barking by yelling or scolding their dog. Your dog may think you are joining in and will take the attention as a sign that you agree with his actions. Barking can be very frustrating to a person. If your dog is barking, it is important to first get his attention to interrupt the behavior. Using a cheerful, happy tone will help to get your dog focused on you rather than what he is barking at. When your dog responds to your cheerful voice, reward him with a high value treat for being quiet. The next step would be to redirect your dog's attention to an appropriate, quiet behavior, such as fetch, chewing on a bone, or playing with a toy.

Why does my dog turn away when I hug him?

Although humans love hugs, it does not necessarily mean that a dog will be comfortable with one. Dogs do not hug each other; in fact, dogs are very respectful of each other's space. There are many other ways to show affection to your pet. If your dog turns away when you hug him, your dog is politely letting you know he does not want or enjoy the hug. Hugging can be stressful for dogs to accept as he may feel trapped by the embrace. If you must, keep it short and sweet.

How should someone greet a dog?

When greeting a dog try to use slow, casual body movements. You should not be closer than two feet from the dog. If the dog does not approach you, turn your body slightly sideways to the dog, which is a nonthreatening posture, rather than squaring off / directly facing the dog. Always allow the dog to take the first steps to approach you and wait before you reach out to pet the dog. Once the dog feels comfortable enough to approach you, the first physical interaction you should have is to pet the dog under the chin, or along his side rather than reaching over the dog's head. If the dog does not want to approach you, simply respect the dog's choice and walk away politely.

What is the best way to let my dog approach and greet another dog?

In terms of canine social behavior, appropriate greetings are nose-to-tail. Nose-to-nose greetings in the dog world are not only impolite, but they increase the risk of your dog being bitten by a dog who may *not* love other dogs.

What are calming signals and why does my dog use them?

Dogs do not have the ability to use verbal language like humans. They rely on body language to communicate with each other and other species. One aspect of their body language is called *calming signals*. They use these signals to share their intentions with other dogs and with us. For instance dogs use their tail as a way to communicate their feelings. Just because the tail is wagging does not necessarily mean the dog is happy. Depending on how he is carrying his tail as well as other body language will tell you whether the dog is in the mood to play, nervous or in the mood to fight.

When a dog wants to show another dog that he means no harm, he will turn his head and sometimes entire body away from the imposing dog. Dogs may also scratch, yawn or lick their lips as a way to signal they are feeling too much pressure. With humans, dogs will display these same behaviors in an attempt to communicate they are uncomfortable in their current situation. We should “listen” to these behaviors and give our dogs a break from the situation at hand. Just like people, dogs cannot work effectively if they are under too much pressure.

Of course, dogs also scratch when they have an itch, and yawn when they are tired or bored, so the signals must be read in context.

What are the best ways to communicate with my dog and why is understanding dog body language important?

Many people feel their dogs understand every word they are saying and then are frustrated when their dog does not respond to something they are asking them to do. While dogs can learn to associate many words with items or actions, they fall far short of understanding everything people are saying.

They are, however, quite good at understanding your tone of voice. For instance, a happy, high pitched, cheery voice indicates that you are pleased or that you want to play. Your tone of voice is important in order to begin good communication with your dog, and to let him know what you expect from him and when. Dogs are also very good at communicating through body language, including facial expressions.

Once you start to understand your dog’s body language you can start to communicate with your best friend in a way they can understand. The signs dogs use to communicate with each other include facial expressions, body postures and movements. Dogs specifically use their faces, ears, tails and eyes to communicate.

Students need to learn how dogs use different body movements to communicate as a dog’s body language is often misinterpreted. For example, we commonly think a wagging tail means a dog is friendly, but depending on the speed of the wag and the stiffness and posture of the body, it can also mean that a dog is potentially in a defensive or offensive threatening mode.

How do dogs tell each other that they want to play?

Since dog-dog play can sometimes be confused by people as fighting, it is important to understand their body language so no harm may come to either of them. Dog play is often initiated by a play bow which tells the other dog that he is doing this for fun. Dogs will often bark and growl a bit while playing. Typically they use a higher-pitched bark than a warning bark. Dogs will also take frequent quick breaks or pauses lasting just a couple of seconds during play. You will also likely see a lot of give and take during play. The dogs will essentially take turns with one dog leading and then the other. It is important to supervise the play sessions in case one dog has had enough, you can intervene if the other dog persists. For instance if one dog is consistently hiding underneath a chair or crying to get away it may be necessary for you to step in to protect the dog who does not want to play anymore.

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TRAINING AND LEARNING

What kind of rewards can be used in positive reinforcement training?

There are many types of rewards that will provide the necessary praise and positive reinforcement for your dog. Dogs have varied temperaments and interests. Not all dogs are food motivated in every context or environment. Other types of rewards can include a favorite toy, a game of chase or tug, petting, verbal praise and even teaching the dog a special trick he enjoys making the training fun.

What is clicker training?

Clicker training is a type of positive reinforcement training that is a simple and very effective. The student uses a clicker, which is typically a small plastic box with a metal strip inside of it that makes a clicking sound when pressed. The clicker is pressed to mark the desired behavior, indicating to the dog that he did the right behavior and that a reward is on its way!

What does “capturing” a behavior mean?

Capturing a behavior can be one of the fastest ways to train a new behavior. For example if you want to teach your dog to lay down using the capture method you would simply wait for your dog to decide lie down and then reward him the moment he does the behavior. Timing is crucial for capturing a behavior. Think of it as a camera – you want to take a picture of the exact moment your dog does the behavior. You are not asking, commanding or luring him into the action. You are waiting for your dog to offer the behavior on his own. Capturing works best for teaching a behavior that your dog does naturally, such as sit, lying down, barking on cue, sniffing, or holding objects. The primary difference between capturing and other positive reinforcement training techniques is that the dog is making the decision to offer the behavior without being asked or prompted.

Can my dog be trained positively if he does not like food as a reward?

A reward is quite simply anything that your dog finds intrinsically rewarding. Some examples of rewards include toys, access to the outdoors, a car ride, or attention/affection from people. Food is often used because many dogs are motivated by it and food is also quick and easy to deliver to your dog. However; if your dog just ate his dinner, using a food reward may not be your best option. The key is to know what is rewarding to *your* dog in that moment! Make a list of 20 things that are rewarding to your dog including food, toys, treats and other life rewards such as belly rubs or playing with another dog!

If my dog is not able to execute a behavior he has been trained to do reliably, what should I do?

Ideally a dog should respond to a cue asked of him on the first time. If your dog does not respond to your cue within a few seconds of you asking him one of a few things is likely occurring – either he does not know the behavior as well as you may have originally thought, he may not be motivated enough to execute the behaviors or there is something in the environment that is distracting him from executing the behavior successfully. There is also a possibility that there may be some underlying medical condition that is preventing him from completing the behavior. If the problem persists you should consider checking with your veterinarian to rule out any medical issues. Do keep in mind that dogs are not robots and may become distracted or become unmotivated at some point. Keep consistent in your training and remember that occasionally rewarding your dog from time to time will be the best way to keep him motivated for a reliable response.

What is positive reinforcement and why should I use it?

The most effective way of teaching a new behavior is using positive reinforcement. Using positive reinforcement provides a win-win situation for you and your dog. The dog learns that doing what you want gets them what he wants – i.e., food, toys, affection. There are various ways to positively reinforce behavior. You can “lure” your dog into the desired behavior and then reward. You can wait for your dog to offer the desired behavior and then reward. You can use a marker signal, such as a clicker, to “mark” when a dog does something you want and then reward. Whatever behaviors you reward (or positively reinforce) are the behaviors that you will see increase.

How important is consistency in training?

Consistency is one of the most important aspects of training your dog. For instance, you do not want your dog on the couch. When you are home, you are able enforce that rule. While you are not home, other people in the house may tell your dog it is ok to be on the couch. This can lead to obvious confusion for your dog. This also applies to many other behaviors such as barking, pulling on the leash, chewing, jumping, etc. Consistency simply means that everyone uses the same rules for the dog all of the time for clear training results.

How do you reward a dog when teaching him a behavior that has multiple steps?

An example of a behavior with multiple steps is fetch. The steps might be chasing after the ball, picking up the ball, and bringing the ball back to you. The trainer would teach each behavior step by step and reward each successful step. Eventually the student can gradually ask for more of the sequence of steps for the dog to achieve the reward. The steps might look something like this: Dog chases after the ball and gets a reward. Dog picks up the ball and gets a reward. Dog brings the ball back and gets a reward. Then, the dog chases the ball and picks the ball up which gets him a reward. Finally, the dog chases the ball, picks up the ball and brings the ball back (the complete behavior) to get the reward.

What should I do if my dog is barking in his crate?

You should first figure out why your dog is barking. There may be a number of reasons why he is barking in his crate including he is trying to get your attention, because he is stressed about his crate or perhaps because he needs to go to the bathroom? The most common answer is that he is barking because he wants your attention. There is a simple solution—ignore your dog. Do not look at him, do not say anything to him, you might even walk away. Once he stops barking wait a few seconds and then give him some attention which will be a reward for being quiet. By ignoring him your dog will quickly learn that being quiet, not barking, is the way to get your attention. If you think your dog needs to go to the bathroom, the answer is obvious. Let your dog out! If you think your dog is barking because he is stressed, speak with your trainer about ways to help him become better acquainted with his crate or what alternatives you can explore for containing your dog.

What do I do if my puppy is jumping up and scratching me and leaving welts on my arms and legs?

Teaching a puppy how to respect a human's space is an important life lesson. Lest the puppy think we do not ever want them to come into our space to relate, this life lesson must be taught in a positive fashion. It is helpful to redirect your puppy's attention to an alternative behavior instead of using you as a scratching post. Rewarding an alternative behavior such as "sit" instead of jumping all over you is one way to train the puppy to get his paws "off" of you. If the jumping, scratching and space invading is attention-driven, then a student must think about whether or not the puppy is getting meaningful, appropriate attention and exercise throughout the day. It is also important to make sure that your puppy's nails are well trimmed at all times.

What should I do if my puppy is biting my hands every time we play?

Puppy biting is a natural behavior for puppies. They explore their environment with their mouths. There are a few things you can do to minimize or eliminate puppy biting. During playtime make sure you are playing with a toy and not with your hands. A larger toy is better than a smaller toy and will help teach your dog to use his mouth appropriately during play. If your puppy's mouth comes into contact with your skin at any time the best reaction you can have is to say "ouch" and remove all of your attention for a few moments – just walk away, turn your back and ignore him. It will not take long before he learns what level of play is and is not acceptable. Consistency will be very important for your success. That means everyone needs to play the same way. Playing rough with your puppy, even if it's just with one person, will teach him that it's ok to play that way. It's also very important to make sure that your puppy is getting enough exercise. Try games like hide and seek with his favorite toy, set up a treat hunt, take him for a short jog in the park or give him a dog puzzle or brain game to wear him out mentally when you cannot wear him out physically.

Do dogs automatically learn to generalize new behaviors they have learned to every person and every situation?

Generalizing new behaviors is something dogs do not do well. You have to send a consistent message to your dog in all circumstances and keep it simple for your dog to avoid confusion. This means that everybody who comes into contact with your dog has to send the same message. For instance to teach your dog not to jump, you ask for and reward a behavior that you want instead, such as sit. To help him generalize the behavior you would ask him to sit when greeting you, family and friends. You would also need to ask him to sit in a variety of places and situations i.e. at the front door, while out for a walk, etc.

My dog does not understand training. Is he just being stubborn or dominant?

Training your dog can sometimes require patience. Dogs learn quickly what works and what does not work. Dogs are often called stubborn or dominant when they seem to ignore our requests. What they are truly displaying is confusion or a lack of not understanding what you're asking them to do. Perhaps your dog has not generalized the behavior to that situation, or your dog is stressed, distracted or perhaps your dog has not made the connection between your cue and the behavior you are seeking yet.

(End of Study Guide)