

# Visiting as a Canines for Christ Team

## What Makes a Great Therapy Team?

Carefully consider the following:

Handler	Dog
Do you love Jesus & love talking about Him to others? Do you love people? Are you willing to pray with and for people?	Does your dog love people?
Are you reliable, committed, & punctual? Are you willing to serve and to cooperate with others?	Is your dog reliable, predictable, & controllable?
Are you confident & friendly?	Is your dog calm, confident, friendly, & joyful?
Are you a good listener? Are you capable of empathy rather than sympathy? Are you respectful of & able to communicate with a wide variety of people (ages, races, socioeconomic backgrounds, varying degrees of health and disabilities)?	Does your dog seek & enjoy contact (petting) while respecting personal boundaries?
Do you believe that Christ, the dog, & the needs of the person in front of you are more important than your wants & needs for the visit? Can you surrender your ego and allow intimacy to develop between your dog and a participant?	Is your dog completely non-aggressive?  Can you honestly say that your dog does not jump up, growl, snarl, or bark inappropriately?
Are you committed to your dog's emotional & physical well-being?  Do you regularly groom your dog?  Do you take your dog for check-ups with a veterinarian regularly?  Will you end an interaction that is endangering your dog's physical or emotional health?	Is your dog well-socialized outside of your home with other people, other dogs, different environments? (See "Socialization: What It Is and What It Is Not" in "Canine Resources" <a href="http://k9forchrist.org">k9forchrist.org</a> )  Is your dog completely housebroken---does not urinate or defecate inside or inappropriately?

<p>Are you dedicated to improving your relationship with your dog and to a lifetime of training him?</p> <p>Are you eager to learn from other teams?</p> <p>Will you engage in fellowship &amp; learning opportunities online or with a local chapter?</p>	<p>Does your dog respond to re-direction?</p> <p>Does your dog respond to training and enjoy learning new cues &amp; tricks?</p>
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## Checklist

1. Confirm your arrival time with the facility (Unscheduled visits or “drop-ins” may pose problems/inconveniences for the staff and facility and may, therefore, be unwelcome.) For group visits, appoint a liaison who will be a point-of-contact for the facility and will send a reminder to the members two to three days ahead of the visit. Be punctual and notify the facility if you cannot keep an appointment. Arrive 10 to 15 minutes before the visit and allow your dog adequate time to acclimate to the environment and to potty (use a designated area and dispose of solid wastes as directed by the facility).
2. Pray
  - If you are working with a group, take time to pray together before your visit.
  - For your safety and the safety of your dog while you travel to and from the visit and while you conduct the visit.
  - That the Holy Spirit will work through you and lead someone you encounter to a new or stronger relationship with God.
  - That the people you encounter are comforted, strengthened, and healed, according to His will.
  - Thank God for the opportunity to do His work and for your dog.
3. Attire and Grooming  
<https://k9forchrist.org/volunteer-manual>

Handler	Dog
C4C Shirt/Sweatshirt from Website Store <a href="https://k9forchrist.org/store">https://k9forchrist.org/store</a>	Clean, Groomed, Short & Filed Nails (No sharp points, please. They damage delicate skin.)
Customized Polo/Collared Shirt	Fresh Smelling Ears & Breath

Dress Code of Facility	<p>*Collar or Harness &amp; 4'-6' leash, non-retractable, no long leads, no prong, chain choke, or slip collars.</p> <p>Consider a leash with a "traffic handle" if navigating through tight spaces.</p> <p>C4C Bandana or Vest</p>
Close-Toe Shoes (No sandals or flip flops.)	No Costumes
Pants, Capris, Mid-length Shorts	<p>Vaccination Records</p> <p>Insurance Declaration Page</p>
<p>C4C Lanyard</p> <p>IDs/Badges Provided/Required by Facility</p> <p>C4C Car Magnet</p>	CGC & Therapy Dog Certificates
Vaccination Record	<p>Business Cards &amp; Brochures</p> <p><a href="https://k9forchrist.org/store">https://k9forchrist.org/store</a></p>
<p>You might want:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Charged Cell Phone</li> <li>• Pen &amp; Paper to Record Prayer Requests</li> <li>• Sanitizer</li> </ul>	<p>Your dog might need:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water &amp; Bowl</li> <li>• Potty Bags</li> <li>• Wipes for accidents or drool</li> <li>• Small towel for paws up on bed</li> </ul>

\*You should use the same equipment (type of collar/harness/leash) on visits that you used during your CGC evaluation.

## Considerations

Fewer and shorter visits keep you and your dog fresh.

- Do not overwork your dog or yourself. Avoid scheduling multiple visits on the same day and avoid scheduling visits on consecutive days.

Visit facilities where your dog is happiest.

- Do not subject your dog to stress by forcing him to interact with people or visit facilities where he is uncomfortable. Know your dog, his stressors, and how to manage and handle him for the well-being of all participants. Do not force your dog to work where you want to go! Listen to him and go where he prefers.

Set the tone for your visit by choosing your words carefully.

- Focus on the interaction between your dog and the person in front of you.
- Respect the boundaries of someone who is afraid of dogs. Do not try to change their mind about dogs or force interaction. Demonstrate a trick instead.
- Be empathetic, not sympathetic.
- Avoid discussing specific health issues.
- Look for opportunities to talk about the Lord.
- Stay upbeat and positive.
- Respect the confidentiality of all participants and do not post photos without permission from them or the facility.

Avoid burnout, depression, and compassion fatigue.

- Take time away from therapy work for exercise, vacation, church, family, friends, and rest.
- Take time every day to enjoy your dog!
- Play with your dog, allow him to rest, to chew/dig/run etc. and to do “doggie things.” Enrich his life with new experiences and this will strengthen the bond between you.

## Seven Basic Cues

1. **Sit:** The hind legs are tucked squarely beneath the dog's body and the back is upright. The front legs are evenly placed.
  - Do not push down on the dog's rear to force a sit.
2. **Down:** The dog tucks his hind legs under his body, or he may lie on one hip with the legs outstretched. His body, specifically the chest and stomach, rest on the floor. His front legs are outstretched with paw pads on the floor. He may rest his head on the floor or on his paws.
  - Do not push down on the dog's back to force a down. Some dogs may need to sit before going into down.
3. **Stay/Wait:** The dog freezes in position (sit/down/stand) and does not move from the spot until he is released. He may shift his weight from side to side so long as the stay is maintained.
4. **Come:** The dog immediately moves from his location to the handler's location. While a "sit" may be trained as the end behavior of the come, it is not required. However, the dog should at least wait long enough and close enough for his handler to attach a leash.
5. **Loose leash walk:** The dog is not in a formal heel position, but he is close enough to his handler that a slack U-shaped or J-shaped leash can be seen between them. The dog is not pulling, and the leash is not taut. The dog is "checking in." He should "switch" easily from one side of the handler to the other when prompted to do so.
6. **No/Leave It:** The dog immediately removes his attention from his current activity or from the object he is investigating and looks to the handler for further instructions.
7. **On/Off:** The dog hops onto a surface like a chair, bed, or vehicle seat when cued and hops off this surface when cued. (Use a barrier between the dog and a chair or bed on visits.)

**"Load Up" or In/Out:** On/off when used specifically for getting the dog into a vehicle.

When you give a cue:

- Limit your movement and facial expressions.
- Convey authority. Stand up straight. Do not lean over the dog. Use a firm voice, free of anger and harshness. Do not plead, question, or doubt.
- Use very few words. Stick with the same word(s) &/or hand signal every single time. Be consistent. Verbal cues are excellent, but hand signals can be especially effective on therapy visits.
- Wait for your dog to respond.

Your dog should respond within three seconds, without an additional prompt, regardless of your distance from him, the presence of wildlife, other dogs, other people, moving vehicles, etc. Furthermore, he should maintain the cue until you release him (“Okay” may not be the best release word because we say it so much. Try these instead: “alright,” “done,” “break,” “free.”) When your dog maintains a cue until you release him---regardless of distance, distraction, and duration---he has proven himself reliable on that cue. This is called, “proofing.” When your dog performs on cue, your reward---whether it is verbal praise, physical touch, or a delicious treat--- should be delivered within one to three seconds.

Remember training is ongoing and lifelong. It is not a one-time obligation.

## Canine Good Citizen Skills

1. The dog allows a friendly stranger to approach her and to speak to her handler in a natural, everyday situation. The dog is not touched or spoken to, and she remains confident and friendly during the encounter.
2. The dog allows a friendly stranger to touch her while she is out with her handler. The dog remains confident and friendly.
3. The dog permits someone, such as a veterinarian, groomer, or friend of the owner, to examine her and groom her (brush, comb, handle paw, look inside her ear). The dog remains confident and shows no fear or aggression.
4. The dog walks loosely on a leash, without pulling, and turns left and right and does an “about turn.” She frequently “checks in” and looks at her handler for directions.
5. The dog walks politely through a crowd and passes closely by at least three people. She should be friendly, and confident, not aggressive, shy, or overly excited. She does not jump on people and shows only mild interest in them.
6. The dog must perform a sit and a down. The handler then places her in either a sit/stay or a down/stay and walks twenty feet away from her, returns, and releases her. The dog should stay as the handler approaches her.
7. The dog comes to her handler from ten feet.
8. The dog can pass another dog and his handler and stand politely while the handlers shake hands and talk. Neither dog should approach the other dog or the other handler.
9. The dog demonstrates curiosity and confidence when confronted with common distractions. While she may be slightly startled, she should not react with excessive fear, by running away, with aggression, by barking or by lunging.
10. The dog shows mild concern, but no excessive barking, whining, or pacing when her owner leaves her with a trusted person and goes out of her sight for three minutes. She should remain confident, but a little agitation and/or nervousness is acceptable.

## Canines for Christ Therapy Specific Skills

1. Allows grooming. CGC
2. Allows handler to attach harness/collar/leash. 7
3. Walks on loose leash, without pulling, between the home/car/facility and within the facility. CGC
4. Does not pull through doorways. 7 & CGCA\*
5. Acknowledges but ignores spills, food, pills, trash, medical supplies, unusual or loud sounds or unusual movements (Responds immediately to "Leave it.") TT & CGCA
6. Ignores other dogs. CGCA
7. Remains at handler's side until released to greet others. "Say 'hi!'" CGCA
8. Allows clumsy petting and accepts gentle restraint, like hugging. TT
9. Does not snap or bite if ears or tail are pulled. TT
10. Allows a friendly stranger to approach him and his handler. CGC
11. Enjoys petting within or by a crowd. TT
12. Maintains a long down/stay or long sit/stay. CGC
13. Responds to verbal cues and hand signals. 7
14. Remains calm when the environment is loud. CGC & TT
15. Keeps four paws on the floor when greeting people (NO JUMPING UP or "hugging.") SC
16. Does not vocalize on visits, remains quiet. SC
17. Walks up and down stairs, across different flooring surfaces, rides in an elevator, and navigates through revolving doors. SC
18. Maneuvers within reach of the participant by responding to "stand" and "back up." (See "C4C STAND and BACK Training Description" in "Canine Resources" [k9forchrist.org](http://k9forchrist.org)) SC
19. Places chin on lap or puts paws up on a clean towel on a bed for petting and calmly sits for petting. A small dog "downs" on a clean towel on a bed or sofa for petting or companionship. SC
20. Does not lick faces. SC
21. Performs tricks. SC

7 = Seven Basic Cues

TT = New Temperament Test

CGC = Canine Good Citizen

SC = Suggested Cues/Skills

\*AKC Community Canine also known as Advanced CGC, not required for Canines for Christ Membership

## **New in 2025! TEMPERAMENT TEST FOR CANINES FOR CHRIST MEMBERSHIP**

View an example of the test: <https://youtube/4eixPD6qMf8>

1. Overall exam – including forceful pets on head, clumsy petting, vigorous rubbing/scratching, touching paws, holding ears, scratching/petting throat, lightly pulling tail, brief restraining hug. The dog is allowed to move or step away from the person examining the dog, but not jump away, and no mouth snap.
2. Crowded and petted by several people at once (at least four). The dog should ideally be able to stand or sit and remain calm; however, if the dog is uncomfortable in this situation, an acceptable (Satisfactory) response is for the dog to lower its head and/or tail or look to the handler for “help” (which indicates stress).
3. Leave It – both a treat in someone’s hand, and a treat, tissue, pill, etc. on the ground. The dog should leave the item alone when directed by the handler. An “Excellent” score should be noted if the dog ignores the item and doesn’t try to take it (unless the release word is given). The dog showing interest in the item but not going for it indicates a “Satisfactory” rating.
4. Being bumped (lightly) from behind. The dog can startle and turn to look, but no mouth snaps allowed.
5. Angry yelling – This should be carried out between two people in the presence of the dog but at least 8-10 feet away from the dog. Yelling is NOT to be directed at the dog. The dog is allowed to startle and look up but should not pull away or otherwise act up.
6. Does dog initiate contact with people? Chooses to engage with people if given a choice? (Tolerating being pet by a friendly stranger does not really determine if the dog WANTS to visit.) A simple way to test this would be for the evaluator to step back several times throughout the assessment and informally beckon the dog. When invited, but not being ordered by their handlers, dogs who enjoy visiting with unfamiliar people will initiate contact with their assessors at different times throughout the evaluation and remain engaged. This constitutes an Excellent rating. A dog offering at least some eye contact and comes to the assessor when beckoned earns a Satisfactory rating.





# Temperament Test Evaluator Form

## 1. Physical Touch Test

Evaluator's Action	Dog's Response		
	Excellent	Satisfactory	Fail
Forcefully pets the head			
Clumsy Petting			
Vigorously rubs/scratches back, ribs, neck			
Holds Ears			
Touches Paws			
Scratches/rubs throat			
Lightly pulls tail			
Briefly restrains with a hug			

- Excellent: The dog stands or sits and remains calm.
- Satisfactory: The dog moves or steps away from the examiner.
- Fail: Dog jumps up, jumps away, mouths, barks, or snaps.

## 2. Crowded Petting Test

Evaluator's Action	Dog's Response		
	Excellent	Satisfactory	Fail
Evaluator + 4 others surround & pet dog			

- Excellent: The dog stands or sits and remains calm.
- Satisfactory: Visibly uncomfortable or lightly stressed in the situation (lowering head, dropping tail, looking to handler for help), but the dog tolerates/accepts petting.
- Fail: Barks, mouths, snaps, cowers.

## 3. Leave It Test

Evaluator's Action	Dog's Response		
	Excellent	Satisfactory	Fail (List item(s) here.)
Evaluator records dog's reactions to a treat, food, & tissue placed by the evaluator along a path.			
Evaluator offers treat in an open palm.			

- Excellent: The dog ignores the item and does not attempt to take it (unless the release word is given).
- Satisfactory: The dog shows interest in the item but does not move toward it.
- Fail: The dog lunges /pulls towards &/or takes the item into the mouth. For training purposes, list the item(s) that resulted in Failure in the box marked "Fail" above.

#### 4. Bumping Test

Evaluator's Action	Dog's Response		
	Excellent	Satisfactory	Fail
Evaluator lightly bumps into dog's rear from behind.			

- Excellent: The dog ignores the bump.
- Satisfactory: The dog startles, looks, but does not mouth or snap.
- Fail: The dog lunges &/or vocalizes, mouths, snaps.

#### 5. Angry Yelling Test

Evaluator's Action	Dog's Response		
	Excellent	Satisfactory	Fail
Evaluator + 1 person, or 2 people observed by the evaluator, <u>shout at each other</u> , NOT the dog, approximately 8 to 10 ft away from dog.			

- Excellent: The dog ignores the yelling or quietly observes.
- Satisfactory: The dog startles, looks at the yelling pair, but does not pull away, lunge, or otherwise act out.
- Fail: The dog lunges /pulls towards &/or away from the pair, vocalizes, cowers.

#### 6. Initiating Contact & Engagement Test

Evaluator's Action	Dog's Response		
	Excellent	Satisfactory	Fail
Evaluator steps back from dog, invites, waits, & observes.			

- Excellent: Without invitation from evaluator or command by the handler, the dog interacts with and allows petting from the evaluator.
- Satisfactory: With invitation from evaluator and no command from the handler, the dog made eye contact and came to the evaluator when beckoned.
- Fail: When invited by evaluator and commanded by handler, the dog refused to engage or offer eye contact.

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***All sections of this test must be graded either excellent or satisfactory for the dog to pass the test. Any sections scoring a failure will cause the dog to fail the test.***

Overall Results: Pass\_\_\_\_\_ Fail\_\_\_\_\_ Date of Evaluation: \_\_\_\_\_

Remarks:

Evaluator's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Evaluator's Printed Name \_\_\_\_\_

Handler's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*The temperament test above is intended for dog/handler teams applying for membership in Canines for Christ. The evaluator is not liable for any legal consequences resulting from an incident involving the tested dog that leads to legal action, provided the evaluator passed the dog in good faith.*

## How does YOUR dog express Anxiety, Insecurity, or Stress?

To pet or not to pet? <https://youtube/-cGDYI-s-cQ?si=xmZNa4xGwVvO5tm9>

Disclaimer: The following is not an exhaustive list of stress signals. For the safety of all involved, learn your dog's particular signs.

### Signs of Stress

If you observe any of the following, give your dog a break and then reassess. If your dog does not recover, discontinue your visit. **Identify & manage stressors. Advocate for your dog. Protect all involved in the interaction.**

Lip Licking	Flat ears
Closed mouth	Moving slowly/creeping
Drooling	Panting
Looking away/whale eye	Holding up a front leg
Raised hackles (piloerection)	Shaking/shivering
Scratching/sniffing/stretching/yawning	Eliminating
Hiding	Looking for an escape
Ignoring basic training cues/commands	Cowering
Clawing/pawing at you, seeking help & rescue	Disinterest/Disengaging

### Warning Signs

If you observe any of the following, remove your dog immediately! If you ignore these signs, your dog may escalate, attack, and bite someone. Advocate for your dog. Protect all involved.

Stiffness	Freezing
Direct Staring	Hard Staring
Snarling	

**DANGER ZONE!! Your dog is over his threshold!! DANGER ZONE!!**

Growling	Lip curling	Lunging	Snapping
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Because early stress signals are often ignored or missed, a dog escalates along this ladder of communication until his need for space is acknowledged. When your dog escalates to “the danger zone,” he is warning you that a bite is imminent. Diffuse, respect, and “back off.”

**Review Quiz:** <https://moderndogmagazine.com/articles/what-are-these-dogs-trying-to-say-take-this-quick-quiz/>

## Managing the Common Stressors & Hazards of Visiting

View a video about Stressors During a Visit:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?list=PLhIXwWGH2LkihsDBs2iBfc8zc6\\_Rlp1PW&v=CpJVjMRCCoo&embeds\\_referring\\_euri=https%3A%2F%2Fk9forchrist.org%2F](https://www.youtube.com/watch?list=PLhIXwWGH2LkihsDBs2iBfc8zc6_Rlp1PW&v=CpJVjMRCCoo&embeds_referring_euri=https%3A%2F%2Fk9forchrist.org%2F)

Environment (noisy, active, unusual): Socialization & Exposure Techniques

Unaccustomed to equipment, setting, or noises: Socialization & Exposure Techniques

Participant behavior: Never allow a participant to touch your dog roughly or inappropriately. Your dog is not obligated to interact with everyone. Find the right place and the right participants for your team. Show people where/how to pet your dog and allow your dog the right to refuse.

Insufficient exercise prior to visit: Give your dog a brisk walk for exercise and elimination before you enter a facility. Bring your own waste bags, pick up after your dog, and dispose of his waste in the proper location. If you leave an area soiled, our organization may not be welcomed back.

Poor, inconsistent, or unskilled training: Work with a professional trainer in your area.

Lack of communication between dog & handler: Use verbal and visual cues with your dog. Be clear, concise, use the same word & same signal every single time.

Handler uncomfortable: Practice with family members or friends and simulate visits. Observe and learn from other more experienced teams. Ask to accompany another team on visits and allow the handler to mentor you. Collaborate with a professional trainer in your area.

Overworking: Schedule fewer visits and shorter visits (30 minutes to one hour) once or twice per week). Give your dog time to rest and recuperate between visits. Taking a quick break during a visit is also encouraged.

Existing physical problems: Postpone visits while your dog is injured or sick. Return to visits only when your dog is cleared by your veterinarian.

Dog is bumped into, tripped over: Use your body as a barrier to protect your dog and to maintain space between him and others in confined spaces. Train your dog to accept bumps and trips by working at home to build a positive association between bumps/trips and your dog's favorite treat.

Dog scratches someone through rambunctious play or shaking hands: Simply do not allow either of these activities on a visit. Teach the gentler "High 5" as an alternative to "shake." Show off your dog's tricks rather than allowing free play between dog and participant.

Dog mouths or snaps a hand when given a treat: Do not allow dog to accept treats on visits. It is dangerous for the dog and the participant.

Dog mouths or snaps at participant's face: Do not allow face-to-face contact, like kisses or licking. It is dangerous and unsanitary. Some dogs do not like their space invaded. Many people dislike it, too. Allow your dog the freedom to move away and verify that your dog is giving consent for the interaction.

Dog mouths or snaps when it feels trapped or cornered by staff, another team, or a participant: Do not allow your dog to be backed into a corner, surrounded, or crowded. Keep a minimum of three feet between your dog and another canine team. Allow space for your dog to move away from participants and other dogs. Verify that your dog is giving consent for the interaction.

Handler Feels Stressed/Nervous: Keep your dog on a loose leash. Do not work on a tight leash. Stress and tension travel along a tight leash! Consider visiting with other teams with or without your own dog.

Dog is overstimulated/fearful/stressed: Talk to your dog in a soothing, calm, and reassuring tone.

Dog seems distracted: Watch your dog and have him watch you. Teach "watch me/look at me."

## Training Solutions for Common Problems

Barking: Investigate, Ignore, & Teach/Use (Leave It, Speak, Hush)

- Jill Marie's Leave It Video

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=koB4anXJ6ro&list=PLhIXwWGH2LkihsDBs2iBfc8zc6\\_Rlp1PW&index=11](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=koB4anXJ6ro&list=PLhIXwWGH2LkihsDBs2iBfc8zc6_Rlp1PW&index=11)

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Jumping Up: Manage, Ignore, Dodge, Remove, & Teach/Use (Sit & Stay)

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Pulling: Exercise & Equipment, Use Anchor, Angle, Turn Around, Deny Access

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Managing Greetings: "Say hello." Use Sit/Stay or Stand/Stay, Release

## **Suggested Resources**

### **Canines For Christ Resources**

<https://k9forchrist.org/canine-resources>

Larry Randolph's *Finding Grace: The Inspiring True Story of Therapy Dogs Bringing Comfort, Hope and Love to a Hurting World*. 2023

### **Training Resources**

Guide to a Well-Behaved Dog: Proven Solutions to the Most Common

Training Problems for All Ages, Breeds, and Mixes by Zak George, 2019

Lucky Dog Lessons: Train Your Dog in Seven Days by Brandon McMillan, 2016

Train Your Dog Positively by Victoria Stilwell, 2013

The Other End of the Leash by Patricia B. McConnell, 2002

### **Dog Therapy Resources**

Teaming With Your Therapy Dog by Ann R. Howie, 2015

Therapy Dogs Today by Kris Butler, 2004

Becoming a Therapy Dog Team by Katha Miller-Winder, Ph.D., 2021

Practicing Partnership: A Therapy Dog & His Person by Katha Miller-Winder, Ph.D.,  
2023

Therapy Dogs: Training Your Dog to Reach Others by Kathy Diamond Davis, 2002

The Power of Wagging Tails: A Doctor's Guide to Dog Therapy and Healing by Dawn A.  
Marcus, MD, 2011