

VOLHARD'S PUPPY APTITUDE TEST

WHAT IS PUPPY TESTING?

Some of the tests we use were developed as long ago as the 1930's for dogs bred to become Guide Dogs. Then in the 1950's, studies on puppies were done to determine how quickly they learned. These studies were actually done to identify children's learning stages.

Top Dog Tips: The ideal age to test the puppy is at 49 days of age when the puppy is neurologically complete and it has the brain of an adult dog. With each passing day after the 49th day the responses will be tainted by prior learning.

Later on, in the early 60's more tests were developed to determine if pups could be tested for dominance and submission. These tests determined that it was indeed possible to predict future behavioral traits of adult dogs by testing puppies at 49 days of age. Testing before or after that age affected the accuracy of the test, depending on the time before or after the 49th day.

We took these tests, added some of our own, and put together what is now known as the Volhard Puppy Aptitude Test, or PAT. PAT uses a scoring system from 1-6 and consists of ten tests. The tests are done consecutively in the order listed. Each test is scored separately, and interpreted on its own merits. The scores are not averaged, and there are no winners or losers. The entire purpose is to select the right puppy for the right home.

The tests are as follows:

1. Social Attraction - degree of social attraction to people, confidence or dependence.
2. Following - willingness to follow a person.
3. Restraint - degree of dominant or submissive tendency, and ease of handling in difficult situations.
4. Social Dominance - degree of acceptance of social dominance by a person.
5. Elevation - degree of accepting dominance while in a position of no control, such as at the veterinarian or groomer.
6. Retrieving - degree of willingness to do something for you. Together with Social Attraction and Following a key indicator for ease or difficulty in training.
7. Touch Sensitivity - degree of sensitivity to touch and a key indicator to the type of training equipment required.
8. Sound Sensitivity - degree of sensitivity to sound, such as loud noises or thunderstorms.
9. Sight Sensitivity - degree of response to a moving object, such as chasing bicycles, children or squirrels.
10. Stability - degree of startle response to a strange object.

During the testing make a note of the heart rate of the pup, which is an indication of how it deals with stress, as well as its energy level. Puppies come with high, medium or low energy levels. You have to decide for yourself, which suits your life style. Dogs with high energy levels need a great deal of exercise, and will get into mischief if this energy is not channeled into the right direction.

Finally, look at the overall structure of the puppy. You see what you get at 49 days age. If the pup has strong and straight front and back legs, with all four feet pointing in the same direction, it will grow up that way, provided you give it the proper diet and environment in which to grow. If you notice something out of the ordinary at this age, it will stay with puppy for the rest of its life. He will not grow out of it.

HOW TO TEST

Here are the ground rules for performing the test:

- The testing is done in a location unfamiliar to the puppies. This does not mean they have to be taken away from home. A 10-foot square area is perfectly adequate, such as a room in the house where the puppies have not been.
- The puppies are tested one at a time.
- There are no other dogs or people, except the scorer and the tester, in the testing area.
- The puppies do not know the tester.
- The scorer is a disinterested third party and not the person interested in selling you a puppy.
- The scorer is unobtrusive and positions him or herself so he or she can observe the puppies' responses without having to move.
- The puppies are tested before they are fed.
- The puppies are tested when they are at their liveliest.
- Do not try to test a puppy that is not feeling well.
- Puppies should not be tested the day of or the day after being vaccinated.
- Only the first response counts!

Top Dog Tips: During the test, watch the puppy's tail. It will make a difference in the scoring whether the tail is up or down.

The tests are simple to perform and anyone with some common sense can do them. You can, however, elicit the help of someone who has tested puppies before and knows what they are doing.

VOLHARD'S PUPPY APTITUDE TEST

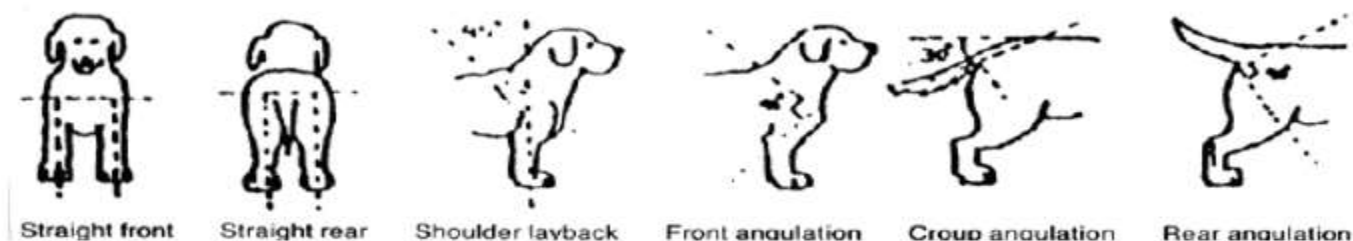
© Wendy Volhard 2003

Puppy (color, sex _____) Litter _____ Date _____

TEST	PURPOSE	SCORE	#	✓
Social Attraction: Place the puppy in test area. From a few feet away, the tester coaxes the pup to her/him by clapping hands gently and kneeling down. Tester must coax in a direction away from the point where it entered the testing area.	Degree of social attraction, confidence or dependence.	Came readily, tail up, jumped, bit at hands	1	
		Came readily, tail up, pawed, licked at hands	2	
		Came readily, tail up.	3	
		Came readily, tail down.	4	
		Came hesitantly, tail down.	5	
		Did not come at all	6	
Following: The tester stands up and slowly walks away encouraging the pup to follow by lightly clapping hands and using verbal encouragement. Make sure the pup sees you walk away.	Degree of following attraction. Not following indicates independence.	Followed readily, tail up, got underfoot, bit at feet	1	
		Followed readily, tail up, got underfoot	2	
		Followed readily, tail up.	3	
		Followed readily, tail down.	4	
		Followed hesitantly, tail down.	5	
		No following, or went away.	6	
Restraint: Crouch down and gently roll the pup on his back and hold it with one hand for a full 30 seconds. Do not use too much pressure. The object is not to keep it on tis back but to test its response to being placed in that position.	Degree of dominant or submissive tendency. How it accepts stress when socially and/or physically dominated.	Struggled fiercely, flailed, bit.	1	
		Struggled fiercely, flailed.	2	
		Settled, struggled, settled with some eye contact.	3	
		Struggled. Then settled.	4	
		No struggle.	5	
		No struggle, straining to avoid eye contact.	6	
Social Dominance: Let pup stand up or sit and gently stroke him from the head to back while you crouch beside him. See if he will lick your face, an indication of a forgiving nature. Continue stroking until a recognizable behavior is established.	Degree of acceptance of social dominance pup may try to dominate by jumping and nipping or it is independent and walks away.	Jumped, pawed, bit, growled	1	
		Jumped, pawed.	2	
		Cuddles up to tester and tries to lick face.	3	
		Squirmed, licked at hands.	4	
		Rolled over, licked at hands.	5	
		Went away and stayed away.	6	
Elevation Dominance: Bend over and cradle the pup under its belly, fingers interlaced, palms up and elevate just off the ground. Hold it there for 30 seconds.	Degree of accepting dominance while in position of no control.	Struggled fiercely, bit, growled	1	
		Struggled fiercely,	2	
		No struggle, relaxed.	3	
		Struggled, settled, licked.	4	
		Rolled over, licked at hands.	5	
		No struggle, froze.	6	
Retrieving: Crouch beside pup and attract its attention with crumpled up paper ball. When the pup shows interest and is watching, toss the object 1 to 2 meters in front of pup.	Degree of willingness to work with a human. High correlation between ability to retrieve and successful guide dogs, obedience dogs, field trial dogs.	Chases object, picks up object and runs away.	1	
		Chases object, stands over object, does not return.	2	
		Chases object and returns with object to tester.	3	
		Chases object and returns without object.	4	
		Starts to chase object, loses interest	5	
		Does not chase object.	6	

TEST	PURPOSE	SCORE	#	✓
Touch Sensitivity: Take puppies webbing of one front foot and press between finger and thumb lightly, then more firmly till you get a response, while you count slowly to 10. Stop as soon as puppy pulls away or shows discomfort.	Degree of sensitivity to touch.	8-10 seconds before response	1	
		6-8 seconds before response	2	
		5-6 seconds before response	3	
		3-5 seconds before response	4	
		2-3 seconds before response	5	
		1-2 seconds before response	6	
Sound Sensitivity: Place pup in centre of area. Assistant of tester makes a sharp noise a few feet from the puppy. A large metal spoon struck sharply on a metal pan twice works well.	Degree of sensitivity to sound (also rudimentary test for deafness).	Listens, locates sound, walks towards it barking.	1	
		Listens, locates sound, barks.	2	
		Listens, locates sound, and walks there curiously.	3	
		Listens, locates sound.	4	
		Cringes, backs off, hides.	5	
		Ignores sound, shows no curiosity.	6	
Sight Sensitivity: Place pup in centre of area. Tie a string around a large towel and jerk it across the ground a few feet away from the puppy.	Degree of intelligent response to strange object.	Looks, attacks and bites.	1	
		Looks, puts feet on object, puts mouth on object. .	2	
		Looks with curiosity, attempts to investigate, tail up.	3	
		Looks with curiosity, tail down.	4	
		Runs away or hides behind tester.	5	
		Hides behind tester.	6	
Stability: Open an umbrella about 5 feet from the puppy and gently place it on the ground.	Degree of startle response to a strange object. Fight or Flight drive.	Looks, runs to the umbrella, mouthing or biting it.	1	
		Looks and walks to the umbrella, smelling it cautiously.	2	
		Looks and wants to investigate.	3	
		Sits and looks, but does not move toward the umbrella.	4	
		Shows little or no interest.	5	
		Runs away from the umbrella.	6	
Structure: The puppy is gently set and held in a natural stance and evaluated for structure in the following categories: • Straight front • Straight rear • Shoulder lay back • Front angulation • Croup angulation • Rear angulation (see diagram below)	Degree of structural soundness.	The puppy is correct in structure.	Good	
		The puppy has a slight fault or deviation.	Fair	
		The puppy has an extreme fault or dev	Poor	

***Please note that the structure of the dog pictured below is similar to the Appenzeller. This diagram is for structure purposes only.**



WHAT DO THE SCORES MEAN?

The scores are interpreted as follows:

Mostly 1's –

Strong desire to be pack leader and is not shy about bucking for a promotion
Has a predisposition to be aggressive to people and other dogs and will bite
Should only be placed into a very experienced home where the dog will be trained and worked on a regular basis.

Top Dog Tips: Stay away from the puppy with a lot of 1's or 2's. It has lots of leadership aspirations and may be difficult to manage. This puppy needs an experienced home. Not good with children.

Mostly 2's –

Also has leadership aspirations
May be hard to manage and has the capacity to bite
Has lots of self-confidence
Should not be placed into an inexperienced home
Too unruly to be good with children and elderly people, or other animals
Needs strict schedule, loads of exercise and lots of training.
Has the potential to be a great show dog with someone who understand dog behavior

Mostly 3's –

Can be a high-energy dog and may need lots of exercise
Good with people and other animals
Can be a bit of a handful to live with
Needs training, does very well at it and learns quickly
Great dog for second time owner.

Mostly 4's –

The kind of dog that makes the perfect pet
Best choice for the first-time owner.
Rarely will buck for a promotion in the family
Easy to train, and rather quiet
Good with elderly people, children, although may need protection from the children
Choose this pup, take it to obedience classes, and you'll be the star, without having to do too much work!

Tidbits: The puppy with mostly 3's and 4's can be quite a handful, but should be good with children and does with training. Energy needs to be dispersed with plenty of exercise.

Mostly 5's –

Fearful, shy and needs special handling.
Will run away at the slightest stress in its life.
Strange people, strange places, different floor or ground surfaces may upset it.
Often afraid of loud noises and terrified of thunder storms. When you greet it upon your return, may submissively urinate. Needs a very special home where the environment doesn't change too much and where there are not children.
Best for quiet, elderly couple.
If cornered and cannot get away, has a tendency to bite.

Top Dog Tips: Avoid the puppy with several 6's. It is so independent it doesn't need you or anyone. He is his own person and unlikely to bond to you.

Mostly 6's –

So independent that he doesn't need you or other people.

Doesn't care if he is trained or not – he is his own person. Unlikely to bond to you, since he doesn't need you.

A great guard dog for gas stations!

Do not take this puppy and think you can change him into a lovable bundle – you can't, so leave well enough alone.

INTERPRETING THE SCORES

Few puppies will test with all 2's or all 3's – there will be a mixture of scores.

For that first time, wonderfully easy to train, potential star, look for a puppy that scores with mostly 4's and 3's. Don't worry about the score on Touch Sensitivity – you can compensate for that with the right training equipment.

Tidbits: It's hard not to become emotional when picking a puppy - they are all so cute, soft and cuddly. Remind yourself that this dog is going to be with you for 8 to 16 years. Don't hesitate to step back a little to contemplate your decision. Sleep on it and review it in the light of day.

Avoid the puppy with a score of 1 on the Restraint and Elevation tests. This puppy will be too much for the first-time owner.

It's a lot more fun to have a good dog, one that is easy to train, one you can live with and one you can be proud of, than one that is a constant struggle.