

# Step-By-Step CGC Training in Your Home & Backyard



The AKC Canine Good Citizen™ (CGC) program provides a perfect framework for training your dog to become a polite member of society. CGC classes will help you and your dog learn the 10 skills in the program. Practice at home will polish them. When you're ready, the final step is to pass the test administered in person by an AKC CGC Approved Evaluator.

While not all CGC training can be done at home, these are basic instructions you can follow until you are in a group class. Read on for step-by-step instructions for working with your dog at home to prepare for the CGC test.

## **Item 1: Allowing a Friendly Stranger to Approach**

Socializing your dog to all kinds of people from an early age will go a long way to passing this test. You can also encourage your dog to focus on you by teaching a "Watch Me" cue. The following steps will help you add distractions once your dog understands the basics:

- Give your dog the "Watch Me" cue with another person far enough away that your dog isn't distracted by them. When your dog looks at you, mark the behavior with a clicker or marker word like "Yes," then praise and reward.

- Repeat, moving closer to the other person one step at a time. If your dog loses focus, you've moved too close too fast.
- Continue practicing until the other person is beside you. Train with as many different people as possible.
- Learn how to safely socialize your dog during COVID-19



## **Item 2: Sitting Politely for Petting**

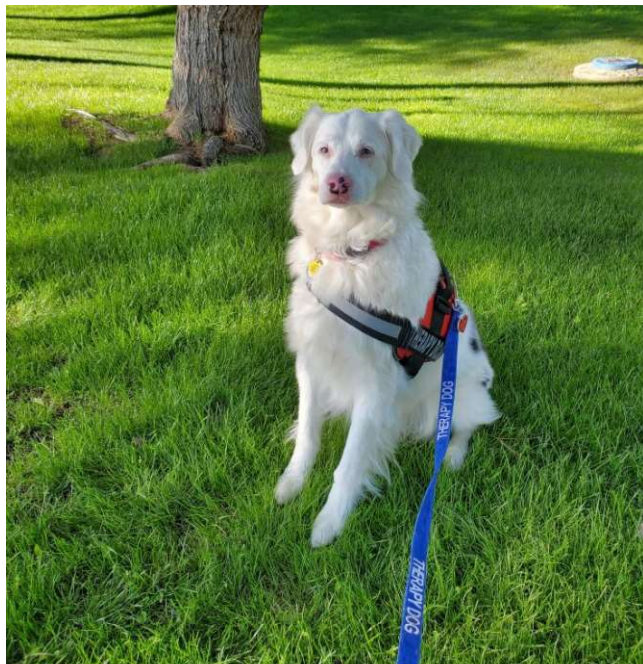
Socialization is an important component of passing this test. So is teaching your dog to control his or her emotions during greetings. Train your dog to sit and relax while being petted with the following steps:

- Ask your dog to sit then have someone approach your dog for a greeting. If your dog becomes overly excited, have the person walk away.
- Repeat until your dog can stay seated with the person beside them.
- Ask the other person to calmly pet your dog. If your dog stays seated the petting can continue. But if your dog gets too excited or stands up, have the person walk away.
- Repeat, with the other person slowly increasing their enthusiasm until your dog can handle highly exciting greetings and pets.

### **Item 3: Accepting Grooming and an Examination**

Handling exercises will help your dog become comfortable with touch. Sensitive dogs can benefit from counter-conditioning, a technique that changes a negative emotional response to a positive one. The following steps will help:

- Touch your dog gently and briefly on a non-sensitive area like the back. Reward with a treat.
- Touch for several seconds, then treat.
- Gently squeeze or manipulate that area, then treat.
- Repeat with more sensitive areas like the paws.



### **Item 4: Walking on a Loose Leash**

To train loose leash walking, never letting your dog earn a reward for pulling. Your dog should only get to walk when the leash is slack. Try the following steps:

- In a quiet place, start walking with your dog on leash.
- Continue walking as long as the leash is slack. When your dog gets to the end of the leash and pulls, stop and stand still.
- Stay immobile until your dog returns to you. Once the leash is slack again, begin walking.
- As your dog starts to master the concept, walk in more distracting areas.
- Add a verbal cue like "Let's Go" to tell your dog it's time to walk.

## **Item 5: Walking Politely Through a Crowd**

This is another test of loose leash walking skills, but now there are distractions. To pass this test, when possible include other people, other dogs, and exciting things to smell in your advanced loose leash walking training. The "Let's Go" cue can be used to tell your dog to keep moving. It can also be helpful to teach a "Leave It" cue that lets your dog know when something is off-limits.



## **Item 6: Sitting and Lying Down on Cue and Staying in Place**

Lure-and-reward training is a great method for teaching sit and down to your dog. These are the basic steps:

- Hold a treat to your dog's nose. Lift it up and over the head for a sit. Move it down and along the ground for a down.
- Mark and reward your dog for following the treat into the desired position.
- Lure your dog as before. Mark then reward with a treat from your other hand.
- Lure your dog with an empty hand. Mark and reward your dog for performing the behavior. This teaches a hand signal.
- Add a verbal cue right before the hand signal. Continue to mark and reward when your dog sits or lies down.

When teaching stay, be aware of the three Ds – distance, distractions, and duration. Try the following steps:

- Place your dog in a sit or down. Give the cue "Stay." Wait half a second. Mark the behavior, say a release word like "Free" to tell your dog the stay is over, then reward your dog.
- Slowly increase the amount of time you wait before you mark, release, and reward. If your dog gets up before being released, go back to a shorter interval and try again.
- As you build duration, reward your dog during the stay with high-value treats. When released, reward again with low-value treats. That ensures your dog enjoys staying as much as being free.
- Add distance once your dog can stay for several seconds. Start with one step, then two, and so on. Always return to your dog to mark, release, and reward.



### **Item 7: Coming When Called**

For a successful recall, your dog should think coming to you is exciting and rewarding. Never use the recall cue to end your dog's fun. Start training in a quiet area with no distractions. The following steps will help build a strong recall:

- With your dog beside you, say your dog's name and a recall cue like "Come." Give your dog a high-value treat.
- Drop a treat beside your dog. As soon as your dog finishes eating, say your dog's name and "Come." Provide another treat when your dog looks at you.
- Repeat the above step while tossing the initial treat a foot away from your dog. Reward your dog for returning to you.
- Take a few steps away from your dog after tossing the initial treat. This should encourage your dog to chase you which adds to the reward.
- Continue to build more distance. Begin to train in different locations.

### **Item 8: Reacting Politely to Other Dogs**

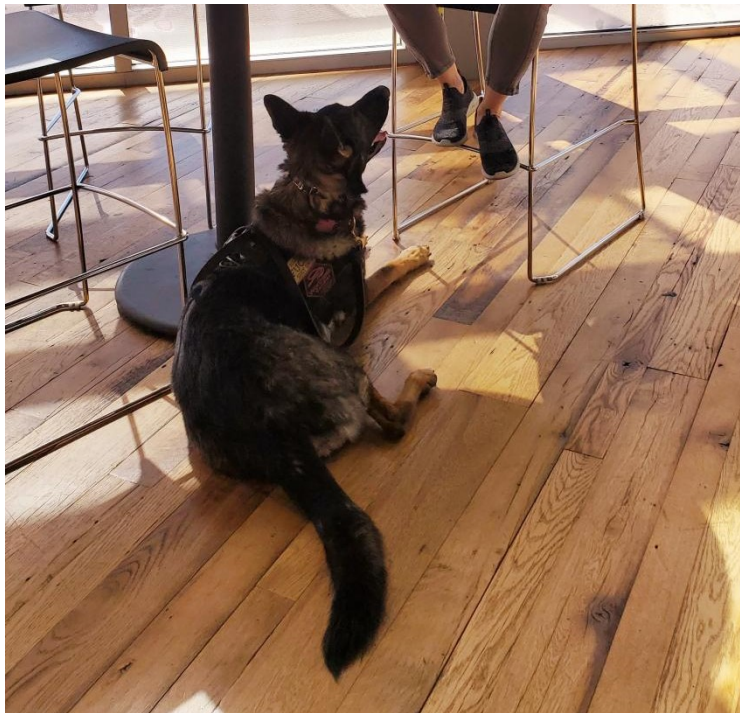
If your dog is nervous around other dogs, an exercise like the one in item three can help your dog become more comfortable. Simply start with your dog far enough away from the other dog that he or she isn't upset. Reward your dog in the presence of the other dog. Slowly decrease the distance.

If your dog gets overly excited by other dogs, use dogs as part of your distraction training. You can also use the "Leave It" cue and/or the "Watch Me" cue to get your dog's focus on you rather than the other dog.

## **Item 9: Reacting Calmly to a Distraction**

A well-socialized dog will be a more confident dog which is helpful for passing this test. You can also desensitize your dog to distractions similar to what the evaluator will use for the test (a dropped food dish, a jogger moving past the dog, etc.). Start with the distraction at a low enough level that your dog doesn't react. Follow these steps:

- Drop a food dish onto a soft surface, like a carpet, from a low height. Immediately reward your dog.
- Drop the dish from a higher level. Immediately reward.
- Drop the dish onto a hard surface from a low height. Immediately reward.
- Drop the dish from higher up. Immediately reward.



## **Item 10: Reacting Calmly to Supervised Separation From the Owner**

An important step for passing this test is alone time training. Teach your dog to be comfortable away from you with the following steps:

- Give your dog an edible chew or food releasing toy to keep him or her occupied. Leave the room or move behind a barrier for as short a time as you know your dog can handle. When you return to the room, praise and reward your dog.
- Continue to slowly build the time you are out of the room. When your dog is comfortable alone with a treat or toy, start over while the dog has no distractions. Praise and reward your dog when you return.