

Expectations of Behavior Skills in Puppies up to 9 Months Old

Goals:

- To ensure that puppies are developing skills commensurate to In-For-Training Standards.
- To identify areas of each puppy's skills that are strengths and those that need improvement.
- To provide valuable feedback to puppy raiser and counselor.

Tools:

The puppy raiser can support the puppy's skills by using treats and, if approved by the counselor or Leader Dog puppy development, a head halter or harness. As the puppy gets older (7 months and up) the raiser should be actively working to reduce the amount of food rewards and to minimize the use of tools such as a head halter or harness. The raiser should be aware that during an actual IFT assessment of a puppy 10 months or older food rewards and tools such as a head halter or harness are not allowed.

Scoring:

1 = the puppy can easily complete the skill as described. Great job!

2 = the puppy can accomplish the skill but may need a second try or extra cues

3 = the puppy struggles to complete the skill, although may be able to do a portion of it

4 = the puppy cannot complete the skill

Expectations of Crate Behavior

Puppy under 4 months: Enters crate with help or with food reward. After a short time will settle quietly and can remain in crate for the number of months old she is plus one (3 months old +1 = 4 hours). The puppy may require a reminder to sit prior to being let out of crate.

Score: 1 2 3 4

Puppy 4–9 months: Enters crate on verbal cue. The puppy settles calmly and quietly even if distractions are present. The puppy may require a toy to maintain quiet behavior. The puppy will hold a sit until the crate door is opened, but may require a reminder.

Score: 1 2 3 4

Expectations of House Training

Puppy under 4 months: Begin to establish a "park" routine. The puppy will start to signal that she needs to relieve herself. The puppy is starting to sleep through the night in her crate and is able to keep her crate clean when left alone for the number of months old plus one (4 months old +1 = 5 hours). The puppy may still have a few accidents, even in public. The puppy will relieve herself on different surfaces (concrete, asphalt, mulch, grass, stones).

Score: 1 2 3 4

Puppy 4–9 months: The "park" routine is established and accidents are almost non-existent. The raiser can stand in one place, give the cue to park and the puppy will comply in most instances. The puppy

clearly indicates when she needs to relieve herself. The puppy will relieve herself on different surfaces (concrete, asphalt, mulch, grass, stones).

Score: 1 2 3 4

Expectations of Health Care

Puppy under 4 months: Allows examination of ears, eyes, teeth and feet with minimum of mouthing and wiggling. Allows brushing and nail trimming but may require being held in lap to accomplish these tasks. Exams can be done by raiser or a stranger.

Score: 1 2 3 4

Puppy 4–9 months: Allows examination of ears, eyes, teeth and feet in a sit, stand or down position with handler support. The puppy will allow veterinary exams with a minimum of fuss. Willingly allows ear or eye drops to be administered and allows oral medications to be administered. Nails can be trimmed without restraint. Bathing can be accomplished by one person.

Score: 1 2 3 4

Expectations of Reward Marker

Puppy under 4 months: Puppy responds to word “yes” with anticipation of food reward. Puppy may need handler support to remain in position while food reward is delivered.

Score: 1 2 3 4

Puppy 4–9 months: Puppy responds to verbal marker “yes” with animated anticipation of food reward. Puppy is able to maintain position at the time of the mark, waiting for the handler to deliver the food reward. Any movement towards food occurs in a mannerly fashion.

Score: 1 2 3 4

Expectations of Food Reward Acceptance

Puppy under 4 months: Puppy is learning to take dry food rewards without causing handler discomfort. Food rewards come from the handler’s left side delivered with the left hand.

Score: 1 2 3 4

Puppy 4–9 months: Puppy will eagerly work for dry food in most training situations. Handler may have to modify hand position for a specific method of delivery but feels no discomfort to the hand when delivering the food. Food rewards come from the handler’s right side and are delivered with the right hand.

Score: 1 2 3 4

Expectations of Loose Leash Heeling

Puppy under 4 months: The puppy should be able to walk on a loose leash for 20 steps in low distraction settings without food rewards. Puppy is being introduced to walking on a loose leash through doors, on stairs, along traffic and through crowds with appropriate rewards for proper behavior.

Score: 1 2 3 4

Puppy 4–9 months: The puppy should be able to maintain a loose leash for 20 steps in moderately distracting settings. Puppy may need management tool (provided by the puppy counselor or puppy development) to meet this goal. Puppy is confident in going through doors, on stairs, along traffic and through crowds with appropriate rewards for loose leash behavior.

Score: 1 2 3 4

Expectations of Sit

Puppy under 4 months: Puppy can sit on cue in low or moderate distraction settings and hold position for 10–15 seconds. Puppy will sit in front or at left side of handler on cue.

Score: 1 2 3 4

Puppy 4–9 months: Puppy will sit on cue at handler's left side in heel position and will hold position until released for 30 seconds. Puppy may be cued to "stay."

Score: 1 2 3 4

Expectations of Head in Bandana/Jacket

Puppy under 4 months: Puppy will sit or stand and allow the bandanna to be placed over his head. A hand target for "touch" may be used followed by a piece of kibble. Some minor movement is acceptable.

Score: 1 2 3 4

Puppy 4 months to return for training: Upon presentation of the bandanna or jacket (front clip closed), the puppy will sit or stand quietly allowing the item to be placed over his head, as well as fastened if the item is a jacket.

Score: 1 2 3 4

Expectations of Down

Puppy under 4 months: The puppy is able to go down on cue with help in low to moderate distraction settings. Can remain down with appropriate reinforcement for 15–20 seconds.

Score: 1 2 3 4

Puppy 4–9 months: Puppy will go down on cue in moderate to high distraction settings. Will hold position for 30 seconds with handler support (may tell the dog to stay). Puppy remains in close approximation to heel position.

Score: 1 2 3 4

Expectations of Stand

Puppy under 4 months: With handler support, the puppy can stand and remain in position for 10 seconds. Handler may need to kneel on the floor.

Score: 1 2 3 4

Puppy 4–9 months: Puppy should stand on cue in heel position. Handler may use the “stay” cue. The puppy should maintain position for 30 seconds.

Score: 1 2 3 4

Expectations of Stay

Puppy under 4 months: Puppy can hold a position (sit, down or stand) for 15–20 seconds. May require reinforcement or handler support. Handler is within two feet of the puppy.

Score: 1 2 3 4

Puppy 4–9 months: Puppy can hold a position (sit, down or stand) for 30 seconds with handler at full leash length away from the puppy.

Score: 1 2 3 4

Expectations of Name Recognition

Puppy under 4 months: The puppy responds to his name by looking at the handler in low or moderate distraction settings. The puppy may need handler support in the form of the handler making a noise or touching the puppy.

Score: 1 2 3 4

Puppy 4–9 months: The puppy responds to his name by looking at the handler in moderate to high distraction settings. The raiser is still marking and rewarding correct responses. The puppy may need handler support.

Score: 1 2 3 4

Expectations of Come

Puppy under 4 months: The puppy will come to the handler when called from a distance of 4–6 feet with help from the handler (moving backwards, coaxing or providing a hand target).

Score: 1 2 3 4

Puppy 4–9 months: The puppy will sit and stay while the handler goes to the end of a 5–6 foot leash. Handler may use touch cue in addition to, or in place of, the “come” cue. The puppy comes close enough to the handler that the puppy’s collar can be touched.

Score: 1 2 3 4

Expectations of Tethering Skills

Puppy under 4 months: The puppy remains calm or does minimal fussing on a leash tether. When tethered to an object, the handler can move 10 feet away and return while the puppy remains calm. Toys can be used to help the puppy relax.

Score: 1 2 3 4

Puppy 4–9 months: The puppy remains calm on leash tether, mainly lying down. The puppy may whine or need toys to maintain calm behavior.

Score: 1 2 3 4

Expectations of Handler’s Exam

Puppy under 4 months: The puppy will allow the raiser to gently examine his eyes, ears, teeth and feet. Nails can be trimmed (an assistant may be used). The puppy will allow himself to be brushed. Mouthing or biting at the brush is easily discouraged.

Score: 1 2 3 4

Puppy 4–9 months: The puppy will allow a stranger to gently examine his eyes, ears, teeth and feet. Nails can be trimmed without assistance. The puppy allows brushing without mouthing or biting at the brush. The handler can support the puppy by offering treats.

Score: 1 2 3 4

Expectations of Impulse Control

Puppy under 4 months: The puppy reliably moves away from food when presented in a closed fist. When hearing a sudden noise, the puppy may startle or move away, but with handler support the puppy will refocus on handler. When seeing a sudden movement, the puppy may try to chase or follow the movement but can be redirected to handler. When seeing a strange dog, the puppy may show interest but can be redirected by the handler.

Score: 1 2 3 4

Puppies 4–9 months: The puppy will remain still or move away from distractions such as food, objects, sudden movement or strange dogs; may need handler support. The puppy is confident and calm around sudden noises though may occasionally require handler support.

Score: 1 2 3 4

Expectations of Greeting People in the Home

Puppy under 4 months (on or off leash): With handler support, puppy keeps all four feet on the floor. After initial excitement, may need handler direction to settle.

Score: 1 2 3 4

Puppy 4–9 months (on or off leash): Puppy greets with reasonable energy, keeping all four feet on the floor. After initial excitement, may need handler direction to settle.

Score: 1 2 3 4

Expectations of Greetings in Public on Leash

Puppy under 4 months: The puppy can remain in a sit or stand while being greeted by a stranger with support from the handler, without straining, excessive licking or mouthing. Generous use of positive reinforcement is preferred with puppies of this age.

Score: 1 2 3 4

Puppy 4–9 months of age: The puppy will remain in a sit-stay or stand-stay while being approached and petted by a stranger. The puppy will lick no more than two times and does not mouth. The handler may choose to reward good greeting behavior.

Score: 1 2 3 4

Expectations of Normal Attachment

Puppy under 4 months: The puppy can be left with a stranger while handler moves around the room, or goes out of sight for very brief periods (15–30 seconds). The stranger can provide the puppy with toys or food rewards to keep her calm.

Score: 1 2 3 4

Puppy 4–9 months: The puppy can be left with a stranger (or another person) while the handler leaves the immediate area for up to a minute. The stranger can use a toy or provide support to the puppy by gentle praise or petting.

Score: 1 2 3 4

Home Settling Behavior

A dog going into the home of a person who is blind or visually impaired needs to demonstrate suitable home manners. Here are some guidelines for home manner expectations:

Puppy under 4 months (off leash): Puppy is comfortable with limited freedom in proximity of humans. The puppy plays with her own toys with human coaching, and will settle and sleep when tired.

Score: 1 2 3 4

Puppy 4–9 months (off leash): Puppy has a good concept of what her toys are and what human items are. Puppy requires less redirection to what is acceptable. She may get excited with changes to the home environment (people coming over) but will settle after five minutes and will lie down and sleep when household is quiet.

Score: 1 2 3 4

Expectations of Resource Sharing

Puppy under 4 months: Puppy is relaxed with humans around food. Puppy will share items with humans and other dogs. An empty food bowl can be picked up without incident.

Score: 1 2 3 4

Puppy 4–9 months: Puppy is relaxed around food. Puppy will disengage from other pets over toys or other valued resources. Puppy may remove a toy from area or eat faster in the presence of people or other pets.

Score: 1 2 3 4

Expectations of Traffic

Puppy under 4 months: The puppy has been exposed to vehicle traffic and is comfortable observing moving cars. The puppy can walk alongside traffic calmly with handler support.

Score: 1 2 3 4

Puppy 4–9 months: The puppy can walk on loose leash with handler support in moderate to heavy traffic coming from behind. The puppy can hold a sit or stand with handler support at a busy intersection.

Score: 1 2 3 4

Expectations of people and crowds

Puppy under 4 months: The puppy should be exposed to different surfaces with support from the handler. The handler should use frequent food rewards to make the puppy comfortable while walking

on different surfaces. The puppy should be able to sit on a loose leash in heel position while crowds pass by. Care should be taken to make sure the puppy is not in a situation where he becomes overwhelmed.

Score: 1 2 3 4

Puppy 4–9 months: The puppy should confidently walk across different surfaces on a loose leash and should be able to walk through crowds on a loose leash with reinforcement from the handler.

Score: 1 2 3 4

Expectations of Settling on Leash

Puppy under 4 months: Puppy will settle in a sit or down at the handler's feet with support from the raiser. Food rewards or a KONG or similar toy with peanut butter and kibble may be used to keep the puppy engaged. Typically, very young puppies will tire from chewing on the toy and fall asleep.

Score: 1 2 3 4

Puppy 4–9 months: Puppy will settle along a chair, under a table or other out of the way place. The puppy remains calm and quiet as the handler eats a meal, works at a desk or similar task. Random reinforcement of this behavior may be needed.

Score: 1 2 3 4

Expectations of Stairs

Puppy under 4 months: The puppy is exposed to safe, easy stairs (closed with secure footing). The puppy may require handler support going up or down stairs.

Score: 1 2 3 4

Puppy 4–9 months: The puppy can confidently go up and down a variety of different types of stairs in a controlled manner. The handler may support the puppy with food reinforcements for good behavior.

Score: 1 2 3 4

Expectations of Movement and Noise Distractions

Puppy under 4 months: The puppy is exposed to different sounds and different moving objects. The handler works on the foundation behaviors of name recognition and rewards the puppy for choosing to ignore a sound or moving distraction. It is important the puppy make the decisions for this skill.

Score: 1 2 3 4

Puppy 4–9 months: The puppy is able to ignore most noise and movement distractions with handler reinforcement and support. The puppy responds well to name recognition. The puppy is able to make his own decisions without excessive raiser guidance.

Score: 1 2 3 4

Expectations of Behavior Around Other Dogs

Puppy under 4 months: The puppy is exposed to other dogs once the second set of vaccinations has been given (except at Leader Dog puppy outings). The puppy is not allowed to go nose-to-nose with other dogs or puppies while on leash. The handler supports good decisions by the puppy with food reinforcement.

Score: 1 2 3 4

Puppy 4–9 months: The puppy has a strong foundation in name recognition and the “leave it” cue. The puppy can work around other dogs and maintain focus, both in puppy class and when out in public. The puppy is supported by the handler with appropriate reinforcement.

Score: 1 2 3 4

Expectations of Walking Through Doors

Puppy under 4 months: The puppy will calmly approach a door and pass through with the handler’s support and reinforcement. The puppy is helped with the “around” skill when passing through a left-hinged door.

Score: 1 2 3 4

Puppy 4–9 months: The puppy will approach and pass through a door in a calm fashion. The puppy responds readily to the “around” cue and will maintain heel position on the right while passing through a left-hinged door. The raiser can provide additional support and reinforcement.

Score: 1 2 3 4

Information created by Leader Dogs for the Blind and adapted for PGI

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