

We know how important it is to match puppies with the best possible homes, whether they are destined to be show dogs, working dogs, sport dogs, service animals, or companions.

We observe them from birth and get to know each personality as it develops. Temperament testing can give you a better idea of what a particular puppy might excel at or which home will best fit.

A temperament test is a snapshot of what potential a puppy has to offer. In my many years of performing them, I have found significant personality differences sprinkled into every litter.

Helpful tests are problem-solving tests, resource-guarding tests, and toy-drive tests. These evaluations give you an idea of which puppy might be the best candidate for the dog sports you might be interested in or which one might be the best fit for your current pack.

Temperament test scores don't necessarily reflect exactly how a puppy will grow up, but they can give a good indication. A puppy's environment and socialization until adulthood have a big impact. However, temperament testing is a valuable tool that can help place puppies in homes where they will thrive.

Puppies go through many developmental stages, including fear periods, which shape their behavior as adults. Both good and bad experiences during the puppy's first year of life have a major influence on what the adult version of that dog will be.

Scoring and What It Means

Each test is scored on a scale of 1 to 6, with lower scores indicating a more dominant, confident puppy and higher scores showing more submissive or independent traits. Here's a breakdown of what the scores generally mean:

- 1 – Very dominant, strong-willed, highly confident, and independent. This puppy needs an experienced owner who can provide firm, consistent leadership. Best suited for working roles, such as police or protection dogs, rather than a first-time pet home.
- 2 – Confident, assertive, and intelligent, but still trainable with the right leadership. This puppy would do well with an active and experienced owner who provides structure and mental challenges.
- 3 – Balanced and adaptable. This is an ideal score for a family pet or companion dog, as the puppy is confident but not overly dominant, making training relatively easy.
- 4 – A little more submissive and sensitive, but still sociable and willing to learn. These puppies thrive in gentle, structured environments and make great family pets.
- 5 – Very submissive and sensitive. This puppy will need a calm, patient owner and may not handle stress or corrections well. Best suited for a quiet home with a gentle approach to training.
- 6 – Extremely independent or fearful. This puppy may not seek human interaction much and might be best suited to a very patient owner with experience rehabilitating shy or aloof dogs.

How to Use the Scores

Most puppies will have a mix of scores rather than a perfect 3 across the board. A good match depends on the owner's experience, lifestyle, and the level of training and socialization they can provide.

When going home it is the new owner's responsibility to continue positive socialization experiences for the puppy, to get the best possible puppy from what good genetics and early socialization produced.

We do not prepare puppies for temperament testing; we prepare them for life. We expose our puppies to many sights, sounds, and textures, and we introduce them to dogs, cats, male voices, and children.

The testing is completed in a room unfamiliar to the puppies by a person who has little to no interaction with them. We want to see how they react when outside of their comfort zone.

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.

Puppy Tested

Brittany (Hot Pink Female)

Litter

Maggie x Roux (12/19/24)

Test Date

2/5/2025

Test

Social Attraction

Score

Response

3 Came readily, tail up

Following

Score

3 Followed readily tail up

Restraint

Score

3 Settled, struggled, settled with some eye contact

Social Dominance

Score

4 Squirmed, licked hands

Elevation Dominance

Score

4 No struggle, relaxed

Retrieving

Score

3 Chased object, picked it up and returned with it to tester

Touch Sensitivity

Score

6 1-2 count before response

Sound Sensitivity

Score

4 Listened and located sound

Sight Sensitivity

Score

2 Looked and put feet on object and put mouth on it

Stability

Score

4 Sat and looked, but did not move toward the umbrella

The Puppy Aptitude Test 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 your lifestyle and your home.

Interpreting the test scores

Mostly 3's

An active dog that requires moderate exercise. Good with people, kids, and other animals. Will need training and should learn very quickly. Great for second time dog owner.