



Super Puppy!

***Service Dog: Life-Partner, Life-Changer, Life-Saver
How to Find the Right Dog for Service Work***

By MARY McNEIGHT, CPDT-KA, CCS, BGS AND CARRIE RUBENS, BA



service dog academy



DIABETIC ALERT DOG
UNIVERSITY

Super Puppy: Life-Partner, Life-Changer, Life-Saver
How To Find The Right Dog For Service Work
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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to my father Special Intelligence Analyst Mark Allen Cates who passed away on March 26th 2012 due to complications of Type 2 Diabetes. He and I both shared a love of all things dog. Dad I miss you.

I would also like to dedicate this book to my first service dog [Jasper](#). Jasper set in motion a change in my life in ways I cannot begin to fathom. Jasper, may you and my father run and play in the big doggie park in the sky until I come home too.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

MARY MCNEIGHT, CPDT-KA, CCS, BGS

Mary McNeight holds a Bachelor's Degree from the University of Michigan and is a graduate of the only dog training degree program certified by the State of Washington. She is a professional member of the Association of Pet Dog Trainers, holds a CPDT-KA (certified pet dog trainer – knowledge assessed) granted by the Certification Council for Professional Dog Trainers, and is certified by the American Red Cross in pet first aid. With more than 5 years of training experience, she has had requests nationwide for her training services and to speak about service and medical alert dog training. She owns the premier medical and diabetic alert dog training studio in the state of Washington, [Service Dog Academy](#). Her training school helps students train their own alert dogs, provides trained diabetic alert dogs, has a board and train program for medical alert dogs under 12 weeks of age and continues to experiment in the field of medical alert dog training to determine what other disabilities dogs can be trained to help alert to. Mary started [Diabetic Alert Dog University](#) in 2011 to help people all across the world access her diabetic training classes. Mary has been partnered with an owner trained service dog since 2005.



Neil McNeight, Mary McNeight, Carrie Rubens and Mary's service dog Liame accepting an award for inspiring Service Dog Academy

Having attended the APDT conferences in 2009, 2010, and 2011 the 2010 and 2012 Clicker Expos, the Fear Aggression and Play Workshop, the Dr. Ian Dunbar seminar in May 2010, Diabetic Alert Dog Training classes in California in 2009 and classes with the top Narcotics Dog Detector for the Seattle Police Department in 2011, she is [committed to continuing her education and professional development](#) by continuously attending seminars and dog training conferences nationwide.

CARRIE RUBENS, BA

Carrie Rubens joined the [Service Dog Academy](#) in March of 2011. She obtained her Bachelor's in Journalism from San Francisco State University in 2008. She has been integral in helping students enroll in the right training classes for their dogs. For more than a year, she has also written for Service Dog Academy's blog and been helpful in doling out free dog training advice and keeping students up-to-date with Service Dog Academy news! Without Carrie, Service Dog Academy couldnt produce the amazing free written content our students have come to expect from us.

Super Puppy: Life-Partner, Life-Changer, Life-Saver How To Find The Right Dog For Service Work

This book is designed to help you pick out a suitable service dog candidate for:
diabetic alert, seizure alert, narcolepsy alert, migraine alert and any other alert or service dog function.

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Marduk - The World's First Narcolepsy Alert Dog

Super Puppy: Life-Partner, Life-Changer, Life-Saver How To Find The Right Dog For Service Work

content by Mary McNeight, CPDT-KA, CCS, BGS
translated from a class lecture into a cohesive ebook format by Carrie Rubens

If you're thinking about getting a service dog, but have no clue where to start, this is your guide. Maybe your doctor has recommended one to help you with mobility, or you need a companion that is trained to respond to subtle cues you give off before an anxiety attack. Or maybe you're fed up with waking up to paramedics standing over you because your blood sugar has crashed without warning. You've con-

sidered the options, and what life will be like with a service dog, now what?

Service Dog Academy has pioneered the industry in psychiatric, and diabetic alert service dogs in Washington State, and has helped many people with disabilities see success through training their own dogs. With this guide, Service



Liame and Jasper - Marys service dogs. Using this book maybe you can prevent the mistakes I made when choosing my service dog.

Dog Academy can help you navigate what is to be the most important decision you will make when it comes to the future success of your service dog, choosing the right dog candidate. Or if you choose not to train your own dog, [Service Dog Academy](#) is now providing pre trained diabetic alert dogs to students all across the country.

Mary McNeight, had to start from scratch with the revelation that a service dog would improve her life. When no one in McNeight's area was training service dogs for depression and anxiety, she had to become the resource she needed and embarked on her career as a dog trainer. She started the Service Dog Academy in 2005 in order to help people

with disabilities train their own dogs for service work. Since then, she has become not just the only positive reinforcement trainer in the area teaching others how to train their own service dogs, but she is the Pacific Northwest's foremost expert on diabetic alert dog training. With a Canine Studies Degree - the only dog training degree recognized by the State of Washington, and a professional dog training certification from the Certification Council for Pet Dog Trainers, she has attended conferences around the nation devoted to clicker and positive reinforcement training. Read more about her education and credentials on her website at <http://servicedogacademy.com/wp/about/staff/>

Chapter 1

Train your Own Vs. Buying an Already Trained Dog

“A couple of times he has alerted me in the 150’s, and I thought he was mis-diagnosing me, but when I tested 30 minutes later, my blood sugar had dropped into the 80’s. For that reason, I trust him more than I trust my feelings about being low.” - Diabetic Alert Dog Class Student Quote

Nearly every day another news story comes out about a family trying to raise money for a diabetic alert dog. From the [Griffin](#) family in Kentucky who has to monitor labels on everything their two-year old son eats, to the Connecticut [7-year-old](#) whose blood sugar swings like a pendulum. They are striving to reach that \$15,000 to \$20,000 cost attached to all readily trained service dogs for diabetic alert. It can be a blessing to these families in need, and seems to be the most widely known route to take for someone who needs a service dog. There are organizations all over the United States proferring readily trained dogs as charitable causes or profiting off of \$20,000 masterpieces. These perfectly socialized, well-trained, heavily vetted dogs come to the rescue of often desperate families. But what these heartwarming stories about hero dogs do not talk about, is that purchasing one is risky, you are usually required to hold fundraisers, there is

still training to do after the dog arrives, and there are a lot of fraudulent companies out there.

Donated Dogs

If you are in a situation where you qualify for a donated dog, it can still take several years to finally receive the dog. You will be put on a wait list and it will take a long time. Certain restrictions apply to these donated dogs. For example, some have age restrictions - the child has to be 12-years or older, or you must have type 1 diabetes. Type 2 diabetes, or hypoglycemia do not qualify for donated dogs.

It doesn't get you out of training

Sure, you're spending a lot of money for the Cadillac of dogs, but it's not going to rotate its own tires, or fill itself up with gas - It doesn't get you out of doing any work. You

will have to maintain training for the rest of the dog's life. Most organizations require a 2-week stay at their facility to learn how to keep up the training, and they often require re-certification each year - meaning you will have to fly to their location to test and retest on a yearly basis.

Risks Involved

If you purchase a dog from a training organization, check their background. If you are going to give them \$20,000 of your hard-earned money - or someone else's hard-earned donation money, try to run a statewide background check on the organization. This may even require getting their social security number.

For Example In February 2012, several families with autistic children were promised already trained service dogs from one such group. [Animals for Autisim won a grant from Pepsi](#)

[and charitable partner, Global Giving](#), claiming they would use the funds to train and place service dogs to families in need. Much hope and excitement was built up as these families received photos of the dog they would be getting and updates on the training progress - until it stopped. After all was said and done, there was no guarantee that these dogs would be delivered to the home and grant money was used for other purposes at Animals for Autism.

Help From A Trusted Source

The [Service Dog Academy](#) will soon be providing trained diabetic alert dogs and have a [board and train program for medical alert puppies under 12 weeks of age](#) for people who have already picked out a dog for diabetic alert. To get on our waitlist for either service please see our website at <http://servicedogacademy.com/wp/diabetic-alert/already-trained-diabetic-alertdogs/>

“Because of my diabetes I required 24 hour supervision and my wife had to quit her job to take care of me. Thanks to the Service Dog Academy's Diabetic Alert Dog Training Program, she can go grocery shopping without fear that she will come home to a dead spouse.” - Diabetic Alert Dog Training Class Student Quote

In Summary:

- An already trained dog from an organization still needs daily training.
- Fundraising is often required to meet the costs of an already trained dog.
- Diabetic alert dogs are not a replacement for proper testing, diet and exercise, but is an additional tool to monitor your blood sugar.
- Check an organization's background before investing your hard-earned money
- Several limitations apply when you are receiving a dog as a donation from a non-profit.

Chapter 2

Success Rides on the Dog, and YOU

“I know that Cooper’s training at Service Dog Academy works, and I, my co-workers, and everyone I meet gets the rah rah! speech about your techniques and training. They are amazed that a 6-month-old dog behaves so well, and that he can notify me about the lows is a double bonus.” - Diabetic Alert Dog & Seattle Puppy Training Class Student Quote

The dog’s age and demeanor will determine how long it takes until the dog is initially trained for service work, and before you start looking for that dog you want to train, it’s important to understand how much time is involved. It’s time to start thinking about whether you want to take a chance on a dog with behavioral issues, spend the time with a puppy, or find that perfectly-mannered dog who can jump straight into initial training.

It would be nice to wake up one morning with a perfectly trained service dog replete with a bow waiting for you on your doorstep. He knows the commands, how to act in public, and is ready to work. But if training your own dog is important to you, and want to bypass some of the other limitations that \$20,000 dogs come with then it’s going to take work, it’s going to take some time, and it’s going to be worth it.

Training your own dog is only a good option if you have the time and the patience. Seventy-five percent of dog training is training the owner. It will be a disaster without a compliant owner who has the time, patience, and is willing to put in the work.

Puppies:

Minimum of two years. Most dogs don’t get their brains until 2-years old, and bigger breeds could take longer.

An adult dog with a perfect temperament:

As little as 6 months

If they have an issue that needs correcting:

Around 18 months, sometimes longer - Whatever problems your dog is having - be it lunging and growling at other dogs, guarding his food bowl, being scared of children, it

has to be remedied before trying to teach the dog tasks to be your perfectly-mannered service dog.

There are behavioral issues that can be fixed, but there are also those that we can only hope to manage. Contrary to what some trainers may think, **there is no cure for anxiety in dogs** - just how we wouldn't expect to completely cure PTSD, the only way to deal with anxiety in dogs is to learn how to manage the condition. **Putting an anxious dog in the hectic public, day in and day out is not fair to the dog, you, or the general public. Its an absolute 100% recipe for failure and a possible lawsuit. The public is loud obnoxious and unpredictable and your dog has to be OK with all aspects of what the public will do to them.**

Your Success Rides On... Your Daily Time Commitment

Not only do you have to commit time to initial training, but also daily maintenance once the dog is trained. Just like learning a new language, if you don't keep practicing you are going to forget. No matter how many years of Spanish you took in high school, if you don't practice you're going to find it difficult to communicate during your trip to Cancun five years later. Just like many things we learn in life, our dog has to keep up the alert training or your well-trained, task-oriented service dog will start to deteriorate.

For a dog with no behavior training needed:

- Prepare for 20-30 minutes of training per day for the initial training period,

- 10-20 minutes per day of daily maintenance after the initial training.
- 30 minutes of daily exercise. Without regular exercise, destructive boredom and anxiety can take over.

Our service dog training program also requires the adoption of the [work-to-eat program](#) in which the dog has his meals through work-to-eat puzzles and training. Preparing these puzzles can take about 5-minutes per day.



A service dog patiently waiting for his work to eat puzzle

If you have a puppy:

- Same as above, plus 20-30 minutes each day to manage the environment, and daily mishaps like chewing the couch, poo-ing on the floor and additional exercise and play.

For a dog that needs behavior training, i.e. excessive chewing, barking, jumping on people, or anxiety about riding in a car:

- If you are working with a dog that has anxiety issues or behavioral issues, then you are looking at 20-60 minutes per day of initial training.
- 10-20 minutes per day of daily maintenance after the initial training.
- 30-minutes of daily exercise. Without regular exercise, destructive boredom and anxiety can take over.
- 5-minutes per day to prepare work-to-eat puzzles

You should be prepared for at least one-hour throughout the day to training, food prep and exercise. Remember, this is for an anxiety-free, fearless, adult dog.

Overall Time to complete initial training process:

6 months: if dog has no issues

1.5 years: if dog has some issues

2 years: Puppies

Initial Daily Time Commitment:

20-30 minutes training

30 minutes of exercise

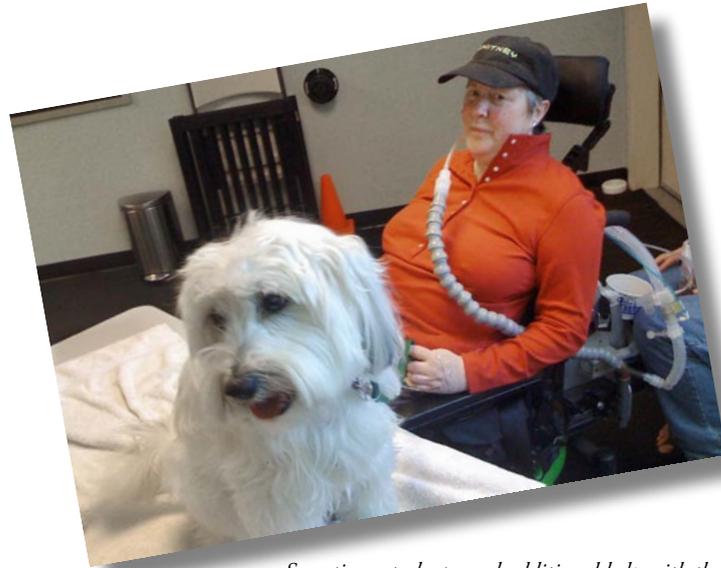
5 minutes food prep

Puppies: 20-30 minutes of environment management

Dogs with behavior issues that dont invovle anxiety an additional 60 minutes of extra training PER DAY.

When does training take place?

Initial training and maintenance training should be done in small increments during the day. You don't need to block out 30-minutes of training at once, and it's even better if you break it up. If you are diabetic, you don't only go low at a specific time of day, i.e. morning, so you should train at different times. 5-minutes in the morning, ten in the afternoon, and another 5-10 after dinner, for example, can help your dog to generalize the tasks throughout the day.



Sometimes students need additional help with their dogs in training because they don't realize how much work is involved in training a service dog. This student brought a home health aide with her to class to help her.

“Thanks to a Service Dog Academy trained Diabetic Alert Dog, for the first time in 4 years my wife was able to take the kids on a small beach vacation, alone, without fear that I might die while she was gone.” - Diabetic Alert Dog Class Student Quote

In Summary:

- An adult dog can take as little as 6 months to train, but puppies can take up to two years
- You need to be willing to devote, at a minimum, 65 minutes a day to your dog
- Puppies need an additional 20-30 minutes added to their overall time commitment to deal with daily mishaps
- Dogs with anxiety or behavioral conditions can add an additional 60 minutes a day to training
- It is our professional advice that unless you are prepared for a lawsuit, dogs with anxiety or behavioral problems should not be trained for service work.

Chapter 3

What am I looking for in a Service Dog Candidate?

When Mary McNeight presented the class this ebook is now based on she, “sounded competent, committed and cautionary... She was organized, well spoken and informative. She was also friendly and encouraging.” - Before Your Service Dog Class Student Quote

Although a Pitbull will make an excellent service dog if trained properly, dogs with bad reputations might present more access challenges.

Because I wanted people to interact with me, I chose a Labrador. I also wanted a stereotypical service dog to avoid access confrontations. With an invisible disability, people will ask more questions, and question whether your dog is a service dog at all. Because of this, we recommend the stereotypical service dog breeds such as Labradors, Golden Retrievers, Poodles, and mixes thereof. This doesn't mean those dogs always make the best service dog, but they do have an excellent working drive, are food motivated, and have a stereotypical “look” of a service dog.

Unfortunately, bad reputations precede certain breeds, if you walk into the grocery store with a Pit Bull, you will



Pit bulls can be service dogs too. Unfortunately not everyone understands this concept and will harass you about the validity of your service dog. This is Spencer, one of our many successful diabetic alert Pitbulls.

be scrutinized. While any dog can be trained to do service work, just remember the discrimination you will face, and the questions people will ask.

Brachycephalic Index and Alert Dogs

Aren't pugs cute? Those wrinkled faces, the stout body, the curly tail. If only their noses were longer, they would be great alert dogs! Breeds such as pugs, bulldogs, or French bulldogs are Brachycephalic- referring to their short, broad skulls. The [Cephalic Index](#) for a dog is the ratio of the length of the head to the width, and is important to consider when picking out an alert dog.

Simply put, their nasal cavities are short. Those really cute smooshed-in noses mean less tissue to process the scent coming through the nasal cavity. They just don't work as well as the ones with elongated noses, and as an organization that wants to help people train reliable alert dogs we cannot recommend this breed for alert work. We're not saying it is impossible, but it's another big challenge among many others while training. Why make it more difficult than it needs to be?

List of Common Brachycephalic dogs:

- Affenpinscher
- American Bulldog
- American Cocker Spaniel
- Boston Terrier
- Boxer
- Brussels Griffon

- Bulldog
- Bullmastiff
- Cavalier King Charles Spaniel
- Cane Corso
- Chihuahua
- Chow Chow
- Dogo Argentino
- Dogue de Bordeaux
- English Toy Spaniel
- French Bulldog
- Japanese Chin
- Lhasa Apso
- Neapolitan Mastiff
- Newfoundland
- Pekingese
- Presa Canario
- Pug
- Shar-Pei
- Shih Tzu
- Tibetan Spaniel

Puppy VS. Adult Dog

Whether you choose an adult dog or puppy is up to you. The success rate with people who started with puppies is pretty good, but think about your needs, your lifestyle, and what kind of training you need. There are advantages and drawbacks to starting with a puppy and advantages and drawbacks to adult dogs, too.

- If you have an social anxiety condition, puppies are

not recommended. **If you cannot get your puppy out in the public DAILY and into a positive reinforcement training class between the critical socialization window that occurs between 8 and 17 weeks of age, because of an anxiety condition, you are setting you and your puppy up for failure.** We have seen this happen first hand to a number of Service Dog Academy students.

- Adult dogs (2 years or older) take much less time to train than a puppy, but do come with their own host of issues, too. Adult dogs who are screened before entering training are highly recommended. We cannot stress enough that both temperament and medical issues should be screened prior to obtaining the dog (see section on temperament testing below).
- The age range we recommend for an adult dog is between 1 1/2-years-old and no older than 3 1/2-years-old. Dogs are still mentally developing up to 1 1/2-years-old, and since you are putting so much time into the the dog, older than 3 1/2-years-old only gives you so much time left. The age cutoff doesn't imply that they can't learn after a certain age, in fact the oldest dog we have trained for diabetic alert is 8-years.

What to Look for in Adult Dogs

Should you choose to get an adult dog rather than a puppy, there are several things to look for in your future service dog - a clean history, good medical history, food motivation, and one that matches your lifestyle. To ensure a clean medical history, try to get the organization you are adopting your

dog from to give you x-rays before the adoption. Then, look at eyes and dental records to be sure of a clean bill of health.

A Clean History

A clean history is a bite-free history. This means neither people nor other dogs have been privy to the dog's chompers. A biting dog is a liability that if by any chance a child gets bitten by your service dog, you could face a lawsuit, lose your dog, and even if it is only a bruise or a nip, that child could be traumatized for the rest of his life. Furthermore, there should be no history of aggression with people, other dogs, or animals. If your dog reacts to another dog, you could be kicked out of an establishment, thus forfeiting your service access rights.

People often take their non-service dogs into stores, and as an owner of a service dog you must be prepared for this. While working with two puppies on socialization, we took them to Target on a busy afternoon. About 50-feet away, a woman walks toward us in the aisle with a rottweiler. He rears up and begins woofing and growling at the puppies. The woman quickly turned down another aisle with her dog before there was any interaction, which could have been a scary situation for these puppies at a crucial point in their development.

The dog you are looking for must be dog-friendly, human friendly, and okay around children. These are rigid requirements. Service dogs will be exposed to other dogs and excitable children in any environment, and knowing your dog

is going to be okay with that is crucial. Children stumble, they don't have the gait of normal people, and they have high pitched voices that can often sound like prey when they laugh or squeal. Just how dogs get excited by squeaky toys because they sound like a squirrely rodent running by, an excited toddler can imitate such a noise. If they are running up to your dog to interact with him, you have to be confident he's not going to try to hunt them down. For these same reasons, the dog needs to be okay around small animals in general.

No Guarding

A child walks by your dog, and drops her ice cream cone. Both the child and your dog go after it. Your dog is eager to capitalize on free food, and the child is defending what rightfully hers... The last thing you want is a dog that guards resources. Guarding can be a big problem for dogs, and a service dog should not display this behavior. Resources can be more than just food. Sleeping areas and even you can be a resource. Any growling when someone comes near their resource is a sign of guarding.

Okay with Loud Noises

You will be around buses, sitting in restaurants with clanging dishes and loud people. Ambulances will go by, fireworks will go off, and your dog should be okay with loud noises. With my former service dog, Jasper, I had to take off from work the days surrounding the Fourth of July because he was terrified of fireworks. You do not want your dog to be on edge every time you step outside. Being anxious and scared

is a perfect excuse to not do your job.

Food Motivated

It is especially important if you want a diabetic alert dog because in order to create a Pavlovian Response - the key to effective alert work, the dog should have a strong drive to eat.

Food drive and using food as a primary motivator are requirements in the Service Dog Academy program. This is non-negotiable.

Energy Level

If you're a couch potato, you do not want a Border Collie. Make sure the dog's energy level matches your desired service capacity, because if you cannot commit to maintaining your dog's energy levels, it will be a disaster.

Absolutely No Anxiety or Separation Anxiety

Anxiety in dogs is a serious issue that, much like in humans, cannot be completely cured. Because of this, anxious dogs are not ideal for service work. If someone was trying to teach you Spanish while on an airplane, when the captain goes on the loudspeaker and announces that the plane is going to crash into the ocean, it's likely you'll have a hard time learning Spanish anymore. So, if a dog is in a state of anxiety he is not going to be able to learn very well. If he thinks he might die, if he feels like something is going to happen to him, he will not be able to perform his job.

Anxiety also increases a dog's bite risk. In the event that someone invades your dog's space, slaps your dog, or irritates it in any way, the dog may be past its anxiety threshold, and no one can afford to have an anxious dog dealing with the public.

Much like anxiety, separation anxiety is one of the hardest conditions to counter in a dog. Your service dog will be with you all the time, but there might be an instance where your



Cooper, a diabetic alert dog in training, learns how to be completely comfortable around children.

dog has to be okay with being left with someone else - he has to be okay with being away from you for a brief period of time.

For conditions like aggression or anxiety, all any legitimate dog trainer can help you do is manage the condition. Consider the extra minutes added to daily training in order to try to relieve, counter, or fix this condition in your dog.

Some trainers may say that anxiety can be cured, but at the Service Dog Academy, we don't hold this theory. It takes a professional to root out dogs that have these issues and assessing a dog's temperament should not be taken lightly when considering its ability to help you with your daily tasks or potentially save your life. For an example, did you know that:

- Anxiety inhibits the ability to learn in dogs
- Anxiety can cause your dog to miss life saving medical alerts
- An anxious dog is more likely to bite, which can result in lawsuits
- Separation anxiety is extremely hard to desensitize and counter condition
- Anxiety cannot be cured, only managed

We highly recommend that you seek a professional to screen a potential service dog for anxiety issues. [The Service Dog Academy](#) can provide you with services to help you minimize the problems you will encounter when choosing a service dog candidate. We have thousands of hours of

training and hands on experience in dog body language. Misunderstood body language cues are the number one reason why humans are bitten by dogs.

Potty Trained

Obviously, we cannot expect a dog to perform complex tasks for you if they cannot manage their own bladder.

Dog Candidate Personality Checklist:

- Dog-Friendly
- Human-Friendly
- Child-Friendly
- Bite-Free
- Non-Reactive (To Both Humans and Dogs)
- Anxiety - Free
- Manageable Energy Level
- Food-Motivated
- Non-Guarding
- Okay with Loud Noises
- Potty Trained

“If it had not been for Malla’s training (at The Service Dog Academy’s Diabetic Alert Dog Training Class)... I really don’t think I would be here today.” - Diabetic Alert Dog Class Student Quote

In Summary:

- For medical alert-work the dog must be non-brachycephalic
- Puppies are a great option only if you have the time and patience
- Puppies are a blank canvas that you can paint on
- Adult Dogs must be temperament-tested
- You can train almost any breed you want!
- Anxiety inhibits the ability to learn, perform tasks, and increases the bite risk

Chapter 4

The Importance of Temperament Testing

“Go see Mary. She can take you from how to get the best dog for your needs to having a dog that can alert for low and high blood sugar or seizures or migraines AND get help in an emergency AND be a wonderful companion who can go everywhere with you or your loved one.” - [Medical Alert Dog Student Quote](#)

The holy grail, the final say, the main assessment. Temperament testing is the best way to evaluate a potential service dog. If you are going to spend the next two years training a dog to essentially save your life, wouldn't you want the best dog possible? It's one reason people will spend more than \$15,000 for an already trained dog. Through a series of cues and tests, a professional trainer can find out whether a dog has the right temperament for service work.

The temperament shows how a dog will receive training, and if it will be able to handle the unpredictable, loud, and sometimes obnoxious public. Also, a properly screened dog can save you 3.5 hours per week in training, and thousands of dollars over the lifetime of the dog in training and medical care. [Service Dog Academy basic dog training classes](#) are a great way to get a professional trainer's assessment while learning the basic obedience commands as taught through service dog training techniques.

Only a trained professional should carry out a temperament test. They have been taught to read dog body language, and pick up on subtle cues the untrained eye cannot see. Skipping the temperament test can end up costing you more in the long run, or cause unnecessary heartache if the dog doesn't respond to training. A properly screened dog can jump right into initial training and save a lot of time and behavioral training. The test can be done in the dog's environment - at the breeder's, for example, but it's more beneficial to see how a dog is with a temperament test in an unfamiliar environment - such as at the trainer's location.

One goal of training your own dog can be to bypass spending a ton of money, in any case, you cannot afford to bypass a temperament test from a professional trainer. And while the search for your dog might seem like a quest for your soul mate, emotions should not trump careful evaluation. One such Service Dog Academy student did just that, and it did not turn out well.

Elizabeth* came to Service Dog Academy wanting to do seizure alert for her son. She did not yet have a dog, and was starting from scratch- she came for advice, and as part of my advice, I implored her to temperament test any dogs her and her son would see at the breeder. However, one German Shepherd puppy caught the eye of her son, and it was love at first sight. Despite my advice, she let the child choose this puppy, thinking that the union between the young boy and the puppy was meant to be, and decided against a test.



The actual puppy Elizabeth had to put to sleep because she declined to do a temperament test.

When I met the puppy for the first time, it was clear something was wrong with it. He was rail thin, whereas puppies should be fat and happy. Over time, he wouldn't put on weight, and the family ended up spending thousands of dollars just trying to figure out what was wrong with the dog. One problem, I was very concerned about, was that his mother had abandoned him at 6-weeks old, at the same time the family purchased him. During our sessions, I could start to tell by its strange behavior and unhealthy appearance that training this dog for service work was not possible.

After a lot of time and money was spent trying to figure out and fix what was wrong with him, they discovered he had a pancreatic condition that is genetic in German Shepherds. Given the puppy's medical condition, I refunded Elizabeth's money she had spent on appointments and training because she was going to need it to care for the dog. The three-year old boy that picked him out had spent time with the puppy, and had formed a bond when the dog had to be put to sleep because of its condition. If they had allowed me to see the dog before making the commitment, I could have prevented the heartache that this ordeal caused the family.

**Name has been changed to protect client's identity*

Puppy Personality and The Volhard Test

The beautiful thing about a puppy is that it's like a little blank canvas that you can paint on. They are highly impressionable, and to see if your puppy is starting off with an amazing canvas, breeders and trainers can perform the

Volhard Test. This is a test that can be done to assess its personality. In an unfamiliar environment, a professional will observe the puppy's degree of attraction to people, willingness to follow, ease of handling, retrieving, touch and sound sensitivity, and stability. The results are scored on a scale of one to five, representing its dominant or submissive traits and response to training.

The Importance of Socialization

The public is loud, obnoxious, and disrespectful to your space and your dog's space. If you don't believe that it can get very bad, please email us so that we can send you a video we made of children doing highly inappropriate things to my service dog while I was in a checkout line at the mall.

These children are very young, and don't really know better. They come up to Liame who is lying down, kiss his rear end, pat his bottom, pull his tail and giggling and squealing like prey. The parents are standing nearby just letting this happen. At times people won't listen when you say, "please don't touch my dog." There is no end to what your dog will have to put up with, and your dog needs to be okay with it. It can even be your coworkers who try to rattle your dog. One student at the Academy worked with a man who would yell in her dog's face.

It doesn't get any easier for smaller dogs. You may have even more people wanting to play with your dog, and you can't just protect him by picking him up all the time. The dog must be okay with being on the ground, and even if you

relied on picking up your dog to avoid strangers accosting him, there will be that one instance when you aren't paying such close attention.

Service dogs should start socialization and puppy class as young as 7 weeks of age. The number one killer of dogs is not parvo or distemper, its under socialization. Please make sure you enroll your dog in a **STRICT POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT OFF LEASH PUPPY CLASS** like the [Service Dog Academy's Pet Puppy Class](#) as soon as you get your puppy. Puppies have a developmental window that closes at 20 weeks of age. If you do not do the necessary DAILY socialization with other dogs, people and environments by 20 weeks of age, you will end up having to do 10 times more work in the following 5 months of your puppies life. Proper puppy socialization classes, such as those at Service Dog Academy can set up your dog up for a career in service work.

Here is a quote from one of our puppy class students that summarizes what proper positive reinforcement off-leash puppy classes can do for you:

"Mary has made all the difference. We began training my service dog right at 8 weeks to shape his personality for his specialty and set him up for success as a service dog. Just 2-3 sessions helped form his brain chemistry into the mode of high focus on me and prohibited him from behavior that could keep him from passing his exams as a service dog... Mary saved his career!!!"

The Service Dog Academy sometimes does [board and train](#)

for diabetic alert dog puppies (dogs under 12 weeks of age).

Our board and train program is the best way to ensure your puppy will be successful for service work. Please contact us if you are interested in our diabetic alert dog board and train program. We only have a limited number of spots each year and they tend to fill up rather quickly.

However, if you are not able to afford Service Dog Academy temperament testing services due to the fact that you live outside of the state of Washington, we highly recommend a [Karen Pryor Academy graduate](#) to help you with this task.



Cooper, a diabetic alert dog in training, learns how to be a good dog citizen by experiencing service dog lifestyle while still a young puppy in our board and train program.

In Summary:

- Proper socialization is critical for service dogs
- The Volhard Test is one way to test whether a puppy would be good for service work
- A 22-step temperament test must be done to assess a dog's ability to learn, and avoid possible heartache
- Only a professional dog trainer should conduct a temperament test
- If you obtain a puppy, immediately enroll him in a strict positive reinforcement only off-leash training class ASAP to set the proper temperament for service work.
- A board and train program with The Service Dog Academy is the best way for you to set up your puppy for success as a service dog.

Chapter 5

Where To Find Your Service Dog Candidate?

“I wanted to thank you for all the good info you gave me during the Info session last Friday... I really appreciate your honesty with me about Zia and her prospects for becoming my Service dog. I have made the decision that she would be better off as a pet for a family.” - Before Your Service Dog Class Student Quote



Jasper my first service dog was a rescue

Service dog alumni at the Service Dog Academy have come from a variety of places. [Jasper](#), my first service dog, was from a shelter. He came with a host of issues that required

additional training, but he was the perfect match for me and my needs at the time. The following is a guide on where to take your search, the drawbacks, challenges, cons and pros

for each one.

Service Dog Organization Dropouts

Some dogs don't make the cut from service dog organizations because of a health condition such as allergies or dysplasia, or they have temperament problems like too much energy, food obsession, or a high prey drive, or they have anxiety issues. These guys are hard to get, and the wait is approximately one to three years - possibly more. I personally have been on the wait list for five years. Just remember, if you tell them you are training for service work, they probably won't return your call.

Rescue Organizations

You can either find puppies or adult dogs from rescue organizations, such as the ASPCA or the Humane Society. Keep in mind that good dogs go fast and sometimes you have to physically be there every day as soon as the place opens to get the dog. Rescue organizations have been known to turn down people looking to adopt for service work. They have to look out for themselves, and unfortunately this can be considered a liability to the organization. While we do not condone lying to these organizations, bear in mind that this has been known to happen and you have to do what you consider ethical in this situation.

Jasper was a rescue, and while an amazing dog, he had issues with other dogs. This may be a drawback from adopting a dog from a rescue organization and be aware that should you adopt, you may have to do extra training before you can get

down and dirty with service dog training.

If you do come across a dog at a shelter that seems like a good fit, you can put a 24-hour hold on the dog and have a professional trainer come visit for a 22-step temperament test evaluation. Service Dog Academy's rate is \$95/hour, which excludes drive time, and is the typical rate for professional trainers.

When I test dogs at the shelter, I bring an umbrella, to see how the dog reacts to it opening and closing. I wear a costume that makes me look different - and inhuman. I will check for food-guarding behavior, and I will squeeze their paw. Do they guard, are they scared, do they yelp? Also ask, what they do when a man or another dog walks by - what do they do when I squeak a toy in front of them? Nothing is guaranteed with this test, everyone can have a bad day, even dogs. It just gives you an idea if the dog will be good for service work. It's all a gamble, like people, who knows how they will turn out. If you're thinking of doing it all yourself, please refer back to the importance of temperament testing by a professional trainer.

Breed Specific Rescues

There are several out there, and can easily be found doing a simple internet search. Often dogs from breed-specific rescues like Puget Sound Labrador Retriever Organization are in a foster environment, and it is nice to be able to hear the actual reason the dog is being given up. Be wary of whether or not the whole truth is being disclosed in these situations.

It is up to you, the adopter, to ask the right questions. Take comfort in that the majority of the time a dog is given up for adoption is simply because the owner cannot handle the dog's energy level. They aren't walking them enough, or not taking enough time for training. If this is the case, and if you are committed to exercising your dog, there are no anxiety or aggression issues, then extensive training can fix the spasmodic dog. Medical issues are also a big part of putting a dog up for adoption, when the owner cannot fully pay for a surgery or handle the costs involved.

Here's the downside. Rescue dogs are like a box of chocolates - you never know what you're going to get. And you can't just take a bite and put it back in the box if you accidentally pick the lemon one. You never know what you are going to get because typically there is no prior info about the owner, or the organization won't give it to you, or in the worst case scenario - the organization is dishonest about the information.

Renowned positive reinforcement dog trainer, [Ian Dunbar](#), set up a 1-800 number with the SF SPCA Academy for Dog Trainers for dog-owners to call for free advice before they gave up their dog. Information from this hotline revealed that the things people say on the phone are completely different than what they tell the shelter as to why they are giving up their dog.

Breeders

When Jasper was ready to retire from service work, I bought

Liame from a breeder. However, within 9-months I had spent more than \$4,000 on surgery for his elbow. You cannot always assume a dog from a breeder will be fine, healthy, and free of medical issues. In my situation, the breeder's guarantee wasn't that the dog would be perfect, but that if he wasn't perfect I could trade him for another dog. That breeder's guarantee didn't pay for the surgery nor did it take into consideration the bond we had already formed by going to 6 hours of puppy classes a week nor the expenses of my time, vet care or training costs. Considering the time and money already spent with Liame, I chose to stick it out. Breeders are



Mary McNeight with renowned positive reinforcement trainer Ian Dunbar

a wonderful way to get exactly the type of dog you are looking for, but in our opinion 99% of breeders “guarantees” aren’t even worth the paper they are printed on.

All breeders are not created equal, so here’s how to navigate the world of breeders when getting your dog.

- Find someone who is devoted to [Early Neurological Stimulation](#). This is a program that was devised by the military to essentially make dogs healthier and smarter a.k.a. to create “super dogs.” They spend five minutes a day with very young puppies and do a series of exercises, like taking a cold washcloth to their feet, tickle the paws with a q-tip, and holding them in different positions for five seconds at a time. If a breeder is doing this, it says that they are paying attention to research, and they are listening to positive reinforcement trainers. It’s a good sign.
- Make sure the breeder is devoted to environmental enrichment. See that they let the dogs go outside, experience grass, trees, and meet children. The notion that we need to protect puppies actually hurts their development. Since there is only so much writing you can do on that puppy canvas, getting a dog at 8-9 weeks old that has not been exposed to numerous environmental conditions might not allow time to make up for those weeks of lost socialization opportunities.
- For some areas, it might be like finding a needle in a haystack of dog breeders. It can be incredibly frustrating and might take a long time and a lot of research.

One Service Dog Academy student called around 40 Labrador breeders in Washington State, and only 4 were doing neurological stimulation. Once he found one that participated in neurological stimulation, they were unwilling to take the dogs into the environment for fear of distemper exposure.

- Make sure you check with the breeder’s veterinarian. Do they keep consistent vet records, or are they performing vaccinations and treating the puppies at their location?
- Check online reviews, and really pay attention to anything negative.
- Visit their location - unannounced! See if the dogs are outside roaming around. Because of theft issues breeders have every right to be cautious about visitors, so if you meet a reluctant breeder just ask more questions. There’s nothing suspicious about a cautious breeder, but everything suspicious about one that refuses to give you the information you need. If the breeder wants to meet in a neutral territory like a parking lot, that is a huge red flag.
- Over 50% of puppy personality is genetic! Take mom and dad outside of the compound, and make sure they aren’t scared of anything. Make sure their personalities are what you want. Scared of traffic? Aggressive toward other dogs? Then it is probably best to start looking for another breeder. Most importantly, you don’t want a dog that has predispositions toward being anxious or aggressive. Also, find out what the mom’s pregnancy was like. Prenatal exposure to large

amounts of stress can cause scared puppies, and possibly cause developmental problems.

The Bottom line: Avoid dogs with issues. Once you obtain your puppy, you're going to be spending a lot of time with it. Breeders probably won't give you a money-back, satisfaction guaranteed stamp of approval. The right dog is worth the extra time searching, and he or she will be priceless.

- See if there are any retired show dogs from breeders. They've been to dog shows, they've been socialized to people, handled a lot, and been around lots of other dogs. They're perfect... but their tail curves in a weird way, or their paws are too large. Breeders put a lot of work into their show dogs, and if you're lucky they may have one that's past his prime.

"Your buddy Citka (a rescue dog) has figured out how to release the leash clip! I was in the grocery store and the muscle spasms from Fibro kicked in and I was in severe pain. I was not paying attention to him in an attempt to try to keep my self upright. The next thing I knew he had unclipped himself and was trying to go get help by climbing over the DELL case to get one of the girls that works there." - Medical Alert Dog Training Class Student Quote

In Summary:

- Service dog organization drop outs are hard to get
- Rescue dogs sometimes come with a host of issues. But amazing dogs have been known to end up in rescues.
- Breeders - if they are not devoted to Early Neurological Stimulation and environmental enrichment, run, dont walk away from a breeder.
- Save the classifieds for your next dining room table, not the dog who is charged with saving your life

In The End...

“I travel close to 70 miles to come to class for you... One way.” - Diabetic Alert Dog Student Quote

This may seem like a lot of information to sort through, but [Service Dog Academy](#) and the recently launched [Diabetic Alert Dog University \(train your own diabetic alert dog videos\)](#) with its more than 7 years of experience can be your hero in navigating this complicated world of dealing with breeders and sorting through shelters. This information is meant to get you a good foundation to start from, and Service Dog Academy trainers can provide temperament testing services, and can offer consultations on getting through this process.

Before you get your dog, think of all the personality traits that dogs can have, and what type of dog will fit your life-

style. Do the research, and do not cut corners when it comes to testing. You can never be too careful when choosing your service dog, and to avoid dogs with issues. If it's your livelihood you want a train a dog for, then you want to get the best dog possible. Many of our students have empowered themselves with this information and have found success in training their own service dog. With this guide, and the help of [Service Dog Academy's professional, strict positive reinforcement dog training services](#), you can be successful, too!

In Summary before you get your next service dog/life partner, don't make a rash decision based on emotions. Follow the outline of this ebook and consider:

- What route you will be taking for your dog, will it be already trained or a dog you will train on your own
- What kind of daily time commitment are you willing to make to your potential service dog
- What to take into consideration when looking for a service dog candidate
- How important the temperament of the dog is in determining the success of your service dog
- Now that you have chosen to get a dog, where you are going to get your dog ?