

Service Dog Public-Access Self-Test

An honest self-assessment of your team's readiness for public work.

Work through this before you take a service-dog-in-training into a busy public place. It's modeled on the voluntary Public Access Test standard used by the assistance-dog community. Check an item only when your dog does it calmly and reliably, not just once.

This is a self-assessment checklist — NOT an official ID or certification. Service dogs are not required to be registered or certified under the ADA, and no federal agency issues or recognizes a public-access test. Passing this proves nothing legally; it's a private readiness check for you.

Before you go in

- ☐ Toilets on cue before entering, on a schedule
- ☐ Loads into and out of the car calmly
- ☐ Walks on a loose leash across the parking lot
- ☐ Stays focused on you despite people and other dogs nearby
- ☐ Recovers quickly from a sudden noise or surprise

Entering and moving through

- ☐ Enters through an automatic door without balking
- ☐ Walks past food, carts, and merchandise without sniffing or grabbing
- ☐ Ignores strangers who talk to or reach toward the dog
- ☐ Ignores other dogs at a distance
- ☐ Rides an elevator or escalator-adjacent area calmly (where relevant)
- ☐ Heels through a tight or crowded aisle

Settled in place

- ☐ Lies quietly and out of the way under a table or chair
- ☐ Holds a settle for the length of a meal or appointment
- ☐ Stays quiet — no barking, whining, or vocalizing
- ☐ Does not solicit attention or food from others
- ☐ Tucks in so tail and paws aren't stepped on

Handler readiness

- ☐ You can state the dog's trained task in one plain sentence
- ☐ You keep the dog under control (leash, voice, or signal) at all times
- ☐ You clean up after the dog without fuss
- ☐ You know the two questions a business may ask — and what it may not
- ☐ You'll leave calmly if the dog has an off day

If any item is shaky, that's your training plan — keep working it under threshold before the next public outing. A dog that isn't ready isn't a failure; it's a dog that needs more calm reps. Alerting or medical-response work supplements medical care and devices; it never replaces them.