

**AKC<sup>®</sup>**  
**CANINE**  
**GOOD CITIZEN<sup>®</sup>**  
**PROGRAM**

**PARTICIPANT'S HANDBOOK**



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An AMERICAN KENNEL CLUB Program

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## ABOUT THE CANINE GOOD CITIZEN® (CGC<sup>SM</sup>) PROGRAM

Welcome to the American Kennel Club's Canine Good Citizen program. The CGC Test tests dogs in simulated everyday situations in a relaxed, noncompetitive atmosphere. The CGC program rewards dogs that have the training and demeanor to be reliable family members as well as community members in good standing.

The purpose of the Canine Good Citizen Test is to ensure that our favorite companion, the dog, can be a respected member of the community. Dogs become respected members of their communities when they are trained to act mannerly in the home, in public places, and in the presence of other dogs. All dogs, including purebreds and mixed breeds are embraced by and welcomed in the Canine Good Citizen program.

**Dogs that have passed the CGC Test should not be confused with service dogs. Service dogs help people who have disabilities. CGC dogs do not have the same access to public places as service dogs. CGC training is a good first step for teaching your dog to be a therapy dog. Therapy dog programs can certify you and your dog to volunteer in nursing homes, schools and hospitals.**

Training for the Canine Good Citizen test is fun, useful, and will help you and your dog establish a closer bond. The American Kennel Club urges all dog owners to participate in this program, thereby assuring that our beloved dogs will be welcome and respected members of the community.

## WHY TRAIN YOUR DOG?

Centuries ago, when dogs were taken from the wild to serve as companions, early dog owners began the process of assuming responsibility for each dog's care and training. Over time, dogs were trained to obey household rules so they would be welcome family members. Today more than ever, dogs must also have good manners in public to live harmoniously within communities and survive the increasing challenges of anti-canine advocates.

Every dog should respond to the basic commands needed to function acceptably in public. "Heel," "sit," "down," "come" and "stay" are some of the basics for every dog. Response to these commands gives dogs the social skills that defuse anti-canine feelings and foster good citizenship. However, your dog is not capable of training itself. It needs the important training that only you, as the owner, can provide.

Training results in a controlled dog, one that does not bother the neighbors or their pets. Trained dogs do not balk at grooming procedures or a veterinarian's examination. Training stimulates your dog's intelligence and gives its life meaning by letting it know how to please you. In an emergency, training can save your dog's life.

A trained dog has good manners, which reflect favorably on its owner, its breed and its species. The AKC Canine Good Citizen Program will help you and all the dog owners everywhere achieve this goal. In addition, the AKC recognizes your accomplishment.

Many AKC dog clubs, private obedience schools and other organizations throughout the country offer courses that prepare you and your dog for the Canine Good Citizen Test. These courses allow you and your dog to work with others who share your goal. Many of these groups sponsor a test upon completion of the course.

If a course is not available in your area, you and your dog can work together with this booklet. When you finish, we hope you will seek certification for your dog and join the ranks of thousands who have attained the Canine Good Citizen certification.

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## **WHERE TO FIND A CGC TEST**

The Canine Good Citizen (CGC) Test is administered by local groups such as AKC dog clubs, private dog trainers, pet superstores, some veterinarians, and organizations such as 4-H. To find a CGC Test, start by contacting your local AKC dog club, or call the AKC CGC Department for assistance.

See [www.akc.org](http://www.akc.org) Type “cgc” in the search box.

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## **MEET YOUR CGC EVALUATOR**

### ***EVALUATOR QUALIFICATIONS***

American Kennel Club approved CGC evaluators submit an application for approval and are assigned an evaluator number. CGC Evaluators must have at least two years of experience working with other owners and their dogs in a professional or educational capacity. Further, they must have experience working with a variety of breeds and be in good standing with the AKC and be at least 18 years old.

Evaluators must have a considerable knowledge of dog behavior and a keen awareness of the public’s attitude toward dogs.

Before passing a dog on the CGC test, evaluators should consider whether the dog is, under good control and appears safe around people and other dogs.

### ***COLLARS, LEASHES AND EQUIPMENT***

All tests must be performed on-leash. Dogs should wear well-fitting buckle or slip collars made of leather, fabric, or chain. Special training collars, such as pinch collars or head collars, are not acceptable. The leash should be made of either leather or fabric.

The evaluator will supply a leash or cord of 20-feet (or 15-feet attached to your leash) for Item 6. Owners should bring a brush to the test for the grooming exercise.

### ***TEST PROCEDURES***

A score is not given in CGC as in formal obedience. No dog “fails” the Canine Good Citizen Test. If a dog has not yet learned a skill, it simply needs a little more training.

To pass the CGC test, your dog must pass all 10 items of the test. You will be allowed to talk to your dog during testing and you may offer praise and encouragement. Food can not be used as a reward during testing.

### ***“DO NOT PASS”***

Any dog that eliminates during testing must not pass. The only exception to this rule is that elimination is allowable in Item 10, but only when the test is held outdoors.

### ***DISMISSAL***

Any dog that growls, snaps, bites, attacks or attempts to attack a person or another dog is not a good citizen and must be dismissed from the test.

### ***RESPONSIBLE OWNER’S PLEDGE***

At check-in, before beginning Item 1, the handler will be required to sign the Responsible Dog Owner’s Pledge indicating that the dog has a veterinarian who provides guidance, care, and recommendations on routine health matters such as rabies vaccines, etc.

### ***RETESTING***

If your dog has minor problems with one item during the test, the Evaluator may choose to allow you to try the test again at the end of testing.

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## FINDING AN INSTRUCTOR FOR YOU AND YOUR DOG

The 10 items on the CGC Test follow with a few training tips for each. We believe your best chance for success as a beginning trainer is to place yourself and your dog in the hands of a competent instructor. We can refer you to an AKC club in your area by visiting the AKC web page at [www.akc.org](http://www.akc.org).

AKC clubs include conformation clubs, breed clubs (for one breed of dog), obedience, agility, and other performance clubs. Some obedience training clubs hold puppy classes and Canine Good Citizen classes.

To choose an instructor for you and your dog, we recommend observing one of the classes before you sign up with a particular club, training school or private trainer. Take a look at the dogs in the classes. Are they learning anything? How does the instruction look to you? Are the dogs in the advanced classes well trained? Do you look at them and say, “I want my dog to be like that!”

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## CURRENT TRAINING PHILOSOPHIES

Although people have been training dogs for centuries, formal obedience trials have only been an AKC activity since the 1930's. In the last 70 years, there have been several dramatic shifts with regard to the way people think about dog training. There was a time when the majority of trainers felt that giving dogs treats (food rewards) during training would result in dogs that only thought about food. In recent years, using food as a reinforcer has become very popular, yet some trainers choose to train without food. There are also strong differences of opinion about the types of collars that are used for training and whether or not any special tools or particular methods should be used.

As a consumer, you should learn as much about the different training methods as possible. Be sure to ask plenty of questions, and most important of all, look at the dogs trained by individual trainers and watch the dogs work. There are many effective ways that you can train a dog—as your dog's owner, you will have to select the method that is the best not only for your dog, but for you as a learner.

# THE TEST ITEMS

## ITEM 1: ACCEPTING A FRIENDLY STRANGER

This test demonstrates that the dog will allow a friendly stranger to approach it and speak to the handler in a natural, everyday situation.

The evaluator walks up to the dog and handler and greets the handler in a friendly manner, ignoring the dog.

The evaluator and handler shake hands and exchange pleasantries. The dog must show no sign of resentment or shyness, and must not break position or try to go to the evaluator.

### *TRAINING TIP FOR ITEM #1*

Your dog needs to be shown how to behave when you meet friends on the street or welcome them into your home. No one enjoys a lunging, jumping dog, and some people are afraid of such an animal.

Arrange numerous social encounters by inviting friends to your home or by taking walks in your neighborhood. Keep your leash handy when you are home so you can put it on your dog. One of the easiest ways to teach your dog to meet a new person is to begin with the dog on a leash. Have the dog seated at your side. Ask the person to approach and pet the dog. If your dog is excitable in the beginning, the person can approach, lightly touch the dog and back up. You should praise the dog for staying in the sit position.



If you choose to use food during training, begin with the dog seated at your side. As the person approaches, reward the dog with a small bit of food for staying in the sit position. For a problem dog, you can have a helper approach to pet the dog. If the dog jumps up, the helper can say, "Sit," and reward the dog with a small piece of food only when the dog is sitting.

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## ITEM 2: SITTING POLITELY FOR PETTING

This test demonstrates that the dog will allow a friendly stranger to touch it while it is out with its handler. With the dog sitting at the handler's side (either side is permissible) to begin the exercise, the evaluator pets the dog on the head and body *only*. The handler may talk to his or her dog throughout the exercise. The dog may stand in place once petting begins. The dog must not show shyness or resentment.

### ***TRAINING TIP FOR ITEM #2***

In public, strangers will want to meet your budding Canine Good Citizen. You have already accomplished a large part of this exercise by teaching your dog to react calmly to visitors in your home.

Start by having your dog remain sitting while you and family members approach and pet it. Praise the dog as it sits and don't allow anyone to pet the dog while it is jumping. If your dog is excitable, you may have to direct your helper to approach, start with merely touching the dog and back up. The length of time of the petting can be very gradually increased over time.



As soon as your dog understands that it must remain under control while being petted by those it knows, you can allow strangers to do the same. Remember that many people, especially children, do not know how to approach an animal and they may need some guidance, particularly before your dog is well trained and reliable.

If you have chosen to use food rewards in training, you can have your helper approach to pet the dog. The helper can remind the dog to sit and give a treat **ONLY** when the dog is sitting. You can choose to give the dog the food yourself when it sits for petting by another person.

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### **ITEM # 3: APPEARANCE AND GROOMING**

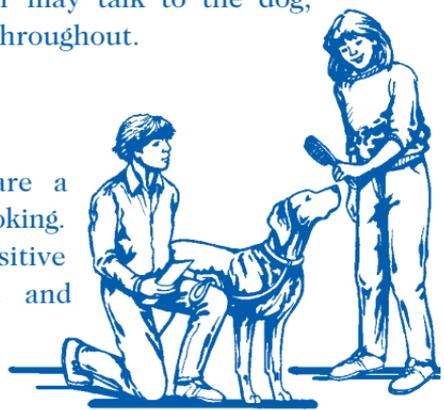
This practical test demonstrates that the dog will welcome being groomed and examined and will permit someone, such as a veterinarian, groomer or friend of the owner, to do so. It also demonstrates the owner's care, concern and sense of responsibility.

The evaluator inspects the dog to determine if it is clean and groomed. The dog must appear to be in healthy condition (i.e., proper weight, clean, healthy and alert). The handler should supply the comb or brush commonly used on the dog. The evaluator then softly combs or brushes the dog and, in a natural manner, lightly examines the ears and gently picks up each front foot.

It is not necessary for the dog to hold a specific position during the examination, and the handler may talk to the dog, praise it and give encouragement throughout.

#### ***TRAINING TIP FOR ITEM #3***

Gentle combing and brushing are a natural extension of petting and stroking. Your dog should receive gradual, positive conditioning to being groomed and examined from puppyhood on. Begin right away if you acquire an



adult dog. If your dog fears this type of handling or becomes uncertain when its ears or feet are touched, spend time allowing it to associate grooming and human touch with a happy experience (such as vocal praise or treats) when it gives the slightest positive response. Pleasant daily handling and grooming will help you recognize physical problems early on, and your dog will learn that being examined and groomed are a welcome part of everyday life. Once your dog is comfortable being groomed and examined by you, ask someone else to do the same.

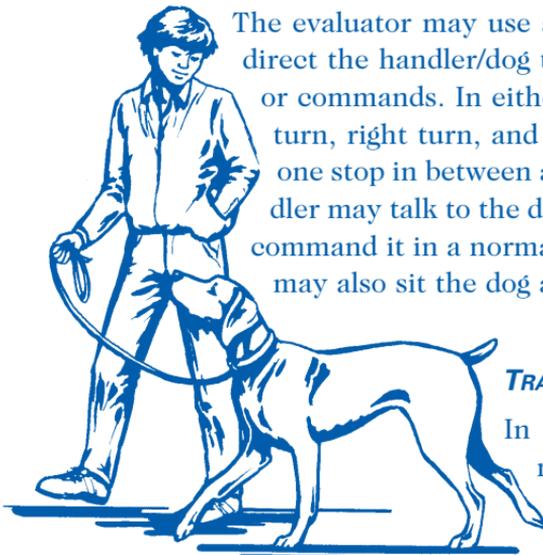
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#### **ITEM 4: OUT FOR A WALK (WALKING ON A LOOSE LEASH)**

This test demonstrates that the handler is in control of the dog. The dog may be on either side of the handler, whichever the handler prefers. (*Note: The left-side position is required in AKC competitive obedience events.*)

The dog's position should leave no doubt that the dog is attentive to the handler and is responding to the handler's movements and changes of direction. The dog need not be perfectly aligned with the handler and need not sit when the handler stops.

The evaluator may use a pre-plotted course or may direct the handler/dog team by issuing instructions or commands. In either case, there must be a left turn, right turn, and an about turn, with at least one stop in between and one at the end. The handler may talk to the dog along the way to praise or command it in a normal tone of voice. The handler may also sit the dog at the halt, if desired.



#### ***TRAINING TIP FOR ITEM #4***

In order to see your movements and respond to them, your dog's head needs to be fairly close to your side. Many untrained dogs

tend to pull ahead, making a simple walk an unpleasant task. Your dog can learn to move on a loose leash, and as soon as it does, you will find that you are taking it everywhere with you because your canine companion is fun to be with.

You can train for this exercise by allowing your dog slack in the leash as you begin to move. If your dog begins to pull, stop and stand still until the dog stops pulling, then proceed. Don't move forward as long as the dog is pulling. Remember to praise the dog when it is not pulling.

You can also teach this exercise by showing your dog a treat or toy to encourage it to move with you as you begin to walk. Anticipation of food or play motivates the dog to stay in the proper place. Remember to praise your dog with this method also. With consistency and plenty of praise and attention, your dog will learn to move happily in the desired position and toys and treats can be eliminated.

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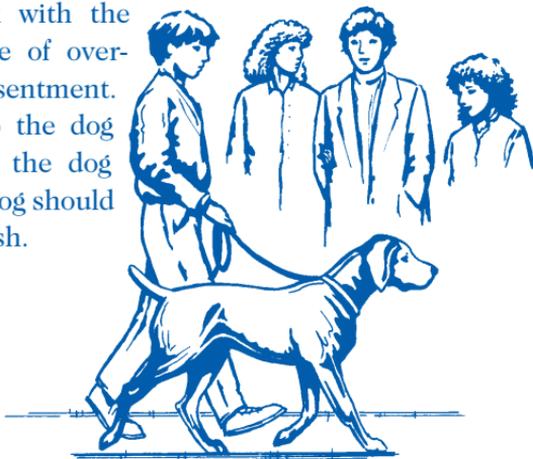
## **ITEM #5: WALKING THROUGH A CROWD**

This test demonstrates that the dog can move about politely in pedestrian traffic and is under control in public places.

The dog and handler walk around and pass close to several people (at least three). The dog may show some interest in the strangers but should continue to walk with the handler, without evidence of over-exuberance, shyness or resentment. The handler may talk to the dog and encourage or praise the dog throughout the test. The dog should not be straining at the leash.

### ***TRAINING TIP FOR ITEM #5***

Because you have already practiced loose-



leash walking in your neighborhood, your dog is probably used to encountering people. If, however, there is no one around, go into town or to the local playground. With an excitable dog, try to work up to close encounters gradually until your dog is comfortable and controllable. For example, choose a quiet weekday evening for a walk in town before you choose a busy weekend.

If your dog tries to go to and jump on a passer-by, you can give a tug on the collar as you give the command “heel” or some similar command that means, “let’s walk.” Praise the dog for paying attention to you. Start this exercise by walking your dog with people at a distance and gradually move the dog closer to the people.

If you have chosen to use food rewards, you can hold the food as you walk with your dog. Periodically give the dog a small bit of food and lavish praise for watching you and walking along nicely. Remember that you will have to fade out the food rewards before taking the CGC Test.

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## **ITEM 6: SIT AND DOWN ON COMMAND / STAY IN PLACE**

This test demonstrates that the dog has training, will respond to the handler’s commands to sit and down and will remain in the place commanded by the handler (sit or down position, whichever the handler prefers).

Prior to this test, the dog’s leash is replaced with a 20-ft. line. The handler may take a reasonable amount of time and use more than one command to make the dog sit and then down. The evaluator must determine if the dog has responded to the handler’s commands. The handler may not force the dog into either position but may touch the dog to offer gentle guidance.

When instructed by the evaluator, the handler tells the dog to stay and walks forward the length of the line, turns and returns to the dog at a natural pace (the 20-ft. line is not removed). The dog must remain in the place in which it was left (it may change position) until the evaluator instructs the handler to release the dog. The dog may be released from the front or the side.

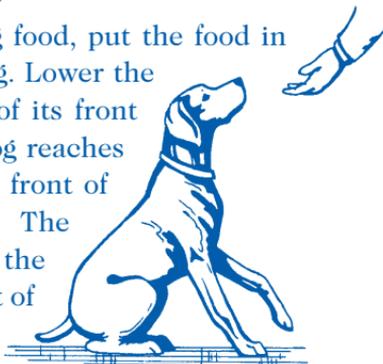
## **TRAINING TIP FOR ITEM #6: SIT AND DOWN**

If you are like most dog owners, you have already taught your dog to sit on command. Maybe you have also taught your dog to down and, if so, you can skip this part and go right to the section on staying in place. If your dog does not know these commands, you have probably discovered that you need the control these two commands can provide.

These commands can be taught several different ways, and you will be successful with either one as long as you are consistent.

To use food to teach sit, hold a piece of food in front of the dog's nose, and lift the treat up over its nose and forehead. Also, keep the treat very close to your dog's body as you say "sit." As your dog looks up at the reward, its rear will settle into a sit. Praise your dog and give the treat instantly as he or she sits.

To teach your dog to "down" using food, put the food in front of the dog's nose as it is sitting. Lower the food to the ground slightly ahead of its front feet as you say, "down." As your dog reaches down for the food, it will lower the front of the body and drop into a down. The motion of the food from the nose to the floor is a straight line. Then, in front of the front feet, the food is moved out away from the dog's body. The whole movement has the shape of the letter "L." Be sure to praise your dog and give the food as soon as it is in the down position.



### **Staying in Place**

With your dog at your side, command it to sit or down. Once it is in position, you are ready to give a "stay" command.

Lower your hand, palm toward the dog's face, as a signal to stay as you say the word, "stay." Then, pivot so you are standing directly in front of the dog. Remain there for only a few seconds, then return to the dog's side and praise it. If



the dog breaks the stay, put it back in place and give the reminder, “stay.” If you are using food rewards, give the treat as soon as you return to position.

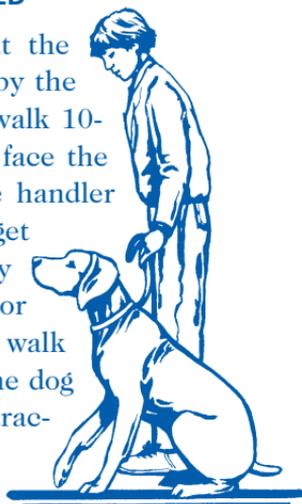
As soon as your dog is reliable on this short stay with you close to the dog, start adding time to the stay, and then bring in some distractions. When your dog is steady for a minute or so, you can begin moving a little further away in each training session. Keep your dog on leash until it is absolutely reliable.

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### ITEM 7: COMING WHEN CALLED



This test demonstrates that the dog will come when called by the handler. The handler will walk 10-feet from the dog, turn to face the dog, and call the dog. The handler may use encouragement to get the dog to come. Handlers may choose to tell dogs to “stay” or “wait” or they may simply walk away, giving no instructions to the dog as the evaluator provides mild distractions (e.g., petting).



#### ***TRAINING TIP FOR ITEM #7***

To begin teaching your dog to come, put on your dog's leash. Call your dog's name enthusiastically. When your dog does come when called, give plenty of praise, pats, hugs or a food reward.

## ITEM 8: REACTION TO ANOTHER DOG

This test demonstrates that the dog can behave politely around other dogs.

Two handlers and their dogs approach each other from a distance of about 15 feet, stop, shake hands and exchange pleasantries, and continue on.

The dogs should show no more than a casual interest in each other. Neither dog should go to the other dog or its handler.

### *TRAINING TIP FOR ITEM #8*

If you are working alone and there are not many people in your neighborhood that walk their dogs, you will need to go where dogs are, such as a park.

If you have already accomplished the stay exercise with distractions, you can consider this exercise as just one more example of a distraction. To begin, every time you see a dog and handler walking, reinforce a “stay” command in either a sit or down position as they pass by. Praise your dog for staying in position. Eventually, your dog will be able to move around and move toward the other dog and remain under control. If you are training with food, you can give your dog a treat for paying attention to you.

Practice this exercise until your dog reacts reliably to canine encounters. It should show no more than mild interest in the approaching dog and handler so you can stop, shake hands and go your own way.



## ITEM #9: REACTION TO DISTRACTIONS

This test demonstrates that the dog is confident at all times when faced with common distracting situations.

The evaluator will select only two of the following:

*(Note: Since some dogs are sensitive to sound and others to visual distractions, it is preferable to choose one sound and one visual distraction).*

- A) A person using crutches, a wheelchair, or a walker (5-ft. away)
- B) A sudden opening or closing of a door.
- C) Dropping a pan, folded chair, etc. no closer than 5-ft. from the dog.
- D) A jogger running in front of the dog.
- E) A person pushing a cart or crate dolly passing no closer than 5-ft. away.
- F) A person on a bike no closer than 10-ft. away.

The dog may express a natural interest and curiosity and/or appear slightly startled but should not panic, try to run away, show aggressiveness or bark. The handler may talk to the dog and encourage or praise it throughout the exercise.

### TRAINING TIP FOR ITEM #9

Life is full of surprises and your dog should react calmly to most of them. Through exposure to everyday situations, your dog has probably learned to ignore the distractions used in this test. But, if your dog rarely sees a bicycle or has taken to barking and fence running when it sees a jogger, you may be in for an embarrassing surprise when you are with your dog in public.

If your dog shows fear of unusual objects, sounds or movements, you should help it by briefly exposing it to these things in a non-threatening environment, preferably at a comfortable distance. Praise, treats, toys, and playful interaction may eventually take its mind off fear and help it associate what was once frightening with positive experiences.

As your dog becomes more confident, you can gradually bring the distractions closer. For example, a heavy book dropped right

behind a dog's back may cause an inexperienced or sound-sensitive dog to panic; but a heavy book dropped 6 feet in front of the same dog may not even be noticed. Gradually moving the book closer, to the side of the dog and, finally, behind its back will desensitize the dog in a positive way.



If your dog shows aggressive behaviors such as lunging at the distraction and trying to bite it, the same technique may be applied by exposing the dog gradually, and at a distance, to the things that triggers its aggression. If your dog is aggressive, you should be working with an experienced instructor.

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## **ITEM #10: SUPERVISED SEPARATION**

This test demonstrates that a dog can be left with a trusted person, if necessary, and will maintain its training and good manners. Evaluators are encouraged to say something like, “Would you like for me to watch your dog?” You will give the leash to the evaluator and go out of sight for 3-minutes. You may tell your dog to stay if it already has a down or sit-stay. The dog does not have to stay in position but it can not continually bark, whine, or pace unnecessarily, or show anything stronger than mild agitation or nervousness.

### ***TRAINING TIP FOR ITEM #10***

As you and your dog work together, you will discover a bond developing that is based on trust. Not only will you begin to trust your dog's manners, but it will trust you and your judgement, even when occasionally left in a strange place, such as a friend's home, a grooming shop or a boarding kennel.

Prepare your dog for Item 10 by going out of sight for a few seconds as you practice distance on your “stay” command. You can walk behind a tree or around the corner of a building. If you don’t have a helper, use a light 15-foot line and hold onto it, you will know if your dog moves, even if you can’t see it. If your dog breaks the stay, go back and reposition the dog saying, “stay.” Don’t go too far away too fast or your dog will not be successful.

The easiest way to train this exercise is to have a helper who holds the dog’s leash while you go out of sight. You will gradually lengthen the time you leave the dog. Before long, your dog will learn to be briefly separated from you and to stay with a person you trust.





## **ON YOUR WAY....**

Congratulations on completing the training so your dog can earn the CGC award. We hope that passing the Canine Good Citizen test will be only the beginning of training for you and your dog and that we'll see you at other AKC events.



## NOTES

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**AMERICAN  
KENNEL CLUB®**

***TO CONTACT THE AMERICAN KENNEL CLUB'S  
CANINE GOOD CITIZEN DEPARTMENT:***

**GENERAL AKC INFO:  
AMERICAN KENNEL CLUB  
8051 ARCO CORPORATE DRIVE, SUITE 100  
RALEIGH, NC 27617-3390  
(919) 233-9767**

**THE CGC ADDRESS IS:  
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CANINE GOOD CITIZEN DEPT.  
P.O. Box 900064  
RALEIGH, NC 27675-9064  
(919) 816-3637**

**EMAIL: [CGC@AKC.ORG](mailto:CGC@AKC.ORG)**