

PUPPY TEMPERAMENT TESTING

# The Volhard's Puppy Aptitude Test

Measuring Puppy's Stability, Shyness, Friendliness, and More

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Provided By



Personality and temperament are not set in stone at birth. Early experience, socialization, development, and the consequences of learning all impact your puppy's future behavior.

You can perform personality testing as early as 7 weeks, but results are found to be most accurate when puppy is 3-4 months old.

## TEST RULES

- The test must be performed in a location unfamiliar to puppy. A room in the house where puppy has not been is perfect.
- If multiple, puppies are tested one at a time.
- There are no other dogs or people, except the **scorer** and the **tester**, and assistant for one test in the testing area
- Puppy does not know the **tester**.
- The **scorer** is a disinterested third party (has no interest in selling puppy to you).
- The **scorer** is unobtrusive, positioning themselves to observe puppy without having to move.
- Puppy is tested before they are fed, and when they are liveliest.
- Do not try to test puppy if its not feeling well.
- Puppy should not be tested the day of or the day after being vaccinated.
- The test should be done consecutively and in the given order. Read through all the test directions before beginning so that you know what you will need to do next. Hint: If this is your first time performing a test, have **scorer** read to **tester** the next task. **Tester** should not have the directions in hand or pause/play with puppy in between each test.
- **Tester** should take note of puppy's heart rate (indicates levels of stress) vocalize it to **scorer**.
- Only the first response counts!

## PEOPLE INVOLVED

Tester, Scorer, Assistant (for one of the tests)

## THINGS YOU WILL NEED

In **tester's** pockets: wash cloth with a 2-3 foot string tied to one of the corners, and sheet of paper

The assistant will need a kitchen pot and wooden spoon (for noise-making).

Scorer will need a notepad to write on and a pen, or a video camera to record the test.

### **Note To Scorer:**

***Don't read the scoring card until all tests are performed. Write your observation with as much detail as possible, you have lines to write on below each test. Scratch notes are perfect. Recording a video is even better. Watch puppy's tail. It will make a difference in the scoring whether the tail is up or down.***

Observation Example:

Chased object, came readily, hesitated, body stiffened, 5 seconds before response, tried to bite, relaxed, showed little interest, tail up

### **Note To Tester:**

***During testing maintain a positive, upbeat and friendly attitude toward puppy. Try to get it to interact with you to bring out the best in them. Make the test a pleasant experience.***

***\*Remember not to talk too much i.e. blabbering on in baby talk.***

ARE YOU READY?

Let's Go!

## ***Social Attraction***

Here we are measuring puppy's desire to interact with people, how frightened they are by them or how attracted they are to them.




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Owner/caretaker- place puppy in the test area about four feet from tester and leaves the area.

**Tester-** kneel down and coax puppy to come to you by encouragingly and gently clapping hands and calling. Make sure you're calling them to the opposite direction from where they entered the test area. Hint: Lean backward, sitting on your heels instead of leaning forward toward puppy. Keep your hands close to your body encouraging puppy to come to you instead of reaching for puppy.

**Scorer-** observe and take detailed notes. Does puppy come readily? Is tail up or down? Do they jump on tester?

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## ***Following***

Here we are gauging puppy's willingness to follow a person and be alongside them.

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**Tester-** stand up slowly and walk away from puppy, encouraging them to follow you. Hint: Make sure puppy sees you walks away, get them to focus on you by lightly clapping your hands and using verbal encouragement. Do not lean over puppy.

**Scorer-** observe and take detailed notes. Does puppy get close up under tester's feet? Does puppy disregard tester?

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## ***Restraint***

We measure puppy's degree of dominance or submission, their response to physical/social dominance.

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**Tester-** crouch down and gently roll puppy on its back, hold it there for 30 seconds. Hint: Hold puppy down without applying too much pressure. The object is not to keep it on its back but to test its response to being placed in that position.

**Scorer-** observe and take detailed notes. Does puppy struggle and bite? Does puppy eventually relax?

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## ***Social Dominance***

We are measuring puppy's degree of accepting human social dominance, how forgiving puppy is.

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**Tester-** let puppy stand up/sit and gently stroke it from the head to the back while you crouch beside it. See if it will lick your face, an indication of a forgiving nature. Continue stroking until you see a behaviour you can score. Hint: Avoid leaning/hovering over puppy. Have puppy at your side, both of you facing the same direction.

**Scorer-** observe and take detailed notes. Does puppy jump, paw, lick, or sit motionless? Does puppy accept being pet or walk away?

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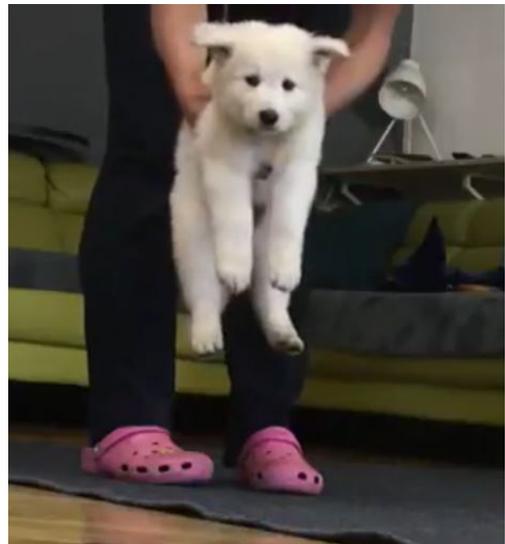
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## ***Elevation Dominance***

Here we are measuring puppy's degree of accepting dominance while being in a position of no control.

**Tester-** cradle puppy with both hands, supporting the puppy under its chest and gently lift it two feet off the ground and hold it there for 30 seconds.

**Scorer-** observe and take detailed notes. Is puppy tense or relaxed? Is puppy struggling?




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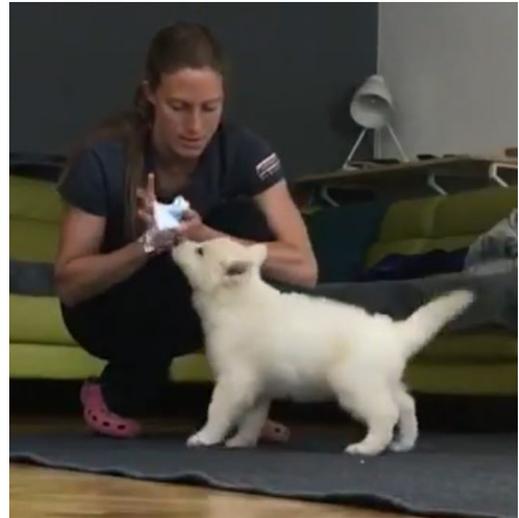
## ***Retrieving | Obedience and Aptitude***

We are testing for puppy's degree of willingness to work with humans. **There is a high correlation between the ability to retrieve and successful guide dogs and service trial dogs.**

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**Tester**- crouch beside puppy and attract its attention with a crumpled up piece of paper (keep paper in your pocket until this part of the test). When puppy shows some interest, throw the paper no more than four feet in front of the puppy encouraging it to retrieve the paper.

**Scorer**- observe and take detailed notes. Does puppy go after object? Does puppy bring it back, and after how long? Is the tail up or down?



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## ***Touch Sensitivity***

We are measuring how physically sensitive/robust puppy is.

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**Tester**- locate the webbing of one of puppy's front paws and press it lightly between the index finger and thumb. Gradually increase pressure while counting to ten and stop when puppy pulls away or shows signs of discomfort. Count to yourself and then vocalize the number of seconds to **scorer**.

**Scorer**- observe and take detailed notes.

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## ***Sound Sensitivity***

We are measuring how sensitive puppy is to noise.

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**Tester-** place puppy in the center of the testing area, an assistant stationed at the perimeter is to make a sharp noise, such as banging a metal spoon on the bottom of a metal pan.

**Scorer-** observe and take detailed notes.

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## ***Sight Sensitivity | Chase Instinct***

Here we test for puppy's degree of response to a moving object.

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**Tester-** place puppy in the center of the testing area. Pull out the wash cloth attached to a string and begin jerking it across the floor, about 2 feet away from puppy.

**Scorer-** observe and take detailed notes.

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## *Stability*

We are measuring puppy's degree of intelligent response to strange objects.

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**Tester-** open the umbrella about 5 feet away from puppy, gently place it on the ground.

**Scorer-** observe and take detailed notes.



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CONGRATULATIONS!

You have successfully finished testing.

HOW TO TRAIN MY DOG



## *Scoring the Results*

Following are the responses you will see and the score assigned to each particular response. You will see some variations and will have to make a judgment on what score to give them.

### SOCIAL ATTRACTION

came readily, tail up, jumped, bit at hands	<b>1</b>
came readily, tail up, pawed, licked at hands	<b>2</b>
came readily, tail up	<b>3</b>
came readily, tail down	<b>4</b>
came hesitantly, tail down	<b>5</b>
didn't come at all	<b>6</b>

### FOLLOWING

followed readily, tail up, got underfoot, bit at feet	<b>1</b>
came readily, tail up, got underfoot	<b>2</b>
followed readily, tail up	<b>3</b>
followed readily, tail down	<b>4</b>
followed hesitantly, tail down	<b>5</b>
didn't follow or went away	<b>6</b>

## Scoring the Results

### RESTRAINT

struggled fiercely, flailed, bit	<b>1</b>
struggled fiercely, flailed, bit	<b>2</b>
settled, struggled, settled with some eye contact	<b>3</b>
struggled then settled	<b>4</b>
no struggle	<b>5</b>
no struggle, strained to avoid eye contact	<b>6</b>

### SOCIAL DOMINANCE

jumped, pawed, bit, growled	<b>1</b>
jumped, pawed	<b>2</b>
cuddled close, tried to lick face	<b>3</b>
squirmed, licked at hands	<b>4</b>
rolled over, licked hands	<b>5</b>
went away and stayed away	<b>6</b>

## *Scoring the Results*

### ELEVATION DOMINANCE

struggled fiercely, tried to bite	<b>1</b>
struggled fiercely	<b>2</b>
struggled, settled, struggled, settled	<b>3</b>
no struggle, relaxed	<b>4</b>
no struggle, body stiff	<b>5</b>
no struggle, froze	<b>6</b>

### RETRIEVING

chased object, picked it up and ran away	<b>1</b>
chased object, stood over it and didn't return	<b>2</b>
chased object, picked it up, returned it to tester	<b>3</b>
chased object, returned to tester without object	<b>4</b>
started to chase object, but lost interest	<b>5</b>
does not chase object	<b>6</b>

## *Scoring the Results*

### TOUCH SENSITIVITY

8-10 count before response	<b>1</b>
6-8 count before response	<b>2</b>
5-6 count before response	<b>3</b>
3-5 count before response	<b>4</b>
2-3 count before response	<b>5</b>
1-2 count before response	<b>6</b>

### SOUND SENSITIVITY

listened, located sound and ran toward it barking	<b>1</b>
listened, located sound and walked slowly toward it	<b>2</b>
listened, located sound and showed curiosity	<b>3</b>
listened and located sound	<b>4</b>
cringed, backed off and hid behind tester	<b>5</b>
ignored sound and showed no curiosity	<b>6</b>

## Scoring the Results

### SIGHT SENSITIVITY

looked, attacked and bit object	<b>1</b>
looked and put feet on object and put mouth on it	<b>2</b>
looked, curious, attempted to investigate, tail up	<b>3</b>
looked with curiosity, tail down	<b>4</b>
ran away or hid behind tester	<b>5</b>
hid behind tester	<b>6</b>

### STABILITY

looked and ran into umbrella, mouthing/biting it	<b>1</b>
looked and walked to umbrella, smelling it cautiously	<b>2</b>
looked and went to investigate	<b>3</b>
sat and looked, did not move toward umbrella	<b>4</b>
showed little or no interest	<b>5</b>
ran away from umbrella	<b>6</b>

## ***Interpreting the Scores***

### MOSTLY 1'S

Strong desire to be pack leader and is not shy about bucking for a promotion. Has a predisposition to be aggressive to people and other dogs. Should only be placed into a very experienced home where the dog will be trained and worked on a regular basis

### MOSTLY 2'S

Also has leadership aspirations. May be hard to manage and has the capacity to bite. Has lots of self-confidence. Should not be placed into an inexperienced home. Too unruly to be good with children and elderly people, or other animals. Needs strict schedule, loads of exercise and lots of training. Has the potential to be a great show dog with someone who understands dog behavior.

***Puppies that score mostly 1's and 2's can be difficult to manage in the future due to its strong leadership aspirations. This puppy needs an experienced home. Not good with children.***

### MOSTLY 3'S

Can be a high-energy dog and may need lots of exercise. Good with people and other animals. Can be a bit of a handful to live with. Needs training, does very well at it and learns quickly. Great dog for second time owner.

### MOSTLY 4'S

The kind of dog that makes the perfect pet. Best choice for the first time owner. Rarely will buck for a promotion in the family. Easy to train, and rather quiet. Good with elderly people, children, although may need protection from the children. Choose this pup, take it to obedience classes, and you'll be the star, without having to do too much work!

***The puppy with mostly 3's and 4's can be quite a handful, but should be good with children and does well with training. Energy needs to be dispersed with plenty of exercise.***

## MOSTLY 5'S

Fearful, shy and needs special handling. Will run away at the slightest stress in its life. Strange people, strange places, different floor or ground surfaces may upset it. Often afraid of loud noises and terrified of thunderstorms. When you greet it upon your return, may submissively urinate. Needs a very special home where the environment doesn't change too much and where there are no children Best for a quiet, elderly couple. If cornered and cannot get away, has a tendency to bite.

## MOSTLY 6'S

Independent and doesn't need you or other people. Doesn't care if he is trained or not - he is his own person. This puppy is unlikely to bond to you. A great guard dog!

## ***Interpreting the Scores***

Few puppies will test with all 2's or all 3's - there will be a mixture of scores.

For that first time, wonderfully easy to train, potential star, look for a puppy that scores with mostly 4's and 3's. Don't worry about the score on Touch Sensitivity - you can compensate for that with the right training equipment.

It's hard not to become emotional when picking a puppy - they are all so cute, soft and cuddly. Remind yourself that this dog is going to be with you for 8 to 16 years. Don't hesitate to step back a little to contemplate your decision. Sleep on it and review it in the light of day.

Avoid the puppy with a score of 1 on the Restraint and Elevation tests. This puppy will be too much for the first time owner.

It's a lot more fun to have a good dog, one that is easy to train, one you can live with and one you can be proud of, than one that is a constant struggle.

## WHAT TO DO WITH THIS NEW INFORMATION

# Knowledge is Power

Now that you have completed the test and understand the results, you can make a more informed decision when looking for your perfect puppy. AND if you already have a pup at home, these results will give you the proper insight you need to know how to train your dog, understand its needs - training can make huge changes, but personality is always the same!

## ***Share your scores with your fellow dog owners!***

Post your puppy's results in our Dog Owners Facebook Group - there are certainly others out there who have dogs with similar scores and you can ask questions and get feedback! We'd love to hear all about your experience with the testing, and support you in any way we can!

Our greatest resource is the knowledge shared between us!

