



Search and Rescue Suitability

Volunteer Canine Handler, Urban Search and Rescue (USAR)

Below is a set of questions that will help you determine if you and your dog are suited for Search and Rescue (SAR) work. This is by no means a definitive or exacting test – just a general gauge. It has been designed as a first step in the long process of having a qualified SAR K9.

The first section is made up of K9 assessment questions and the second section is aimed at assessing your suitability as a handler. In section one, if most of your answers are A – then your dog should be easily trainable and well suited to SAR work. If your answers are mostly B with some As, there is still a very good possibility with some guidance that SAR certification is attainable. If you find most of your answers are C we should really discuss whether this is the right environment for your dog. Training a SAR K9 is a very time intensive venture, and we are all volunteers so please also consider your answers in the handler section.

Remember our final goal is not just to have something to do with our dogs on the weekend but instead to have a qualified SAR K9 so we can save lives.

If after assessing yourself and your dog, you are keen to be involved we want to hear from you. If you are worried that you've not done this before, guidance will be provided for you in your training – but the work **MUST** be done by YOU.

There are many training methods around, but please remember there is no single right answer when it comes to dog training. Every dog and every handler and every combination of dog and handler creates a unique situation.

K9 Section

Toy Drive

1. If you throw a ball does your dog:
 - a. Return it quickly and entice you to throw it again until you stop
 - b. Mostly returns it but sometimes loses interest after a while
 - c. Sometimes chases it but rarely returns it and loses interest



2. If you have a tug toy does your dog:
 - a. Tug hard and happily carry on with the game for a long time
 - b. Tug and pull but sometimes lack enthusiasm after a while
 - c. Have to be enticed to tug the toy

3. If you were to hide all your dog's toys, would your dog:
 - a. Look for them and pick up anything else to get you to play
 - b. Look for them for a while and then give up
 - c. Never notice and relax

Food drive

1. When you feed your dog does your dog:
 - a. Get very excited, and always asks for more
 - b. Waits quietly and may refuse treats in some situations
 - c. Sometimes does not finish meals and refuse treats

2. If you try to remove a food bowl while eating does your dog:
 - a. Try to eat it quickly before you take it
 - b. Let's you take the bowl with no complaint, but may beg for more
 - c. May growl at you and/or make no complaint and go relax

3. If using food treats for rewards when training, does your dog:
 - a. Take them eagerly and look for ways to get more
 - b. Usually takes them gently
 - c. Sometimes shows lack of interest

Socialisation

1. If you meet another dog on a walk does your dog:
 - a. Wag his/her tail and hope for a play?
 - b. Pay little attention to other dogs?
 - c. Raise hackles and warn the other dog off?



2. Someone knocks on the door and your dog:
 - a. Welcomes the visitor
 - b. Barks to alert you but happily welcomes and/or ignores the visitor
 - c. Barks and raises hackles to the visitor
3. You have the dog in the car and someone walks up to the car, does the dog:
 - a. Ignore and/or welcome the person
 - b. Bark until you tell him it's OK
 - c. Bark and growl at the person nearing the car
4. You are playing with your dog and a stranger approach, will your dog:
 - a. Happily, play with this person if you give them a toy
 - b. Ignore them in regard to play, but not worry about them
 - c. Cover behind you and prefer not interacting with the stranger or get possessive over a toy

Control

1. If off lead and you call your dog does, he:
 - a. Returns quickly and enthusiastically
 - b. Mostly returns quickly but sometimes hesitates
 - c. Often takes time and repeated commands to return

Handler Section

1. Are you willing to do the following?
 - a. Train your dog to certain level of obedience?
 - b. Train your dog in agility (not competitive, but to be able to climb ladders, walk planks, go up and down stairs and through tunnels, etc)
 - c. Train with the SAR team in your area on weekends? (Including hiding for other handlers – which might entail crawling into holes, climbing over rubble, climbing up into rafters or crawl spaces, hiding in cupboards or car boots?)
 - d. Keep a training log of what you are doing and be willing to discuss your progress with the team?
 - e. Be flexible and prepared to change things if required? Adapt to new situations?
 - f. Be humble as dog training will teach you something new every day!
 - g. Do this on a volunteer basis with no guarantee of achieving full qualification?

