



Dog Scouts of America Evaluation Criteria

Honor Scout

PURPOSE: The Honor Scout title is the highest level of accomplishment a Dog Scout can achieve. It was designed to honor those Dog Scouts who are truly exceptional and are a clear example of the human/canine bond. These dogs have shown a great desire to learn new things and be helpful in their communities. The dog's handler is dedicated to living the Dog Scout way each and every day.

Not every dog can achieve the level of Honor Scout. It is reserved for those who are above and beyond others in their wide ability to demonstrate behaviors that show the tremendous bond and trust developed between the dog and the handler. There are great Dog Scouts who will never achieve the level of Honor Scout; the inability to do so does not in any way detract from the many accomplishments the dog has achieved.

An Honor Scout is a dog that demonstrates confidence and self-control and is welcome nearly anywhere. In fact, an Honor Scout is a dog that is nearly always by the handler's side. The handler and dog demonstrate a connection that is quite remarkable and serves as an inspiration to others. If bestowed with the title of Honor Scout, it should be evident to all who interact with the dog and handler that the dog is completely deserving of the title.

The Honor Scout title must be evaluated by a qualified Scout Master evaluator. Not all Scout Masters have been approved to conduct this evaluation. Please refer to the [current evaluator list](#) on our web site to find a qualified evaluator. As with all of our specialty merit badges, evaluations conducted by someone other than a qualified evaluator are considered to be invalid.

DOG REQUIREMENTS: There are different components of the Honor Scout evaluation. The dog must have already earned specific badges in different categories. These include:

- Community Service – At least 1 badge in this category is required (handler's choice)
- Responsible Pet Parenting – The Travel Safety badge is required and must further be verified by the evaluator – 2 additional badges in this category (handler's choice) are required
- Obedience – The dog must have earned either the IMPROV or Animal Actor badge, as well as 3 additional obedience badges
- Utility – These badges do not fall in a specific category, but rather, they cross most categories. Utility badges are badges where the dog demonstrates behaviors where he is performing a specific, helpful function requiring physical ability. The Backpacking badge is required along with 4 additional utility badges. Examples of utility badges include most of the badges from the Nose Work category, any of the Pulling badges, Water Rescue, Water Retrieve, etc.
- A minimum of 8 additional badges across ALL badge categories must be earned

The dog must also demonstrate behaviors of an exceptional canine citizen including, an awareness of other people's property and respect for wildlife, a solid "leave it" in any situation and an "implied leave it" (see PROCESS below for specific method), a willingness to cooperate with a veterinarian or other care giver, and the ability to cease barking when asked, to wait at doorways, gates, etc. until instructed to move, to remain quiet in a crate, and to remain in a stationary position where directed.

Additionally, the dog must have attended and demonstrated significant participation in at least 3 Dog Scout camp, mini-camp or virtual camps. This does not include any online badge courses. Significant



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participation can be verified by asking what specifically was accomplished at each camp by this dog/handler team. The evaluator can further verify participation by asking the instructors present for each camp. Because testing for Honor Scout is never done at the spur of the moment, both the handler and the evaluator can prepare this information in advance of testing.

HANDLER REQUIREMENTS: The handler must show a significant commitment to the dog and to DSA with the following actions.

- Maintain a current DSA membership for at least 5 consecutive years and know the date renewal is required
- Act as a responsible handler and live by the Dog Scout Laws, and be able to discuss this either in person or on video outlining a minimum of 5 examples where this occurs
- Always be aware of the dog and his behaviors to keep him safe and ensure he is not disruptive
- Honor and respect the human/canine bond use this bond to promote DSA and responsible pet parenting
- Show (through records) that the dog has regular veterinary care, remains free of parasites and at a normal, healthy weight, and keeps some form of identification on the dog at all times

Again, reaching the level of Honor Scout requires a very significant commitment on the part of the handler to the dog and to the Dog Scout way. In addition to the dog completing the required actions in front of a qualified evaluator, the handler should provide proof of the team meeting the requirements by producing prepared written materials, health care, day care or other provider records, video clips, etc.

If the handler is a member of a local DSA troop, the troop leader will be contacted by the evaluator to determine if the troop leader supports Honor Scout testing for this dog/handler team, and conversely, if there is any information that would be contrary to the dog becoming an Honor Scout.

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: The handler must provide any equipment needed to complete the evaluation including a proper collar, leash, crate, car restraint, etc. The exception to this would be items used for the leave it and implied leave it exercises. These are selected and provided by the evaluator.

PROCESS: The evaluation starts with the handler requirements with the handler discussing and providing other proof of the required items and how they are met on a daily basis. The evaluator may ask for any additional information necessary to understand ways in which the dog/handler team truly lives the Dog Scout way. Proof of the dog having earned all of the required badges should be presented to the evaluator. Camp attendance and participation can be verified as previously described.

Once the evaluator is satisfied with the handler requirements, the test begins for the dog. ALL of the requirements must be demonstrated to the evaluator. For example, even though the dog has earned the Travel Safety badge, it cannot be assumed that these practices are followed on a daily basis and the handler will verify by riding in the car with the handler and dog – the dog travelling in his usual manner. Likewise, the dog must be tested to show a leave it, a wait at a door or gate, time spent in a crate, etc.



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The implied leave it is different than the standard leave it that meets the Dog Scout standards. The implied leave it shows that the dog does not take food just because it is available and in reach and will leave it ***without being given a cue***. That means the dog cannot be told to sit, stay or given any other cue that would make him think that the food is unavailable to him. He must ***choose*** to leave the food of his own accord.

To conduct the exercise, the evaluator will prepare or provide some type of human food that might typically exist in the dog's environment. This could be a sandwich, a slice of pizza, an ice cream cone, etc. The handler must notify the evaluator in advance of any food allergies in the unlikely event that the dog accessed the food item being used. The food will then be held at the dog's level (as if in the hand of a small child), placed on the edge of a table that is eye level to the dog (as if it were set down so that the handler could type on a computer, etc.), and waved around at the dog's level (as if the handler were talking with his/her hands while holding the food). The set up is such that the dog should have no expectation of receiving the food or any other reward. The dog must be reliable in his ability to understand that even though he has easy access to the food, he knows not to take it even without being told to leave it or cued to do any other behavior that would prevent the dog from taking the food.

The evaluator may choose to ask the dog/handler team to repeat any behavior as many times as might be necessary to ensure the dog's competence.

Before awarding the dog with the Dog Scout title, the evaluator will review and discuss the evaluation with another qualified Honor Scout evaluator. Only if both evaluators agree that the handler/dog team meets all the requirements will the dog be bestowed the Honor Scout title.

If the dog were to fail the Honor Scout test, any retest must be performed by the same evaluator. This ensures that the handler will work with the dog to correct any issues and is not able to "shop around" for a different result.

DISQUALIFYING ACTIONS:

- Any action or behavior from the handler or dog that is inconsistent with the Dog Scout way, including rough handling and sharp tone of voice used towards the dog being tested or any other dog in the vicinity
- Use of any collar, leash or other equipment that is disallowed as per the Dog Scout test
- Use of containment systems – crate, seatbelt restraint, etc. that are inappropriate for the dog based on size, breed, etc.
- Any disrespectful behavior directed at the evaluator or any other person involved in the testing or in the vicinity of the test