



Dog Scouts of America Evaluation Criteria

Canine Cognition

PURPOSE: This badge demonstrates the handler's understanding of canine cognition and how a dog's brain works. The handler demonstrates his/her ability to teach the dog new things using the 'Fast-Mapping' protocol. This method helps the handler to develop new ways of living in synchrony with the dog and opens a new learning frontier that enhances the human/dog bond, helping the dog and the handler to work in partnership

DOG REQUIREMENTS: This is an advanced badge and is not intended for inexperienced dogs. The Copy Cat badge is a prerequisite for the Canine Cognition badge. The dog must produce a correct response to the cues given for each exercise in a manner that demonstrates cognitive learning rather than guessing.

HANDLER REQUIREMENTS: Handler is able to teach the dog to perform behaviors using the 'cognition' protocol, while avoiding any subtle cues to the dog including audible sounds, head bobs, eye flicks, pinkie wiggles, etc. This is not as easy as it sounds. When we communicate with our dogs, we usually are giving multiple signals. We may be using our hands or eyes to direct our dog or very subtly changing our body posture. So, it's important to practice only giving a verbal cue and then "clicking" and rewarding the dog. The required behaviors are not tricks, where the dog simply *appears* to be reading, for example but is really responding to another subtle cue; instead these behaviors are a true representation of cognitive learning. The handler demonstrates a cognitive test that he/she has designed as a final requirement for the badge, demonstrating that he/she truly understands Canine Cognition.

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: Any equipment needed to demonstrate behavior must be supplied by the handler. Three sets of yellow and blue objects are needed where the items are identical except for their color, i. e. paper plates, cups, yoga blocks, bags, etc. Additional objects are needed where the objects are completely identical, i.e. cones, boxes, shoes, slippers, dog toy, etc. Shapes and words must be printed on paper for the dog to identify - 2 of 3 words must be obedience words. An opaque cup or bucket is used for the dog to focus on for the 'say no' exercise. Additional/alternative equipment, objects, etc. may be used providing they meet the criteria for use per badge requirements. This allows for creativity in the execution of requirements.

PROCESS:

All behaviors need to be performed at least 3 times in front of the evaluator with no extraneous physical or non-verbal cues given to the dog by the handler. The evaluator is watching to see that the dog is applying the learning process by producing the appropriate response to the cue given. Cognition, by definition implies the ability to think and reason and it must be clear to the evaluator that this is happening. The ratio of right to wrong answers should skew significantly to those that are correct. Guessing on behalf of the dog does not demonstrate cognition as all dogs will guess correctly some of the time. The evaluator has discretion to ask for the behaviors to be repeated beyond the required number of times to ensure that cognitive learning has been applied.



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ALLOWED:

- Treats used as reinforcers
- Creativity in how exercises are applied
- Alternative responses to exercises

NOT ALLOWED:

- Treats used as lures
- Pattern training or the appearance of pattern training
- Any extraneous verbal or non-verbal cues
- Harsh corrections or training methods