

ANNIE'S DOGS: THERAPY DOG TRAINING

WELCOME



THE GIST:

This course certifies you as a Therapy Dog Handler, and your dog as a Therapy Dog.

The course is conducted over 5 days. It teaches your dog impeccable manners, high levels of obedience and refines their dog-human skills.

It involves onsite placement at a nursing home, childcare setting, public café, farm and will include a plethora of incidental public connections.

Check out the following pages for in-depth answers to all of our frequently asked questions, including:

1. The role of a therapy dog. (P. 2)
2. The purpose of a therapy dog certificate. (P. 3 + 4)
3. Prerequisites for the course. (P. 5)
4. Course specifics. (P. 6 + 7)
5. Failure – is it possible? (P. 8)
6. Obedience. (P. 9-11)
7. Puppyhood to therapy dog status – how best to prepare. (P 12-16)
8. Registration forms. (P. 17-18).

Visit: [Annie's Dogs: Therapy Dog training on Facebook](#) for more information.

First off, thank you so much for reaching out! If you're receiving this little booklet it's because you've either asked some great questions which can be answered here, or because you've expressed that you might like to know more. Either way, I hope this booklet will give you all the information you're looking for and more. There are a few ways to use this booklet. You can either read it all and gain insight into questions you may not even have thought about; or you can check out the list to the left in 'The Gist' section and just jump to the topic you are interested in.

Once you've had a look through the booklet, why not jump over to the Facebook page or my website to gain an even fuller picture of what therapy dogs do, and what the course entails. If you'd like to know more about the obedience taught during the course you can also jump across to my 3 Days and a New Dog: Training page where you'll see a plethora of video examples of what will be taught.

At any time if you have any further questions that haven't been answered here or on the Facebook pages or the website feel free to jump back over and shoot me a message 😊 During the week, I'm a school teacher and believe in the motto that no question is a silly one. If it's in your mind, chances are someone else will be thinking it too.

One last thing, if you would like to book in for a course **I'll get you to read the second last page of this booklet and fill out the final page** and shoot it back to me. Then you will be welcome to send through your deposit which will secure your place. **Please note: No places are secure until your deposit has been secured.**

My bank details are:

Annie's Dogs

Bsb: 063500

Account number: 1026 0623

Reference: Your name + therapy.

I am also happy to shoot you through a receipt which can be used for tax claims if you are working in the industry for which you do the training (i.e. if you are a teacher and are training your dog to work in the school with you, then you are able to claim the cost of the course in your tax).

I look forward to hopefully working with you in the future, and even if you decide not to, that's a-ok! I wish you all the very best wherever your life journey takes you.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Annie". The signature is stylized, with a large, looped flourish at the end that forms a heart shape.



FAQ #1 THE ROLE OF A THERAPY DOG

(WHAT IS A THERAPY DOG? WHAT DO THEY DO? WHERE DO THEY WORK? HOW ARE THEY DIFFERENT TO ASSISTANCE DOGS? HOW ARE THEY DIFFERENT TO A NORMAL PET?)

THE GIST:

The number one misunderstanding I receive from people around therapy dogs is the distinction between a therapy dog and service/assistance dog. So essentially:

Service/assistance dogs are:

- For one person.
- Serve a medical purpose (i.e. seeing eye dog; diabetic alert dog; PTSD support dog; etc).

Therapy dogs are:

- For everyone.
- Provide generalized love, joy and calm to a wide audience.

Put it this way, true therapy dogs would make a useless service dog, as you would be sitting in the corner having a medical episode while your therapy dog is off visiting and saying hi to everyone else in the room.

- The number one misunderstanding I receive from people around therapy dogs is the distinction between a therapy dog and service/assistance dogs. So let's start here. Essentially: The easiest way to understand the difference is that service/assistance dogs are for one person who has a diagnosed condition and their dog serves a medical purpose attached to that condition (i.e. seeing eye dog; diabetic alert dog; PTSD support dog; etc). Meanwhile, therapy dogs are for everyone and provide generalized love, joy and calm to a wide audience. Assistance dogs (because they provide medical aid to their owner) are allowed public access, therapy dogs are not. This is because assistance dogs are classified under the 1992 Disability Discrimination Act as they provide a necessary function for their owner to access the community (as explained above). Meanwhile, therapy dogs can be refused entry to public places (schools, workplaces, shops etc) because they are not providing a necessary function for their owner to access the community.

Read on to understand more about the role of a therapy dog.

- What are therapy dogs? Therapy dogs are dogs that are trained to bring joy, love and **non-medical** support to humans. They are often found in hospitals, nursing homes, court houses, schools, childcare centres, libraries, counselling centres, psychological services, and exam halls, among many other community centres.
- They are different to your household pet as they should have been taught high levels of obedience and love for all people, and been assessed as having a temperament which is non-reactive to all things – including, but not limited to people, dogs and the environment.
- To perform their role, therapy dogs must have impeccable manners (i.e. they are going to wait to be invited through doorways, are not going to push children over or fight other dogs, be too noisy, etc). They must enjoy human attention and be non-reactive to the environment or people around them. They also need to be of a stable temperament (i.e. they must be trustworthy around all types and ages of people and environments). They need to listen to their owners and have outstanding obedience levels. (Side note: If you are reading this and feeling overwhelmed, don't be. If you are planning to do my course you don't require to already have your dog at these standards. Instead, if your dog already loves people and is non-reactive that's all you need to join my course. I will teach the rest).
- Generally speaking there are two types of therapy dog certifying businesses: Many organisations require you to have already trained your dog to the standards above. They then provide testing to ensure you have achieved the standard, and you then become their employee (they find work or volunteer placements and you go on behalf of their organisation). Other organisations, such as my business, differ fundamentally from this and operate more like a university - providing you and your dog with the training, upskilling and knowledge required so you and your dog can achieve therapy dog standard. I provide testing, placement experience, and certification throughout our 5 day course which enables you to go out and find work or volunteer in any setting you wish.
- As a result, a therapy dog and therapy dog handler are trained to bring love and joy. You may hold a separate degree (i.e. as a teacher, nurse, counsellor etc) which enables you to perform that degree-certified role with your dog, OR you may have no prior degree and so you may choose to enter care facilities with your dog simply to provide a therapy dog experience.

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING:

"This course is amazing. If you are someone who would like to take your dog into settings (I'm a teacher) this is the place to go. You will laugh, learn, be frustrated, amazed and exhausted but through it all you are supported and encouraged and given everything you need to succeed. Tav loved it he got up every day keen to go again and has learnt so much. I know how to change things too. The best part? The joy on the kids and residents faces and the way they interacted, Tav has never been so happy in his life. I can't recommend this enough. Thankyou Annie you are amazing. Tav and I couldn't be happier with what you've helped us achieve." – Leah Sharp, Primary School Teacher, now working with Tav in her Art Room at her local primary school.



THE GIST:

A main question people often ask is who will the certificate be certified by. The answer to this is a simple one – in Australia there is no governing body that oversees therapy dog certification. As a result, every therapy dog business in Australia certifies their participants in the same way: through their own business and personal qualifications.

My qualifications include as a qualified:

- Dog Trainer
- Teacher (Primary and Secondary)
- Wellbeing Coordinator
- Chaplain
- Pastor

I have years of experience working across multiple settings including:

- Primary Schools
- Secondary Schools
- Youth Centres
- Nursing homes
- Churches
- Hospitals
- Other community settings

Accordingly, if you train through me you not only gain a dog trainer, you also gain industry experience across a variety of settings you are likely to wish to work or volunteer in.

FAQ #2 THE PURPOSE OF A THERAPY DOG CERTIFICATE (WHAT IS A THERAPY DOG CERTIFICATE? WHAT WILL I BE CERTIFIED TO DO? WHAT IS MY DOG CERTIFIED TO DO? DO I NEED A CERTIFICATE? WHERE IS IT RECOGNISED?)

Who will the certificate be certified by?

- A main question people often ask is who will the certificate be certified by. The answer to this is a simple one – in Australia there is no governing body that oversees therapy dog certification. As a result, every therapy dog business in Australia certifies their participants in the same way: through their own business and personal qualifications (I'll provide mine in a moment). Considering it's an unregulated industry, the question may arise:

Why get certified?

- First off, let me say it is possible to receive permission from your workplace/community site to bring your dog with you. However, increasingly many organisations (hospitals, schools, courts of law, prisons) are requiring dogs on site to be accredited as "Therapy Dogs". This is also the language that has been used in the 2002 media release by the Andrews government for their provision of funding to schools for "Therapy Dogs" in 2022. This a growing trend as organisations are becoming more aware of therapy dogs, their specific training, and are standardising what a therapy dog should be able to do (i.e. not jump on the elderly causing skin tears, or bark and chase children in the school yard). As a result, having a Therapy Dog certificate helps to identify that your dog is not "just a pet", rather has completed training and testing and has been found to meet certain standards which ensure they are safe to the public, are temperamentally sound, and have been taught how to be calm and bring joy to all people.
- Considering the certificate you receive will be endorsed by the individual business, when choosing who to go through you want to look for a company/business that has industry experience (i.e. has worked in the fields they are qualifying people to work in) and is conducted by dog trainers. In essence, there's no point only going to a dog trainer with no experience in the field they're meant to be equipping you for, or to a teacher/psych/aged care worker who has no awareness or understanding of dog behaviour or training.
- Accordingly, when your dog receives a certificate as a therapy dog and you receive a certificate as a therapy dog handler you receive this through my business "Annie's Dogs". This certificate is endorsed by my qualifications and years of work-related experience (read below).

What are my qualifications and experience that support your certificate?

- I am a qualified Cert III Dog Trainer and Behaviourist. I have studied and trained in dog training and behaviour in England, America, and nationally hold my Cert III through the National Dog Training Foundation. I also have my Bachelor of Education, Graduate diploma in Ministry, Theology and Counselling, and my Masters degree in Community and International Development. I also have many years of working experience as a Nursing Home Chaplain, Church Pastor, Hospital Chaplain, Primary and Secondary School Teacher, and Wellbeing Officer. All this to say, when I teach you, I have an in-depth knowledge of both how to train dogs, as well as how to teach people, as well as experience in many of the industries you are likely to want to work in. I also have over a thousand past graduates of my course working in every state and territory of Australia, and frequently have people travelling from Western Australia, New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia and the Northern Territory to complete my course in Ararat.

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING:

"My dog and I had a fantastic 5 days with like minded people, all bettering our precious dogs and ourselves. Annie ran a great course covering lots of scenarios. Highly recommend this course to anyone interested in becoming a therapy dog handler and who has a dog suited to be trained as a therapy dog." – Tricia Ruthven, High School Education Support Officer, now working with Winston (her dog) in her role as an ESO in her local high school.



FAQ #3 PREREQUISITES FOR THE COURSE

(WHAT DOES MY DOG NEED TO ALREADY KNOW? IS MY DOG SUITABLE?)

THE GIST:

To join my course, your dog must:

1. Already like people.
2. Not be dog or people aggressive.
3. Love receiving pats, attention and love from strangers.
4. Have had their current C5 vaccinations.
5. Be 5 months or older.
6. Not be nervous, anxious, shy or skittish.

In the time we have together I can teach your dog obedience, but I cannot teach them to like people, be confident in unfamiliar settings, or not be anxious. They need to already have a temperament that loves people before joining the course.

- The number one thing your dog needs to already have BEFORE arriving to do my course is: Enjoy human affection, including from strangers. I can teach your dog obedience, but in the limited duration of our course, I cannot teach them to like people or become confident with strangers. Your dog needs to do this already.
- Your dog shouldn't be skittish, nervous, anxious or shy.
- They should like and seek out affection from people including strangers. They shouldn't startle when loud noises happen or when busy-ness occurs (i.e. in a busy street of people - they shouldn't be showing a fearful/nervous response).
- They should be confident and happy in all environments.
- In essence, the job should be enjoyable to the dog as well as the humans.

What about obedience?

- A lot of people contact me concerned about their dog's obedience. It often goes like this, "my dog loves people, they don't have a problem with that, but they jump on people/aren't calm enough to be a therapy dog/don't listen enough etc." Generally speaking, if your dog likes people (yes, even if they currently jump on people because they like them a little too much, that's fine - I'll teach them not to), is good with other dogs, and spends a lot of time with you, then I can usually teach them all the obedience they need to know in the time we have together.
- In the minority of cases, some dogs do require more work on obedience after the course is finished. If this does occur, there are several options available to you. These include: Attending my intensive 3 day obedience course; my less-intensive one day refresher courses; or working on their obedience yourself and attending a recertification day at a later date. Again, this scenario of needing more obedience training is not common, though it can happen. Reassessment days cost \$100 and are frequently offered throughout the year, so it's not a huge issue if your dog doesn't pass for whatever reason. You bring your dog back whenever you feel they are ready. There is no time limit on this.

Is there anything I can do to help prepare my dog for your training?

- 1) SPEND TIME. I have trained hundreds of dogs and hands down, what makes a dog difficult or easy to train is how much time they spend with their owner. I like to think of it this way: If your dog barely sees you, then when you bring them to training they usually aren't in a place to learn because they're too excited to just spend time with you.
- 2) SOCIALISE them well. Remember, I can't out-train fear, reactivity, or timidity from a dog in the time we have together. Bringing along a dog who is confident, and happy to interact with strangers will be your best asset.
- If you've got a pup, jump on over to my free puppy Facebook page that is filled with hundreds of free tips, advice and resources to get the best start. You can also purchase a \$10 PDF book I have written on all things puppy - just email me and I'll send it through to you. If you've got an older dog with the temperament for a therapy dog role, there's really not much you need to stress over. I train dogs up to any age and find they are all receptive to the training regardless of age. Read below for my next tips surrounding the "best age" to train a dog.

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING:

"I would like to take this opportunity to highly recommend and thank Annie's Dogs: Therapy Dog Training. Last week I attended over 5 days with my Labrador Murph a course run by the highly qualified and enthusiastic Annie Silva. It was held partly inside and outside. I loved that a good part was held outside with many distractions going on. We even had a helicopter flying low as coming in to land at local hospital. (Not planned of course) All dogs were beautiful and I would like to think that I have made good friendships with owners. I personally have a feeling of pride in my beautiful Murph. Thank you to Annie and all other participants." - Irene Kelly, retired resident now volunteering with Murph in several aged care facilities, vaccination clinics and school programs.



FAQ #4 COURSE SPECIFICS

(WHAT WILL MY DOG LEARN IN THE COURSE? WHAT WILL I LEARN IN THE COURSE? HOW IS THE COURSE STRUCTURED? HOW MUCH DOES IT COST? WHERE IS IT HELD? IS THERE ANY DOG FRIENDLY ACCOMMODATION AROUND YOU?)

THE GIST:

Example of our daily structure.

Day 1 (9am-3pm):

9am-12pm: Obedience Training.
(Public onsite 11am-12pm).

Lunch Break: 1 hour.

1pm-3pm: Therapy Dog Information.

3pm-4pm: Optional self-directed
obedience.

Day 2 (9am-3pm):

8am-9am: Optional self-directed
obedience.

9am-12pm: Obedience
Training (Public onsite 10.30am-
11am).

Lunch Break: 1 hour.

1pm-3pm: Therapy Dog Information.

3pm-4pm: Optional self-directed
obedience.

Day 3 (9am-3pm):

8am-9am: Optional self-directed
obedience.

9am-10am: Obedience Training.
10.30am-12pm: Farm Visit and
further obedience training.

Lunch Break: 1hr

1pm-3pm: Therapy Dog Information.

3pm-4pm: Optional self-directed
obedience.

Day 4 (9am-3pm):

8am-9am: Optional self-directed
obedience.

9am-10am: Obedience Testing.

10:00am-11:00am: Nursing Home
Visit

Lunch Break: Café together (dogs in
tow).

2pm-3pm: Child Care Program

Day 5 (9am-12pm):

9am-10am: Obedience Testing.

10am-11am: Graduation

11am-12pm: Patricia Hinchey
Community Centre

Length of course:

- The therapy dog course I run is usually 5 days, 9am-3pm, Monday - Friday. I also run one course a year (usually in September) which is 4 days in length. This is the same course however our days are longer (9am-4pm) to accommodate the missing fifth day.

Main components of the course:

- **Obedience training** – During the course your dogs will undergo intensive obedience training. This is because therapy dogs need to respond consistently to your voice so you can trust them in all settings.
- **Australian therapy dog rules, regulations and standards, as well as industry specific knowledge** – Course participants will spend the first three afternoons learning the theory of the ins and outs of the therapy dog world in Australia..
- **Placement experience and testing** – During the course, participants will have exposure to a variety of different care settings (nursing home, child care centre, school holiday program, community day program, café and more). Participants will also be continually bombarded with public exposure from the moment they arrive as every day the public are invited on site to pat our therapy dogs and help put them through their paces. Participants will also visit a local farm with horses, sheep, cats, chooks and another dog.

Cost:

- The cost of the course is \$1,760. A non-refundable deposit of \$1,000 is payable at time of booking, with the remaining \$760 payable 2 weeks prior to the course starting. Please understand when you book your course you are booking specific dates. If you need to change your dates for any reason up to two months before the course starting you will incur a \$200 transfer fee (if I can fill your spot there will be no transfer fee required). If you need to change your dates for any reason after this cut off point you will incur the full cost of a deposit for the future dates (unless I can fill your spot). This may appear harsh, however, I have often had to run courses with only several paying customers in it and the others all late date swappers. This has left some courses quite empty and others super full and has taken spaces that otherwise could have been filled. The cost of your therapy dog jacket, venue hire and my transport costs are all considered in setting this non-refundable deposit.

Weather:

- The course is part inside and part outside. Please bear this in mind when thinking of when you will book your course. In Summer, the outside part occurs undercover and in the morning to cater for the Victorian heat. The indoor venue is not fitted with air- conditioning, but will have fans going. In winter, even if it is raining we will be outside for a section - this again occurs undercover.

Accommodation:

- There is a variety of affordable dog friendly accommodation available in Ararat. I highly recommend Acacia Caravan Park as they are a 5 minute walk from our venue, have a range of options to suit your needs from cabins to caravans to tent sites. Please specify you need a dog friendly site when booking. They also have a dog grooming station - which will come in handy for the last two days of the course as your dogs will need to be of an utmost hygienic state to enter the local nursing home.



ANNIE'S DOGS: THERAPY DOG TRAINING

FAQ #4 COURSE SPECIFICS CONT...

THE GIST:

The course is held in Ararat, Victoria.

It is a part indoor, part outdoor course.

Bear in mind our venue is an older hall. This means:

SUMMER: If our temperature is low – mid 20s it's going to be awesome. However if the temperature is in the low-higher 30s it will be hot. There will be fans, but please dress accordingly, and, if you'd like to bring your own fan as well you are welcome to.

WINTER: The hall is heated with several wall heaters. Dress appropriately, and you'll be OK.

Days 4 and 5 we will be visiting several public community sites. As a result, your dogs will need to be well groomed and washed hygienically to a therapy dog standard. There is a dog washer at Acacia Caravan park, or one at the local car wash.

There are plenty of small cafes and a McDonalds and Supermarket within walking distance of our venue. You will have an hour for lunch.

There are of course toilets at our venue.

The venue has access to a fenced bitumen area. We will use this only if the ground is not too hot. Otherwise, the main area we will use is a grassed oval with partial fencing. This shouldn't be a problem as our dogs are never off lead (until they're listening to us 100% of the time).

Dog requirements:

- Dogs need to be 5 months old or older to participate in this course. They also need to be fully vaccinated with their current C5 vaccinations up to date. Further, they should not be dog or people aggressive or reactive.

Certification:

- At the end of the course you will receive a therapy dog certificate which will enable you to apply for work or volunteering in any community setting you wish (i.e. schools, nursing homes, hospitals etc). Bear in mind, all therapy dogs in Australia must be given permission to enter public settings by the site manager before working on site.

Course facilitation:

- The course is facilitated by me. My qualifications for being able to run this course are as follows: - Cert III in Dog Behaviour and Training. - Bachelor of Education (P-12) - Masters in International and Community Development. - Graduate diploma in Ministry, Theology, Chaplaincy and Counselling.
- My current and past work experience aids the course as you gain industry specific knowledge in: - Schools (I have worked for 10 years as a teacher and wellbeing officer in Primary and Secondary schools in NSW, VIC, SA; Thailand and Fiji). - Nursing homes (I have worked as a therapy dog handler and chaplain in nursing homes in both regional and metro Victoria). - Hospitals (I have worked as a therapy dog handler in a Metro hospital). - Community youth groups and other community centres (I have worked as both a chaplain and therapy dog handler in community centres in SA, and VIC). - and Churches (I have worked as a youth pastor, pastor, and chaplain in churches across Australia and briefly the Philippines). Such varied academic and work experience ensures you receive both professional dog training, as well as industry experience, tips, hints and knowledge for the areas you are likely to work/seek work in.

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING:

"Annie's therapy dog training was exceptional. My 12 month old pup (who previous to this training was very jumpy and didn't listen to me) has come out of this training listening to me in a variety of settings, will stay in his drop and will come back to me. The biggest thing I got out of this was the sense of control over my dog and his actions without treats and without having to pull aggressively on his lead. My pup didn't quite get his therapy dog certificate due to needing more socialisation with kids (as I want him in a school), however Annie made sure every step of the way that I was aware of what needed to be worked on and came up with a plan to make sure he could become a therapy dog with a little more work! I look forward to going to one of Annie's refresher courses after getting him a bit more socialised so he can get his certificate! Thank you Annie!! Amazing!!"

– Nadia Domaschitz, Training Psychologist, and Education Support Officer.



FAQ #5 FAILURE – IS IT POSSIBLE?

(WHAT MIGHT MAKE MY DOG FAIL? WHAT HAPPENS IF THEY FAIL? IS IT LIKELY? STEPS GOING FORWARD.)

The reality:

- Yes, it is possible for dogs not to successfully graduate the course. This is because for a course to mean anything there must be the possibility of failure to ensure that quality is occurring rather than merely token participation. My courses are based upon ensuring that:
 - a) The therapy dog standards are maintained across Australia, with therapy dogs representing the best of dog obedience and dog temperament. and
 - b) My business brand remains representative of dogs who have been trained to this standard and are superbly fit for the role.
- In the end this benefits you as my participants as it means when someone sees an "Annie's Dog" bandana or certificate they're not wondering whether the dog is up to standard or not. The brand means something, so when your dog wears it, your dog means something too.

The good news:

- While it is entirely possible not to pass, it is also not a common occurrence, AND it's not the end of the road! (I'll explain this more below, but before we get there, let's look at the reasons your dog might not pass).

Why might my dog fail and what can I do?

- If your dog doesn't pass, this is most commonly due to one of two factors:

The first is that your dog doesn't enjoy human affection as much as they need to as a therapy dog, or they are too skittish/nervous/anxious in certain settings or with certain people. Therapy dogs need to love their role, not just tolerate it as it will be what they are doing 24/7. While you may love your dog to be a therapy dog, if your dog is showing signs they don't want to be a therapy dog, I will not pass them. It is not fair on your dog. Therapy dogs also need to be comfortable with all demographics of people and situations. This is because even if you think you will only work with them in one area (i.e. a nursing home) your therapy dog will be wearing a label that makes everyone think they can pat them. Children visit elderly grandparents and will come to interact with your dog. Grandparents pick up children from school. Men and women of all types will likely come into contact with your dog on the way in and out of your setting. The list goes on. It is easy to see that therapy dogs can't be a one-type-of-person only dog. If your dog is nervous with any demographic of person - even if it's not the area you plan to use them in, or doesn't appear to enjoy affection from strangers, they cannot pass this course until they are not only comfortable but are also enjoying the interactions. This is the most common way a dog might fail, as the course is designed for dogs who ALREADY like people and are ALREADY not anxious.

What can I do if they fail for this reason? If your dog fails because they are nervous or don't appear to be enjoying the role, you will need to do a lot of intentional socialisation in a variety of settings. I will explain to you how to do this based on your individual dog. Once you feel your dog could meet the therapy dog standards you are welcome to enrol them in a one day reassessment course where I will reassess their therapy dog status. The cost of this day is \$100. It is held in Ararat, Victoria, and usually occurs at least four times a year.

The second reason your dog might not pass this course is if your dog's obedience didn't quite meet the standards.

Most owners when they arrive at the course are worried their dog won't reach the obedience standards. However, at course completion, the vast majority of dogs are able to achieve exemplary obedience through the training provided.

What can I do if they fail for this reason? If your dog requires further obedience there are multiple options for you. 1) You can implement the training and continue practicing at home. 2) You are welcome to attend my 3 day obedience intensive course. Side note: If you are particularly concerned about obedience, you are welcome to enrol in a 3 day course prior to the therapy dog course starting, This is definitely helpful, though in the majority of cases is not necessary. Benefits include a less stressed experience as you know what's ahead of you and can practice prior; an increased ability to absorb information as a large portion will already be familiar for you; an already obedient dog with which you can aim for an "Advanced Therapy Dog" certificate instead of the basic certificate, which essentially means I would be helping you work with your dog without the use of a lead or halti and just by your voice alone. 3) Enrol in any of the obedience refresher days I run throughout the year (usually 8 in a year). The cost of these is \$50.

Once you feel your dog could now meet the therapy dog standards you are welcome to enrol them in a one day reassessment course where I will reassess their therapy dog status. The cost of this day is \$100. It is held in Ararat, Victoria and usually occurs four times a year.



FAQ #5 FAILURE – CONTINUED

(WHAT MIGHT MAKE MY DOG FAIL? WHAT HAPPENS IF THEY FAIL? IS IT LIKELY? STEPS GOING FORWARD.)

THE GIST:

Essentially, no dog is guaranteed to pass the course. This is to ensure that:

- a) The therapy dog standards are maintained across Australia, with therapy dogs representing the best of dog obedience and dog temperament.
- b) My business brand remains representative of dogs who have been trained to an utmost standard and are superbly fit for the role.

As a result, there is no guarantee that your dog will pass. In saying this, there is a very high success rate for participants who attend the course. There are also 'next steps' which will be given to you along the way if it looks like your dog may not yet meet the therapy dog standards.

- **Other reasons your dog may fail include but are not limited to:**

- 1) If they are overly reactive or aggressive toward other dogs.
- 2) If they are minorly reactive or aggressive to people.
- 3) If they are shy, nervous or skittish in unfamiliar settings.
- 4) If they fail the angry man test. Before I explain what this is and why I do it, I need to emphasise: Please do not practice this test at home as it can create a fear-tendency in your dog that was not there before, if it is not done right. The angry man test is a test to check your dog's level of trust in you and non-reactivity. It comes toward the end of the week after your dog has spent considerable time building trust in your leadership. The reason I do this test is because your dog needs to not react even if they perceive a threat to themselves or to you. This is because in every setting your duty of care is to your clientele not your dog. For example, if a resident with dementia becomes aggressive, your dog cannot react to them. If a student has a meltdown and throws a chair in your classroom, your dog cannot react to them. If a person is intoxicated and acts in an aggressive manner, it is not an excuse for your dog to react. The angry man test I perform on the dogs is with a man that is not known to the dogs. Owners are encouraged to comfort their dogs and provide reassurance through the form of pats and body contact throughout the experience. The angry man will first approach on a bike in high vis. He will ride and shout around the area where our dogs are with their owners. After he hops off the bike, he will approach (though maintain distance) each participant in an aggressive manner (arms raised and shouting). Your dogs are allowed to bark, but they should not position themselves to protect you or themselves. The best response in this scenario from your dog is a dog that hides behind you and waits for you to save them. Again, throughout the entire experience owners are encouraged to be on the ground with their dog providing reassurance through verbal (i.e. "it's okay, Sammy") and physical (pats, holding, letting your dog sit with you etc) means. This activity lasts a total of 5 minutes. At the completion of the activity all dogs have a chance to meet the angry man and will have time with him to see that he is not dangerous. I also provide explicit instruction on what you should do in the week after this test to ensure no negative association occurs for your dog. Again, I structure this test in very specific ways so as to reduce the chances of negative pairing for your dog. Please DO NOT practice this test at home prior to the course as without doing it right, you will more likely create problems for your dog. The best preparation for such a test is widespread socialisation so as your dog associates all people with love.

- **Will I get anything from the course if my dog fails?**

- Aside from the learning and growth you will receive, you may also be eligible for a Therapy Dog In Training certificate. I give these certificates to dogs who were close to passing though didn't quite make it. Essentially these certificates act like Learner plates on cars. It alerts the public that your dog is learning to be a therapy dog and may make a mistake at times. They still have the same ability to access your workspace as other therapy dogs (at your manager's discretion). It just lets people know if they make a mistake (i.e. bark etc) that they have their L's on.

- **Will I know if my dog is going to fail?**

- If it appears your dog may fail, I will be chatting with you throughout the course helping you best prepare your dog and making you aware of how your dog is tracking. The only surprise will be if your dog doesn't pass the angry man test as I cannot gauge prior how your dog will act. Again, with all of this said, please be encouraged that there is a very high successful completion rate, and if you are worried about the angry man test, in all my years training therapy dogs there has only been one that did not pass this test.



ANNIE'S DOGS: THERAPY DOG TRAINING

FAQ #6 OBEDIENCE

(WHAT WILL MY DOG LEARN? WHAT PRINCIPLES DO YOU FOLLOW? IS THERE ANY "PRE TRAINING" YOU RECOMMEND WHAT HAPPENS IF I'VE DONE YOUR GENERAL OBEDEINCE COURSE AS WELL?)

THE GIST:

Hands down, the number one thing that makes a dog easy or difficult to train is how much time they spend with their owner.

The best way to prepare your dog for the obedience part of this course is simple: SPEND TIME WITH THEM.

Dogs who have the most trouble learning the obedience are those that are outside-only dogs. When it comes time to learn obedience, they simply aren't ready to learn as they're just super excited to be around you. They are not in a mind-space to learn.

First off, I want to start you from a position of confidence, and to do that, I want to give you a snippet of my background. I have been a dog trainer for the past 5 years. Before starting my therapy dog business I trained hundreds of dogs through my obedience course: 3 days and a New Dog: Training. This course is still available. The point of this training is to take your dog from being unruly, unlistening and unresponsive, and to helping them become well mannered, a good listener, and obedient to you every time. It's different to most dog training courses as the transformation occurs in just 3 sessions. (You can see more by visiting the 3 days and a New Dog: Training Facebook page).

Now to be clear (and with the purpose of giving you added confidence), I'm not just talking about transforming already good dogs who need a little fine-tuning. I'm talking that the majority of dogs I see in that course are usually dogs with really stubborn personalities, and bad behaviours. I mean, it's not uncommon for people to message me concerned and say "oh my dog will be the absolute worse." To which I reply, "don't worry, I've heard that a thousand times before. Very rarely is a person willing to pay \$660 (the cost of the obedience course) if their dog is already good."

As a result, let's start this conversation with confidence- if you think your dog is a therapy dog candidate (kind, calm temperament; and not dog or people aggressive) then it's very, VERY unlikely I won't be able to teach it obedience.

The principles I use to train dogs are as follows:

- 1. I do not use food.** This is because I find food to create a large amount of inconsistent compliance from the dog - responding when the owner has food, and not responding when the owner doesn't. It is also because I tend to find owners stay connected to giving food, rather than moving to obedience without food.
- 2. I require all dogs to wear a head halti training collar.** This is because dogs are easier to train and control on a halti. Owners will gradually lessen their dependence on the halti, however they will all train with a halti (unless owning a brachyscome breed of dog).
- 3. I use positive reinforcement** in the form of positive voice tones (high pitched "good boy") and pats and love.
- 4. I use force free corrections** for behaviour the dog knows is wrong.
- 5. I use terminal commands** such as "free" to end a particular activity; and I use non terminal commands to ensure the dog knows they have done well, but are not finished yet.

These principles fit within the guidelines set out by the NDTF (National Dog Training Foundation).

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING:

"Best experience ever!! Annie gives you all the tools for you to work on at home and all the advice/feedback you need at your sessions. If your willing to put in the hard work for you beloved fur baby, you should definitely give this a go as early as you possibly can." – Kodie Greenwood



ANNIE'S DOGS: THERAPY DOG TRAINING

FAQ #6 OBEDIENCE CONT...

THE GIST:

There is a strong focus on obedience in this course because therapy dogs must reflect the highest standard in obedience and listening skills.

There is an expectation that you will continue the obedience at home beyond course completion to ensure your therapy dog remains at the top of their game.

I will provide you with obedience homework during the course. Completing this homework is a must to ensure you and your dog gain the most from the course.

I will also provide all owners with a "recommended next steps" sheet after course completion. This sheet is a personalised obedience programme tailored just for you and your dog.

What your dog should learn by the training's end:

Manners: *All of these standards are without the use of food as a motivator.

1. To wait until invited through doorways, entranceways, gates, etc.
2. To greet people without jumping on them.
3. To be gentle around all people.
4. To listen to you in all settings to gain appropriate cues for what they are expected to do.
5. To behave appropriately around other species of animals including, but not limited to horses, chickens, cats, and other birds.
6. To wait patiently at their owner's feet while their owner is eating at a public Cafe.
7. To wait patiently in the sit position when an owner is speaking to another person.
8. To choose you as their owner above any other distraction that could hinder their obedience.

Obedience: *All of these standards are also without the use of food as a motivator.

1. To sit on command.
2. To drop on command.
3. To enter "work" mode on command.
4. To exit "work" mode on command.
5. To stay in their sit and drop until released. This will be up to 30 minutes in duration; and will entail heavy distraction.
6. To recall to their name from a distance of 20 metres away.
7. To stay in their drop while their owner leaves them and continues out of sight.
8. To heel with a loose lead for their owner.
9. To heel with a loose lead for another adult.
10. To heel with a loose lead for a child.
11. To heel with a loose lead for an elderly person.
12. To respond to you above any and all distractions including other dogs, animals, toys, and people.
13. To understand what your expectations are in all new and familiar settings.

What I expect your dog to already know before it arrives:

1. All dogs need to love people, and be happy around other dogs (i.e. I shouldn't be worried that if I turn around I'll have a dog fight on my hands). At the beginning many dogs may be so enthusiastic around people that they jump on them when they are being approached. This is normal, though by the end of the course this behaviour should be rectified. An indication of a dog who may need more work before joining the course is one who is hanging off the lead, pulling you over to jump on someone.
2. All dogs should have a strong relationship with their owner where they are allowed inside, and where they spend considerable time each day with their owner (see the above page's "The Gist" section for why).
3. All owners need to be stronger than their dogs (or if they're not, that the dog already listens to their owner). The reason for this is because it's very, very hard to train a dog who cannot be restrained by the owner.
4. All dogs must be fully vaccinated with their current C5 injection.

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING:

"After seeing some videos on Facebook of Annie's training I thought it must be too good to be true, that maybe my dog would be the exception and be untrainable. Fortunately that was not the case and we were quick to realise that it is us doing the most learning! After the first day of training we felt like there had been a language barrier between us and our dog, Hazel, that had been removed and she could suddenly understand our intentions/tone. After that it was just consistency that allowed her to learn everything else. Now that Hazel has graduated and we have been accepted in to the graduate group we have constant reminders, support and help from Annie and other dog owners which is definitely encouraging us to be persistent! Would recommend Annie's dog training to anyone." Prudence Coburn, Art Therapist.



ANNIE'S DOGS: THERAPY DOG TRAINING

FAQ #6 OBEDIENCE CONT...

THE GIST:

Many past graduates started in the 3 day general obedience course, and loved it so much they joined the therapy dog course. The benefits of doing both are:

1. If you have completed a 3 day obedience course, you can aim for an Advanced Therapy Dog Certificate instead. This certificate identifies that your dog is trained and trusted off lead and has an advanced level of obedience.

2. You gain access to quarterly graduate refresher obedience courses and a graduate obedience Facebook group.

3. You get to proof your skills before the course and put those nerves to rest.

4. You get to make a lot of friends, and so does your dog. (The course is a group setting so it introduces your dog to more dog socialisation).

The 3 day obedience course is recommended though NOT required.

• **Other recommendations (though not requirements):**

1. I do recommend your dog completes puppy school (this is not required though). I recommend it NOT for the obedience (as puppy schools rarely produce any real obedience) rather I recommend it for the early social interaction your dog gains from it. (Read the next FAQ on puppyhood to therapy-doghood).
2. I also recommend (but it's not required) your dog attend local obedience classes even if they use food-based methods. This is because any act of your dog learning how to learn is an advantage.
3. I also thoroughly recommend my 3 day obedience course as you will learn the same method as the therapy dog course and your dog's obedience will soar. If I know you're planning on doing the therapy dog course, I also tailor your participation and provide tips for you to work on before you start the full course. Again, this is recommended but not required!

A note on dog reactivity vs aggression:

- First off, I don't train aggressive dogs. I define dog aggression as being when the dog is hanging off the end of the lead barking, lunging, pulling, and acting aggressively. It is also when they approach another dog aggressively thus causing an otherwise calm dog to react. These dogs are not suitable for the therapy dog course. As much as therapy dogs are for people, they also need to be trustworthy in all public settings – of which many public settings include dogs. Family dogs are often allowed to visit nursing homes, are sometimes present at pick up and drop off of school times. It would be highly inappropriate if your dog adversely reacted to another visiting dog on site.
- Now, in saying all of this, most dogs will usually bark when they first see other dogs – this is fine, and completely normal. Mild dog reactivity toward other dogs even at course completion is ok. It is extremely difficult to remove all dog reactivity – as the number one fix for it is early socialisation (from 6-12 weeks of age). Mild dog reactivity is any reactivity that can be stopped by a firm warning from you, and never results in a dog fight.

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING:

"My boy Nipper is 3 years old. When he was a pup I did do basic puppy training and it took a year to just pass the basics (sit, drop, stand etc) but in that year he became so obsessed with the food reward (as that's how you trained them at puppy school), and then all his focus was with the treat rewards he just stopped listening as all he wanted was food. So he learnt to just do all the commands. When walking him he pulled and wouldn't listen when other dogs walked past or was across the road he would pull and bark and carry on. If they showed any sign of aggression he would lunge and nip at them. I struggled to walk him. I even bought a no pull harness (he still pulled). He gets very excited when he sees people and especially kids he would jump all over them and lick them. He is ball/toy/stick anything you throw obsessed, kids couldn't play with him around because he had to join them. So I was very excited to be picked to try out the new 3 day group training but also very scared and nervous because there was going to be other dogs. But I committed to it so I took the plunge and went. I found it wasn't as bad as I thought. The calmness of Annie was enough to calm me so it calmed Nipper so there was hope. He was looking at the dogs but he didn't carry on so that was good. Nipper picked up the training quicker than I thought and I couldn't believe how different he was just after 1 day. He didn't jump on my grandkids. He even let me play with his ball until told too. I was blown away - all this after 1 day. So with excitement we did day 2 and the change again after a testing week was unbelievable and after day 3 graduation day. I was able to walk away from my boy back turned dogs all around him and he stayed until I called him. He let a little girl play with his ball and he didn't cross the boundaries. He is a changed boy and more calmer and easier to walk too. We still have a bit to go but we now have the tools to continue and get to perfect instead of better. And I am confident that with these tools I would be able to put this into practice with a new puppy if I was to get another one. It's overwhelming at first with all the information and what you have to do but it does get easier as you learn and do the homework. So if you have a puppy or even an older dog who has some bad habits I really recommend Annie and her training methods she is amazing at what she does." – Sandy Birch Burton, after her experience of the 3 day general obedience training I run.



ANNIE'S DOGS: THERAPY DOG TRAINING

FAQ #7 PUPPYHOOD TO THERAPY DOG HOOD

(WHAT BREEDS ARE BEST SUITED? HOW OLD SHOULD I TRAIN? WHAT SIZE IS BEST? HOW CAN I HELP PREPARE THEM FOR THEIR FUTURE THERAPY DOG ROLE?)

THE GIST:

Any breed can be a therapy dog.

It's important to think about who your clientele are, what size dog would be best, and how important it will be to try avoid allergen triggers in your work place.

Breed. First off, let's be clear: Any breed of dog can be a therapy dog, from a bull mastiff to a toy poodle. It all comes down to their individual temperament. In saying this, there are definitely breeds that I consider advantageous in the therapy dog world. These are as follows:

1. Hypo-allergenic breeds (I.e. poodles, Bichon Frise, Maltese, poodle crosses). Why? Ultimately, it's one less thing to have to tell your client about. Kids with allergies in schools? It's a lot easier to have a dog with a low allergenic threshold, than to have to avoid certain areas of the school, or keep the dog away from certain clients (remembering for many people it's not just the dog itself, it's the residual hair, smell and dust that can also cause a reaction- meaning, if you do have someone with an allergy it's likely you'll need to clean your whole area rather than just remove the dog while they're there).

2. Large breeds if you're working with teenage boys. Why? Generalising here, many troubled teenage boys initially relate better to a dog if they're big. And if you're thinking "but can you get a hypo-allergenic large breed that doesn't appear effeminate?" The answer- sure you can! Even poodles don't have to be feminine...it all depends on how you clip them. And remember, in France poodles are police dogs.

3. Non-toy breeds if working with young children. Why? Toy breeds such as chihuahuas, pugs, toy poodles, etc. can inadvertently be hurt by the rough and accidental clumsiness of young children. Further, because of their size, the world can seem an intimidating space for toy breeds. They can sometimes deal with this by becoming yappy (to defend themselves) or shy (retreating to avoid harm). Neither of these characteristics are what we want in a therapy dog. At the same time, I need to clarify, toy breeds are not doomed for failure! Both shyness and yapping can be socialised out with an early and deliberate socialisation schedule when a pup - I'll come back to socialisation a little later.

4. Toy breeds with the elderly. Why? Conversely, often toy breeds with the elderly can be a good fit as they are small enough to sleep on their bed, go for a ride on their walker, sit on their lap in their wheelchair etc. They usually also fit the slower pace of a nursing home bingo class. You do need to ensure they are taught not to get under people's legs though when walking - as they're so small they can sometimes not be seen.

5. Large breeds with the elderly. Why? I just finished telling you that toy breeds can work well when working with the elderly, but so do large breeds. Generally, the elderly have trouble bending down. This makes larger dogs who are still within reach when sitting, beneficial. Smaller dogs are also harder to see, which is not always a good mix when dealing with people of whom the majority wear glasses. Honestly, with the elderly the only dogs that aren't best suited (though remember this is generalising) are medium sized dogs - the dogs that are too big to be picked up and cuddled, but too small to be patted without bending down.

Accordingly, as you can see, it really comes down to who your target audience mainly is and working out what size dog is going to work best for them. Remembering though, any breed can be a great therapy dog. The most important aspect is temperament.

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING:

"So I am the proud owner of Winston a standard poodle. He is to be a Therapy dog at Ararat College, he therefore needs to be very well trained. On the day he turned 5 months old Annie began her training. The dog transforms before your eyes. We walked into the training grounds with Winston almost pulling me over and a few hours later walked out with a loose lead and Winston walking right beside me. And that was just day one. I highly recommend this training. It teaches the owner how to successfully communicate with their dog." Trish Ruthven after her 3 day general obedience training with Winston.



ANNIE'S DOGS: THERAPY DOG TRAINING

FAQ #7 PUPPYHOOD TO THERAPY DOG HOOD CONT.

THE GIST:

Temperament is more important than looks, breed, or cost when it comes to choosing a pup for a future therapy dog role.

In fact, if you can't find a pup with the right temperament in the litter it's better to not choose any than choose the wrong one.

Temperament. As a result, understanding that temperament is the most important factor we need to focus on, the question remains: How we can stack the odds in your favour when choosing a pup to have a therapy-dog temperament. There are several important ways.

- 1. Choose your breeder carefully.** Research is showing us that a pup's critical window of socialisation is from 4 to 16 weeks of age. Within that period, the age 4 - 8 weeks is most important as it is when the pup's brain has most plasticity (the neural quality of being shaped and moulded) and will imprint most readily to experiences of fear/neutrality/positive affection. 8 - 12 weeks is the next most important period in their critical socialisation window, and then finally 12-16 weeks sees the pup's brain closing off on its plasticity. What this means: Your breeder has a very important role to play as your pup should still be with your breeder from 4-7 weeks. This means you want to look for a breeder who understands their significance. You want someone who is introducing them to sights, sounds, animals, people, different surfaces, etc. You preferably want a house that's busy - with children, noise and other animals. Generally speaking, you don't want an animal that is coming from a quiet, no distraction home (unless they are intentional about introducing your pup to busyness, kids, animals etc outside of the home).
- 2. Ask to meet (or at least gain a temperament profile) of the pup's parents.** You do not want them to have any physical concerns. But equally important, you do not want them to have any temperament issues either. This means: you don't want to hear or see that they are shy, anxious, scared, aggressive, ADHD, over the top etc. Because yes, temperament can be passed through to your pup.
- 3. Explain to your breeder that you are hoping your pup will become a therapy dog.** They can help you choose the pup that might fit the role best. Importantly, don't choose your pup based on appearance (reality check- you're going to love your pup whatever colour it is). Instead, choose your pup based on personality. Here, it's really important: you do not want the quiet pup. Yes, therapy dogs need to be calm, but pups at this stage should be showing curiosity, interest and investigation into their world. Quiet, reserved pups at this age can be more prone to anxious behaviour later. You do not want this. By the same token however, you also do not want the ADHD pup. You want to look for the pup that is confident, investigative, wants to come up to you, enjoys your affection, but is equally happy to go back and join in the action with their littermates.
- 4. Pick up your pup from 7 - 8 weeks, no later.** There is a misconception in the public and among some breeders that it is illegal to take a pup before 8 weeks. This is incorrect. There is no law in Australia about the age of taking a pup. There is a policy within ANKC breeders which promotes 8 weeks as the minimum, however this is a policy and not state or federal law. This policy is based on old research - but I won't touch on that here. Essentially, all I am saying is: Pick your pup up early. Why? Because regardless of what your breeder did or didn't do, you need to start your socialisation schedule, and there's no time to wait.

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING:

"Left speechless and stunned after just three days! Annie showed, guided and helped our family show our 6mth old Blue heeler Fergus how to have manners, realise that we love him and he can trust us. No matter where we are or what is happening around him or us. Watching the transformation before our eyes is amazing and we will forever be grateful for Annie, her knowledge and her compassion. Highly recommend her services." Penny Ibbeson after her 3 day training session.



ANNIE'S DOGS: THERAPY DOG TRAINING

FAQ #7 PUPPYHOOD TO THERAPY DOG HOOD CONT.

THE GIST:

Pups have a critical socialisation window that exists from 6 weeks of age until 12 weeks of age.

During that period you need to acquaint them with EVERYTHING they will come into contact with later in life.

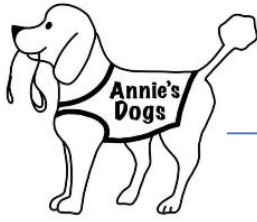
After the critical socialisation window closes, your dog's reactivity to certain things (people, dogs, sounds, etc) is largely fixed.

The best comparison of this critical socialisation window is akin to the difference of teaching a child a language compared to teaching an adult. The child's brain plasticity makes the learning of a language markedly easier than an adult learning a language.

5. **Socialise. Intensely.** If you've read some of my posts or are in my puppy Facebook group, this is where my 200 rule comes in. Essentially the idea is to introduce your dog to 200 different people in their first 2 weeks with you. But let's start with the obvious, there will be some dogs who will only meet 10 people in their life and yet be amazing with people. Just because you don't get 200 people does not guarantee your dog will be a failure. However, there will be other dogs that need that exposure. The difficult thing is: You will only know which type of dog yours will be when it's too late. When they're 6 months old and barking at everyone who enters your house; when they're 1 year old and feeling anxious around people on skateboards, or chasing after bikes. You won't know which type of dog you have when they're 8 weeks old. So the general rule remains - 200 people is an awesome number. For the dog who was going to love people regardless, it just helps them to love people even more! And for the dog who was going to be afraid or anti-social it makes sure that doesn't happen. This may sound daunting but it doesn't have to be. You might be wondering where on earth can I find 200 people?! Here is a list of where I take my pups to find 200 people.
- Family
 - Friends
 - Bunnings
 - Pet shops
 - ANY shop - call ahead and ask. Explain, "I have an 8 week old pup at the moment who I'm looking to train as a therapy dog/trying my best to socialise with people. Would you mind if I brought him with me when I pop in later?" Chances are, if they don't serve food, they will say yes.
 - The vets.
 - Churches. These are often a great place as they usually involve both the elderly, children, and sometimes even people in attire that a dog won't see on the street. Generally speaking, even if you're not a member of the church, very few churches would turn you away if you explain what you're doing. They'll just like the fact you're there.
 - Schools. Wait out the front of a school, dog in arms and just wait by the fence. Even if no one comes up to you, your dog is seeing busyness, people and chaos. It can be a good idea to call ahead and let the principal know, that way they're not wondering what this stalker-person is doing by their gate.
 - Shopping centres. Same as above.
 - Work. Ring ahead and ask your boss if you could bring him/her in for an hour/two/the whole day.
 - Community events like ParkRun. Even if you've never been to their event before, no one is going to say no to free love from a pup!
 - Public spaces - parks, skate parks, the main street, anywhere where people might be. Even if you never would choose to go there if it weren't for your pup. Now's the time to put those biases aside and go say hi to your local skate park kids. Honestly, they're a treasure trove of socialisation for your dog because you'll have all things wheeled (skate boards, bikes, scooters etc).
 - Up the street. Just walk with them in your arms up the street. They don't have to physically touch people to be socialised to them - though of course there won't be too many people who will just walk past an adorable 8 week old pup without wanting a pat!

An important caveat at this point needs to be mentioned: I'm a firm believer in keeping your pup safe. Until they're 14 weeks old, pups won't be fully vaccinated and therefore won't be protected against many dangerous viruses. To help you still socialise your pup while keeping them safe, I do all of the above while holding them in my arms (I don't allow them to touch the ground when in a public space).

Also importantly, as part of this 200 rule make sure you include adults of different genders, children, babies, elderly, people wearing beanies, sunglasses, umbrellas, walking sticks etc. Doing so ensures your pup not only meets a lot of people, but they also meet them in a variety of settings, are exposed to a variety of sights and sounds, and have controlled safe, positive encounters with the public.



ANNIE'S DOGS: THERAPY DOG TRAINING

FAQ #7 PUPPYHOOD TO THERAPY DOG HOOD CONT.

THE GIST:

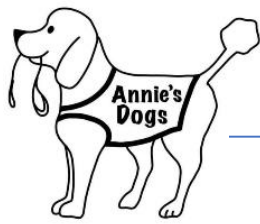
While you socialise, be mindful of parvovirus.

Keep your pup safe until they have had all their vaccination shots (often at 14 weeks of age).

To strike the balance of socialising and keeping them safe I do all their public socialising with them in my arms not touching the ground. This reduces their risk of contacting parvovirus.

Also be aware, parvovirus can remain on a surface for up to 7 years. There does not have to be a current active case in your town for their to be a risk!

6. Remember socialisation doesn't just only need to occur with people. It also needs to include:
 - Intentionally dropping plates/pans/ cup on the floor.
 - Different floor surfaces
 - Washing machines
 - Dishwashers
 - Vacuums
 - Brooms
 - Car rides
 - Horses
 - Chooks
7. **Make your house busy.** Don't keep it quiet. Bang things on purpose. Drop plates. Build things with hammers and drills. Invite your friends over with noisy kids. Even if your house is usually a peaceful oasis, now is the time to destroy that. You need your dog to be used to busy-ness.
8. **Introduce them to at least 10 vaccinated dogs in your first month.** Then continue to introduce them to a steady stream of other dogs each month of their life.
9. **Seek permission.** Tell your employer your plans for their role as a therapy dog, and ask if they can come in with you from day dot. Hands down this is the BEST way to having your dog ready for their job. Dogs who have lived and breathed their role from the moment they came into your life make some of the best therapy dogs around. You do need to manage these interactions carefully by explaining to your clients that your pup is training to be a therapy dog, but isn't yet a therapy dog. Talk to them about puppy nipping and what to do about it, about toilet training, jumping etc, and include the client in the pup's training. (I have a detailed post on how to do this in a school setting in my puppy page which I'll attach the link to at the bottom of this post).
10. **Crate train.** Obviously this isn't compulsory, however crate trained dogs can make life a lot easier for you as a therapy dog handler. Think: making transport easier, as well as giving your dog a space they will always know is theirs. This last point is important to set up (even if it's not a crate - it can be their bed). This way, you teach your clients that if your dog goes to their bed/crate it means they're tired, and they need a break. I always set this up with the kids at school to let them know "when Pauley is on his bed, you aren't allowed to touch him. It's his safe space. He's telling you he needs a break." The kids know that when he's off his bed they can pat him and play with him, but when he's on his bed they need to let him be there.
11. **Teach your pup to play fetch.** The reason:
 - Fetch is a great game to increase engagement and bonding with your dog. A child who has trouble bonding, an elderly resident who needs to practise their arm exercises, a patient who wants some sunshine. Playing fetch with your dog can help everyone. Fetch is also great even for dogs not training as therapy dogs.
 - Let's say you break your leg, have a baby, suddenly have to work two jobs. All of these situations mean you have less time to exercise your dog. Well, if you've got fit dogs like mine, a 30 minute walk around the block isn't going to cut it. Mate, an hour walk around the block isn't going to cut it... BUT 15 minutes of fetch, now that's a different story! Invest in one of those long arm throwers, find yourself a local fenced oval (velodromes are great- so long as your local velodrome doesn't mind dogs on their grass), and get yourself a couple of tennis balls. Killing energy never was easier.
 - Pro tip: **don't play fetch at home. The reason - do you really want a nagging puppa at your feet dropping the ball every 10 seconds wanting to play fetch? In our house Murphy in particular is fetch mad, BUT because he's never played fetch at our house, he's only incessant when we put our leads on and walk to the velodrome. Then he's naggy, because all he wants in life is the ball!



ANNIE'S DOGS: THERAPY DOG TRAINING

FAQ #7 PUPPYHOOD TO THERAPY DOG HOOD CONT.

THE GIST:

This FAQ has just given you a snapshot of puppyhood to therapy-doghood.

I run a free puppy Facebook group which goes into all of these points and more in a lot more detail (I.e it gives you videos to follow of how to teach your dog the tricks I mentioned; gives a step by step guide to crate training and why; as well as talking more generally on topics like how to toilet train etc). The link is here: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/594467001156856/?ref=share> . Feel free to add yourself.

12. Teach your dog tricks. It's not just fetch that kids and oldies will bond with your therapy dog over. They'll also love it if your dog can do tricks. So here are my top five easiest tricks to learn:

- Spin
- Weave through your legs
- Shake
- High five
- Roll over

Tricks are also a great resource as they teach our dogs to be creative, to explore the world, and to look to us as the repository of fun and games.

Of course, these steps don't guarantee therapy dog temperament, but they do go a long way in establishing great possibilities. Also, don't feel bad if your dog hasn't had these steps, if your dog loves people and seeks out human affection then it doesn't matter how they got there, your dog is trainable as a therapy dog. 😊

Best age to train a pup:

Ok, so this one has three main facets to it:

- **The age they are trainable** (not debating at this point whether it's the best age or not). My method of training is suitable and successful for dogs that are 5 months or older. At this age, your pup is old enough to concentrate, learn and manage their impulses (even if they don't do it well before being trained. They are entirely capable of it).
- **Best age of a therapy dog** (this isn't necessarily the best age to train - you'll see what I mean - rather it's what age therapy dogs are generally the best at their job). The answer to this will differ depending on what setting they are in. Younger trained therapy dogs are often best for settings with children because they have loads of energy to burn. Often the dog's enthusiasm and energy matches that of their kids. The same young dog however, would likely be less suited to a nursing home - where the energy level is markedly less, or to a hospital, court house etc. In such settings, an older therapy dog is often the better fit as their role is primarily one of resting and relaxing rather than playing.

In saying the above, neither of these answer when it's best to train a therapy dog. The first answer merely tells when a therapy dog is trainable. The second, when they will likely come into their own as awesome therapy dogs. However, training them at the age they'd be amazing is not always the answer. In fact, referring back to what I shared above- many of the best therapy dogs are those that are introduced to their future work environment from day dot.

- **The age is it best to train a therapy dog.** My opinion is: Anywhere between 5 and 9 months. At the end of the course it's unlikely they'll be the best in the course, however, this is the age that gives you the most potential with them. It allows you to introduce them to your work space, colleagues and clients, and allows the dog and yourself to grow into the role together. Like people, the person who has been working at their job for 5 years, compared to the person who has recently joined the company - you can expect the employee with most experience to be markedly better than the one who has just joined (at least at the beginning). They have more knowledge, are familiar with the processes, and know what they need to do. The younger employee though still has much to offer, and, if trained and mentored well can sometimes surpass even the most experienced. That won't happen on day one, but over time as they also learn their role. It's the same with therapy dogs. Your new therapy dog may not be as good as mine who's been doing his job for 5 years (since he was 5 months), but guess what, Pauley wasn't as good as he is now when he started either. Dogs are like people, the more they do their job the better they become at it. To be sure, when your dog graduates the course, they will be obedient, intuitive, and will be an awesome therapy dog. But the sky is also the limit for them (and you). Potential is open, and I'm sure they'll continue to go from strength to strength as they do more and more of their job.



ANNIE'S DOGS: THERAPY DOG TRAINING

UNDERSTANDINGS



THE GIST:

Please read this page before you book in for the course. It will give you a snapshot to ensure you are fully informed of what you are signing up for.

When you fill out your registration form you will be signing to say you have read and agree to all of these points.

- **What is a therapy dog?** Therapy dogs are not service dogs. Service dogs are trained to respond to assist a person with a life altering disability i.e. seeing-eye dogs, diabetes dogs, epilepsy dogs. These dogs are allowed anywhere – supermarkets, cafes etc. Therapy dogs are at the opposite end of the spectrum. They are trained to provide non-life saving affection, comfort and support to all people. Importantly, they are not allowed entrance into all facilities, rather they must receive prior permission from the facility for entrance.
- **What am I qualified to do after this training?** Importantly, this training does NOT qualify you as a teacher/counsellor/psychologist/aged care worker etc. Instead, this certificate credits you as a therapy dog handler, and your dog as a therapy dog. This means you can enter facilities – with prior permission from the facility – as a therapy dog handler. If you are ALREADY a teacher, counsellor, psychologist, aged care worker etc this qualification will enable you to take your dog with you to work (given your employer has granted you permission to do so). If you do not have a prior qualification, this certificate enables you to seek permission of public access facilities to bring your therapy dog into their facility to provide generalised wellbeing through dog-human contact.
- **What are the legal requirements of therapy dogs?** Therapy dogs are not service dogs. This means they do not have access to facilities which serve or prepare food, nor are they considered exempt from public housing or national park requirements. Before a therapy dog can enter a public space, they require prior approval from the administration of your building.
- **When you book your course you are booking specific dates.** If you need to change your dates for any reason up to **two months before** the course starting you will incur a \$200 transfer fee (if I can fill your spot there will be no transfer fee required). If you need to change your dates for any reason **after this cut off point** you will incur the full cost of a deposit for the future dates. This may appear harsh, however, I have often had to run courses with only 3 paying customers in it and the others all late date swappers. This has left some courses quite empty and others super full and has taken spaces that otherwise could have been filled. The cost of your therapy dog jacket, venue hire and my transport costs are all considered in setting this non-refundable deposit. Going forward, your non-refundable deposit of \$1000 is that: non-refundable, unless I can fill your place. In the event of being able to fill your place no cost will be incurred to change your dates).
- **Covid restrictions.** In the event of Covid restrictions interrupting our plans there will be three options available to us.
 1. A voucher which can be used for any future course.
 2. A rescheduling of dates.
 3. A refund of partial moneys.Preference will go to options 1 and 2. Regarding option 3:
 - a) If the course hasn't started yet, you will be reimbursed \$1,300. The \$300 non refunded will go to the cost of running the event including venue hire, jacket cost, transport etc.
 - b) If the course has started you will be reimbursed \$750. The \$850 non refunded goes to the costs outlined above, and takes into consideration what you have already received (on day 1 you will receive a resource pack, intensive training in dog obedience, as well as all of the principles required for dog obedience).
 - c) If the course has made it to our testing days (the last two days of the course) you won't be offered a refund but a one day testing day will be organised at a future date at no extra cost to you.
- **Fail grade.** It is entirely possible (**though unlikely**) for your dog to fail. This may be due to your dog's obedience, temperament, or enjoyment of the role not meeting therapy dog standards. There is no guarantee that joining the course will ensure graduation. If you do receive a fail grade, advice will be made available to you specific to why your dog failed (i.e. tips on how to socialise your dog, obedience courses etc). It is up to you whether you would like to continue to pursue therapy dog status or not. If you would like to re-test for therapy dog competency, this will be at a cost of \$100 for a re-cert day.



Annie's Dogs: Therapy Dog Training Registration Form

Dog's Name: _____

Dog's Age: _____

Dog's Breed: _____

I consent that (please tick each one):

- My dog is 5 months of age or older
- My dog enjoys human-dog contact
- My dog is not dog or people aggressive
 - My dog enjoys human interaction
- My dog is up to date with their vaccinations

My Name: _____

My Occupation: _____

Setting where I wish to work/volunteer with my dog:

How much time (on average) I spend with my dog per day:

I consent to (please tick each that apply):

- Having videos/photos taken of myself and my dog during the training.
- Having those videos/photos posted on Annie's Dogs Facebook pages.

I recognise that all costs incurred in the event of my dog harming another person/dog/property will be payable by me (the dog's owner). I release Annie's Dogs from any legal or financial liability resulting from the training including personal injury. I agree to the understandings outlined in the previous page, including but not limited to the cost incurred if I need to change my dates, or if my dog fails.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Full Name: _____

WHAT DO I NEED TO BRING:

- Blackdog Head Halti Harness and lead (see below).
- Favourite toys, food and treats.
- Long lead (or multiple leads – we'll clip them together).
- Water bowl, water, poo bags, etc.
- Dog bed.
- Lunch/snacks for yourself.

CONTACT:

- Phone: Annie Silva- 0473 739 067
- Facebook: Annie's Dogs: Therapy Dog Training
- www.anniesdogs.com.au

CAN MY DOG FAIL?

- It is possible your dog may not pass the requirements to become a therapy dog. However, a re-evaluation can be conducted at a later date.
- Reasons for your dog receiving a fail grade will be based on their obedience, temperament or apparent non-enjoyment of the therapy dog role.
- Communication and support will be offered before any fail grades are given. A fail-grade is unlikely, but possible.

PHYSICAL MOBILITY REQUIRED:

- This training does require a moderate level of physical capability. If you are concerned, please talk to me about your limitations to ensure this training is appropriate for you.
- Please bear in mind, the stronger and more stubborn your dog is, the more physical strength you *may* need.

