



# Steps to Becoming a Pet Partner Team



## Prerequisites

### Prerequisites for the Person

- The person handling the animal (handlers) must be at least 10 years old. Handlers younger than 16 must be accompanied by a parent or guardian and must have written permission to participate from a parent or guardian.
- People who do not have an animal may also register as Pet Partners

### Prerequisites for the Animal

- All animals except birds must have lived in the owner's home for at least 6 months. Birds must have lived in the owner's home for at least 1 year.
- All animals except "pocket pets" must be at least 1 year at the time the animal is evaluated. Pocket pets (e.g., guinea pigs, rabbits, rats, etc.) must be at least 6 months at the time the animal is evaluated.
- Dogs trained to aggressively protect and/or encouraged to actively bite, even as a component of a dog sport (e.g., bite work that is part of Schutzhund) *may not* be Pet Partners.

## Animals That Can Be Pet Partners

There are a great many species that make wonderful visiting animals and can form a strong human-animal bond. Only domesticated animals may become Pet Partners. Animals with disabilities can also participate as long as the veterinary approves (health certificate) it and animal passes the evaluation. Examples of registered pets include:

Dogs (all breeds)	Horses	Guinea pigs	Miniature Pigs
Cats	Donkeys	Rabbits	Potbellied pigs
African Gray Parrots	Goats	Domesticated Rats	Chickens
Cockatoos	Llamas.		

Wild or exotic animals (e.g., snakes, ferrets, lizards) may not be Pet Partners.

# Step 1:

## Pet Partner Team Training Course

Learn the skills needed to visit safely with your animal in hospitals, nursing homes, classrooms, and other facilities. Successful completion of this course required for registration as a Pet Partner.

Topics include:

- Selecting and preparing animals for visits.
- Identifying and decreasing stress in animals.
- Animal health and safety.
- Special needs of client groups.
- Interacting with special people.
- Facility health and safety codes.
- Patient confidentiality.

### Attend a workshop.

The Pet Partners Team Training Course is usually presented as a fast-paced day-long (8 hours), hands-on course. Some **Pet Partners of Orange County** instructors present the course over more than one day. Students receive a copy of the *Pet Partners Team Training Course Manual* and practice visiting skills. Courses are scheduled throughout the year in locations all over the country. All workshops are taught by Delta-licensed instructors. Pre-registration is required and **no animals are allowed at this event**. Dogs must be obedience trained or have it's CGC within six months of taking your evaluation. If you trained the dog yourself, you can get letter from a trainer that mentions that the dog knows the basic commands like heel, sit, down, stay and leave it and trainer should sign paper. Most dog trainers will not charge you anything if they know animal will be used for volunteer Animal Assisted Therapy work. A drill or brush up class for your dog can tremendously improve the chances of doing well at the evaluation. We want you to succeed on your first try!

We strongly recommend the Workshop, but if you are in an area where the workshop is not available, please let us know so we can suggest other options.

# Step 2:

## The Pet Partner Team Evaluation Process

The Team Evaluation process **evaluates the animal/handler team**, how well the handler interprets and manages the animal's behavior, and how well the animal responds to the handler.

Team evaluations are performed by Delta-licensed Team Evaluators. There are 2 parts:

1. [Pet Partners Skills Test](#) (*click to follow link*) (PPST) – shows whether the animal can be controlled by you and follow basic commands. During the PPST, you will be assessed on how you interact with the evaluator, the evaluator's assistants, the animal, and the environment around you.
2. [Pet Partners Aptitude Test](#) (*click to follow link*) (PPAT) – designed to simulate conditions that may be encountered on a visit. This screening helps determine the most appropriate environment for you and your animal. Many people compare this to a temperament test. During the PPAT, you will be assessed on how well you interact with the evaluator and evaluator's assistants as you simulate being on a visit. They will be acting as though they are in a facility. Your interactions may be in the form of questions, responses to the evaluator and evaluator's comments, eye contact, smiling, head nodding, directing the animal to interact, or other verbal and nonverbal methods of communicating.

Unlike obedience competitions, you and your animal do not have to perform the exercises with precision to pass the evaluation. You are also encouraged to talk to your animal during the entire evaluation. The main emphasis is that the animal is under control.

One of the goals of the Pet Partners Program is to ensure that we can all be proud of the visiting teams because they are safe and reliable. The evaluation process gives a complete picture of each handler/animal team. This process is the safest way to identify acceptable visiting teams.

After you have passed the PPST and PPAT, the Team Evaluator will give you a signed and dated copy of your test forms for you to include when you [submit your completed Registration Packet](#) to Delta Society. If you are doing visits in Orange County or lives in O.C. you are automatically a member of PPOC (Pet Partners of Orange County), a Delta Society Affiliate Group. Among the advantages of being a member, you will pay lower registration fees with Delta Society, can enjoy visits in facilities that have already been set up, can participate in a mentoring program that really helps you to get started.

**Please Note:**

At no time will your animal be put in a situation that is dangerous to the animal's welfare. The Delta-licensed Team Evaluators who conduct the PPST and PPAT are trained and learn that the well-being of animals comes first, no matter what. At no point during the evaluation will animals be hurt or intentionally frightened. The PPAT is designed to resemble an animal-assisted activities/animal-assisted therapy (AAA/AAT) visit with situations that might occur when the animal goes on a visit. If you are uncomfortable with or unsure of what is going on during the evaluation, please let the evaluator know. You are encouraged to be your animal's advocate.

Some extra requirements might be required for your Evaluation! The extra requirements can help you succeed!

If you are in Orange County, after you pass the Evaluation, you will be assigned a mentor to go with you on 1 or 2 visits per month for 3 months so you can have a feel of

the different facilities we visit and learn from the expertise of your experienced mentor/pet partner.

## Step 3:

### After You Submit Your Packet

Pet Partners of Orange County will mail the package for you if you live or plan on visiting facilities in Orange County. There may be a grant that will pay for the vest of any Orange County Pet Partner.

Once Delta receives your completed Registration Packet, they start processing it for your acceptance into the Pet Partners Program.

Within a few weeks, you will be issued a temporary ID badge, which allows you to begin visiting. Pet Partners of Orange County will mentor you and your animal as soon as you have the temporary ID. Mentoring time is limited; you can visit on your own after we feel you got some experience visiting.

About 3 to 4 weeks later, you will receive your permanent ID badge and your animal's tag.

### Pet Partners Benefits

As a Pet Partner, you will receive:

- Delta Society membership and [Interactions magazine](#), which includes a section for Pet Partners.
- [\\$1 million primary liability insurance](#).
- Identification badge for handler and collar tag for animal.
- Referral to facilities searching for Pet Partners teams.
- Exclusive offers on [Pet Partners accessories](#).
- Eligibility for regional and [national awards](#).
- Opportunity to network with other Pet Partners teams.
- Access to licensed Evaluators and Instructors as local resources.
- Support from the Delta Society office.

As a registered Pet Partner, you'll also have the satisfaction of knowing you are helping people in need in your own community.