



PUPPY DEVELOPMENT SERIES

Puppy Temperament Evaluation

Observation, Assessment & Guidance





How We Evaluate Temperament

Observation First. Evaluations Are a Tool.

Observation Over Time

Temperament evaluation begins with careful observation as our puppies grow. We watch how each puppy responds to people, handling, play, new experiences, and everyday challenges, allowing individual personality traits to emerge naturally over time.

Structured Evaluation

At seven weeks, we add the Volhard Puppy Aptitude Test as a structured evaluation. It provides another perspective on each puppy's developing temperament and complements what we have already observed throughout the litter's development.



Temperament Begins Before Birth

Thoughtful Pairings Help Set the Foundation

Selecting Our Breeding Dogs

Temperament is one of the most important considerations when we select dogs for our breeding program. We look for gentle, adaptable, socially positive adults with stable temperaments and low-to-moderate activity levels.

More Than Genetics Alone

Genetics help shape a puppy's natural temperament, but they are only the beginning. As puppies develop, their experiences, environment, handling, and socialization all contribute to the dogs they will become.



Observation From the Beginning

Personality Emerges Early

Early Signs

Individual personality traits often begin to emerge while puppies are still very young. As the litter develops, we may notice differences in curiosity, confidence, activity level, vocal behavior, and how each puppy interacts with people and littermates.





Looking for Patterns

Consistent Behavior Matters Most

Patterns Matter

We look for behaviors that appear consistently over time rather than placing too much importance on a single moment. Weeks of daily observation help us build a more complete picture of each puppy before any formal temperament evaluation takes place.





The Volhard Puppy Aptitude Test

A Structured Look at Temperament

What It Is

The Volhard Puppy Aptitude Test is a structured temperament evaluation designed to provide insight into a young puppy's natural behavioral tendencies. It looks at responses to people, handling, movement, sound, and mild challenges.

How We Use It

We use the Volhard evaluation at seven weeks as another piece of information—not as a pass-or-fail test or a way to identify a “best” puppy. The results are considered alongside weeks of observation and help us provide families with additional guidance as they choose their puppy.



Why Timing Matters

Seven Weeks Is the Traditional Window

The Volhard Puppy Aptitude Test is traditionally performed at 49 days of age, or seven weeks. This timing is intended to capture natural temperament tendencies before learning and environmental influences have had a greater effect on behavior. Because timing is part of the method, testing too early or too late can change how the results are interpreted and may reduce their usefulness.





What the Test Evaluates

Ten Exercises Build a Behavioral Profile

The Volhard Puppy Aptitude Test uses a series of structured exercises to look at different aspects of a puppy's natural responses. No single result defines a puppy—the overall pattern is what matters.

Social & Handling Responses

- Social Attraction
- Following
- Restraint
- Social Dominance
- Elevation Dominance

Instinct & Sensitivity

- Retrieving
- Touch Sensitivity
- Sound Sensitivity
- Sight Sensitivity
- Stability



How Scores Are Used

Tendencies, Not Labels

What Scores May Suggest

Results can highlight tendencies such as confidence, sensitivity, independence, interest in people, and tolerance for handling or mild stress. The goal is to understand the puppy's overall behavioral profile rather than focus on one individual score.

How We Use Them

We consider the results alongside our ongoing observations of each puppy. Together, this information helps us give families thoughtful guidance as they consider which puppy may best fit their household, lifestyle, and expectations.



What the Test Cannot Predict

A Snapshot, Not a Forecast

One Point in Time

The Volhard evaluation offers insight into a puppy's natural tendencies at seven weeks, but it cannot perfectly predict adult behavior, future training outcomes, or every challenge a dog may encounter.

Development Continues

Temperament continues to be shaped by environment, training, socialization, health, and everyday experiences. A seven-week-old puppy is still developing, which is why we view the evaluation as one tool within a much larger picture.



Why Breeder Experience Matters

Observation Adds Important Context

Weeks of Daily Observation

A breeder who has spent weeks with a litter often sees patterns that a single testing session cannot fully capture. Everyday interactions reveal how each puppy responds across different situations and over time.





Putting Evaluation in Context

Scores Are Only Part of the Picture

Putting It All Together

The greatest value comes from combining structured evaluation results with ongoing observation and knowledge of the puppies. Scores provide useful information, but they are best understood within the larger picture of each puppy's developing temperament.





Understanding Each Puppy

Different Tendencies, Different Responses

Different Puppies, Different Tendencies

The Volhard evaluation is designed to help describe behavioral tendencies, not to label puppies as better or worse. The results provide additional context about how a puppy may respond to people, handling, activity, and new experiences, and can help families better understand the differences they may see among puppies.





Using Evaluation as Guidance

Information to Support Puppy Selection

Helping Families Understand Their Choices

We use temperament observations and evaluation results to help families understand the individual puppies in a litter—their confidence, sensitivity, activity level, interest in people, and responses to handling or new experiences. This information can provide helpful context as families consider which puppy feels like the best fit for their household and lifestyle.





Our Documentation

Recording What We Observe

A Written Record for Each Puppy

Each puppy's temperament evaluation is documented individually. We record the responses observed during the Volhard exercises and use those results alongside our ongoing observations to create a more complete picture of the puppy's developing temperament.





Key Takeaways

Temperament Is Best Understood Over Time

- Temperament has a genetic foundation, but continues to develop through environment, socialization, training, and life experiences.
- Daily breeder observation provides important insight into how each puppy behaves across many different situations.
- The Volhard Puppy Aptitude Test adds a structured evaluation at seven weeks, but no individual score defines a puppy.
- Observations and evaluation results are considered together to help families better understand each puppy as they make their selection.



Sources & References

Resources Behind This Booklet

Joachim & Wendy Volhard

Volhard Puppy Aptitude Test (PAT) — original temperament assessment and scoring framework used throughout this booklet.

Miss Cindy's Doodles

Ongoing breeder observation, puppy temperament documentation, and our practical use of evaluation results to guide families during puppy selection.

Our Puppy-Raising Curriculum

Temperament observations are considered alongside the developmental, socialization, and enrichment work described throughout our Curriculum & Protocols Series.



Thank You for Learning With Us

Thoughtful Observation. Informed Guidance.

Every puppy is an individual, and understanding temperament takes more than a single moment or score. Through careful observation, structured evaluation, and years of experience raising puppies, we work to give families meaningful information about the developing personalities within each litter.

Our goal is to help families feel informed and confident as they get to know their choices and select the puppy that feels right for them.

Thoughtfully Bred. Lovingly Raised.



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