

## Owner Relinquishment Evaluation Guide

**Owner's name:**

**Name of dog:**

**Age:**            M / F            **Spay / Neuter?**

**Reason for home visit:**

### **Initial meeting**

**Describe dog's behavior at your arrival to the house (circle all that apply):**

**friendly    on guard but quickly relaxes    suspicious, not  
relaxed fearful    continues to bark and challenge**

**Dog's behavior after 10 minutes:**

**friendly    on guard but quickly relaxes    suspicious, not  
relaxed fearful    continues to bark and challenge**

**You remain neutral and do not call the dog, stare or encourage him to approach. Does the dog approach you on his own?**

**Once he seems relaxed try to touch the dog. Does he seem to enjoy touching?**

**Touch all over**

**Brush him along his back and rear**

**Get up and move away. Does he follow?  
when called?**

**Does he come to you**

**Lift lips to look at teeth 5 different times during visit. Is he more relaxed or getting annoyed?**

**Check ears, feet**

**Gently put in down position (do not force him and do not do this if at any time you feel threatened), roll him on side, roll him over.**

**Is he relaxed and ready for a belly rub? Is he on guard or annoyed?**

**How to Startle: Take the dog into a room with a hard floor like a kitchen. When the dog is not looking, drop your car keys near him.**

**When the dog is walking away from you, gently give him a push on his rear.**

### **OBJECT GUARDING**

**Ask the owner if there is any history of guarding food or toys. Ask the owner to put out his dish with treats and then have her reach down and touch the dish. What is the dog's reaction? Circle one.**

**His face is relaxed and he looks up with happy anticipation, he turns his body to block her and eats faster, he stiffens and stares, growls with lip lift, lunges**

**Put a bowl with food or cookies in it on the floor.**

**As the dog starts to eat, take a step toward him.**

**Try this with a raw hide.**

**Couch: If the dog is allowed on the couch can you or the owner call him off of the couch? How willingly does he give up his spot?**

**Ask to see his favorite toy. Will he give it to you? Will he trade it for a treat?**

**General information**

A home evaluation is needed when the owner relinquishment coordinator has concerns about the owner's perception of the problem or the adoptability of the dog. It is your job to evaluate the dog and get a first hand view of the problem.

The volunteer who is handling the relinquishment will contact you. He or she will explain why the evaluation is needed and give you the owner's contact information. The owner will have already agreed for a home evaluation and will be expecting your call. You will contact the owner and set up a time to visit.

The checklist is for your use and is only a suggestion of what you may wish to do.

Afterward, e-mail a summary of your visit to the OR handling the case.

Please, remember that during this visit you represent MAESSR. At all times be professional and non-judgmental. (You may have moments when you wish to **CHOK** THE LIFE OUT of the owner. This is never ok.)

Your experience with springers probably enables you to handle most dogs with ease. However, your purpose here is not to become this dog's best friend but to evaluate questionable behavior. To accomplish this you need to "set up" the dog to see the behavior in question and be somewhat aloof and neutral with the dog at first. If you walk in with baby talk and petting, you may never see the problem.

Sometimes an evaluation is needed because there are red flags in the owner's story. Here you need to play detective and ask leading questions, or ask the owner to show you what they mean. Some owners do not understand canine behavior and their description of an event may be completely off the reality.

The evaluation should progress from mild "getting to know you" gestures on your part to testing his limits of rude and pushy behavior from you. In your mind you should be asking yourself "Is this dog adoptable?"

Example: The story from the owner was that the dog was getting increasingly aggressive with the neighbor's kids who play in a large group in front of the house that was on a cul de sac. The kids would also come into the house to play with their son.

I called the owner and asked what happens when they let the dog out to greet a stranger. They reported that he would rush out barking and might jump on me but has not bitten.

I set up a time to visit and explained that I wanted to witness his behavior. I asked that they let him out to "greet me". I called from my cell phone to let the owner know that I was out front and was ready for him.

He did just as they had predicted and was pretty intimidating. I then called his name, turned away from him (a signal that I was no threat) and asked if he wanted a treat. Now he was a different dog. Is he trainable? Yes.

In the house I went through the steps of the evaluation and had no “red flags” at all. Then their son, approximately age 7, joined us and began to perform. He showed us how he plays with the dog by holding a stuffed toy over his head and running around the room. The dog was leaping into the air and snapping at the child to get the toy. Great fun. I asked the child if he had ever gotten hurt. He said no. Kids are great because they are so honest.

I explained to Mom, who thought the whole scene was cute, that allowing that type of play encourages the dog to air snap at kids.

Is this dog trainable / adoptable? Yes!

Also, I witnessed the relationship between the cat and the dog. Adorable!

When MAESSR was called this dog was a day away from a trip to the SPCA. Through us he is now in a forever home.

Please familiarize yourself with canine body language.

Signs of stress signaling that the dog is uncomfortable with what is happening include lip licking, yawning, sniffing the ground, looking away, tail tucked, ears held low.

If the dog is stressed by what you are doing, stop and back off. Try again later or let it go. Make a note of his reaction. His reaction may not be a deal breaker but it is good information to pass along to the relinquishment coordinator.

Signs warning you to back off or pending aggression include hard stare possibly showing the white of the eye, ears forward and alert, stiffened body, stiff raised tail, low growl, lip lift, showing teeth, lunging, air snap.

When conducting a home evaluation it is your goal to test the limits of the dog's tolerance in several stressful situations. If at any time you feel threatened, stop the evaluation.