

THE WUSV WORKING GROUP - GB



ZAP Character Assessment

Overview

The German Shepherd Dog (GSD) is the most versatile breed of dog in the World which is why it is not only a widely used service dog in very many different ways and a favourite for many canine sports but also is a much loved companion dog. Its unique character, incorporating intelligence, loyalty, confidence and determination, lie behind its popularity.

In any breed of dog, popularity can lead to indiscriminate breeding and the erosion of key breed characteristics. The SV (GSD Club in Germany, the World Governing Body) has at its core the protection of the unique characteristics of the GSD. The objective being to ensure the GSD remains the outstanding companion dog and working dog that it should always be.

A programme known as the Breed Harmonisation Programme was introduced in 2016 by the SV across the World through the WUSV (World Union of GSD Clubs) member clubs.

A fundamental element of this programme is the introduction of an assessment of the character of German Shepherd Puppies between the age of 9 and 13 months. The assessment looks at various aspects of the puppy's character and comments on them in order that the puppy's owner can understand their puppy's behaviour better and have some information which will help when considering basic training requirements and methods. For those who are interested it can give insight into suitability for activities such as obedience, tracking, agility and breeding.

The assessment is known as the ZAP Character Assessment (ZAP 1 for short)*

*note that ZAP1 is in its early stages and as such changes to terminology, procedures etc may occur. This document will be reviewed and updated periodically

Frequently Asked Questions

What is involved in the assessment?

The assessment consists of a number of tasks which have been developed to test the puppy's natural behaviours and instincts: Is the puppy sociable with people and animals? How does the puppy react to noise? Does the puppy like to play? How does the puppy react to unusual situations?

The tasks are based on those used by service organisations when selecting puppies for working and are as follows:

- The assessor discusses the puppy with its handler
- ID check – on lead
- Examination of Teeth – on lead
- Examination of Testicles for males – on lead
- Measurement of height – loose lead
- Dog is given to the judge to hold the lead - handler walks away & calls dog
- Dog is held on lead by a stranger - handler walks behind a group of people & calls dog
- Handler and dog on lead walk toward a group of people and stop at the group
- Handler and dog walk through the group, dog off lead
- Handler and dog go to a person in the group and casually greet each other
- The dog meets another dog, both on lead, at a distance three paces apart
- Noise sensitivity - engine running – chain saw/leaf blower/lawn mower etc. passes dog with dog on loose lead
- Noise sensitivity – chain dropped on metal plate – dog on loose lead at a distance
- Gun test at 15 paces dog on loose lead
- Handler and the dog play off lead.
- Handler guides the dog onto a rocking platform and plays with the dog using a toy as the platform is gently rocked by the judge
- The dog is guided up a ramp or steps onto 3 long tables which are placed end to end with a turn and a small gap. The dog is encouraged by the owner to walk the length of the tables and back to the start position and off the table.
- Handler with the dog on the lead plays with the dog and then plays with the dog and a toy. Handler gives the dog on lead to the judge and with the dog watching the handler, toy in hand walks away from the dog & places the toy under a box 10m paces away. Handler returns to the dog, takes the lead from the judge and then lets the dog off the lead to retrieve the toy from under the box and bring the toy back to the handler
- Reaction to smooth surface - dog is taken into a club house and let of the lead to walk around on the slippery floor. At a point a metal food bowl is dropped on the floor.
- The dog is tied by lead to a securely fixed object in a suitable place. The handler walks out of site. After about 5 minutes a stranger approaches the dog, pats it, reassuringly talks to it and then walks away. The handler returns to the dog.

Who does the assessment?

Assessors are trained and approved by the SV. The SV judges regulations contain the criteria which must be met by those wishing to become assessors in Germany before they can undertake the training and practical assessments. Currently there is no equivalent regulations for assessors overseas but it is expected that these will be released soon and mirror closely those for Germany.

How can the assessor understand my puppy's reactions when he doesn't know him?

The assessors have had many years of experience with GSDs of all ages and will be very familiar with how they react and what things might affect the way they react.

At the start of the assessment the assessor will ask about the puppy and its handler. Does the handler own the puppy? Does it live in the house or in a kennel? Is this the handler's first puppy? Is the handler an experienced trainer? The assessor builds up a picture of its background which helps them to understand better how the puppy reacts based on what it may or may not have experienced before.

What does my puppy have to do to pass the assessment?

The assessor is looking to see how the puppy reacts to each of the tasks, each puppy will react differently and the assessor will comment on the reaction in terms of how closely it fits with the expectation for a GSD puppy or what it tells us about the puppy's aptitudes.

There are no points awarded and no pass mark – the assessor simply makes comments about each task.

Does my puppy have a qualification if it passes the ZAP Character Assessment?

The ZAP character assessment is not a qualification in its own right. It is a stepping stone to more advanced qualifications. It is designed for breeders of German Shepherds but will be interesting, fun and useful to all owners.

Can my puppy fail the ZAP Character Assessment?

There are three ways in which a puppy can fail the ZAP Assessment:

- The puppy is excessively aggressive
- The puppy is excessively nervous
- The puppy is excessively afraid of the gun test.

Can I retake the assessment if my puppy fails?

The assessment can be taken a maximum of two times.

How can I train my puppy for the assessment?

The assessment is designed to look at the puppy's natural character and reactions. This is harder to do if the puppy has been trained to do each task so ideally you don't train the puppy although practising once or twice if you have the opportunity would be fine.

The most important thing to do in preparation for the assessment is to socialise your puppy. Play with the puppy, handle the puppy, and introduce it to different situations and people. As soon as it is old enough to leave the house get out and about, enjoy your puppy and introduce it to lots of different people and places.

Some puppies will be prepared for working or showing before the assessment and will have been trained to do some of the tasks as part of that. For example a puppy that is going to be a show dog may be trained to be measured and a puppy that is going to be a working dog may be trained to find its ball. This does not put them at an advantage because the assessor will know this and will understand that it is not a new task to them.

Is the assessment stressful for the puppy?

The assessment is carried out in a very specific way with great care being taken not to cause the puppy undue stress.

The puppy will be put in unusual circumstances though and its natural reaction may be to become a little stressed. If it is excessively stressed the assessor will stop the task and may stop the assessment.

The assessor leaves plenty of time between tasks to ensure that the puppy is ready to move on to the next one. The amount of time can vary greatly from one puppy to another.

The assessment is likely to take around 30 minutes.

Can I take my puppy into the assessment myself?

Yes, absolutely! The assessment is not physically demanding and it is likely that your puppy will be at its most comfortable and relaxed when it is with you.

Is this voluntary?

In the UK the assessment is currently voluntary.

For anyone wishing to obtain an SV Breed Survey (koerung) it should be noted that a ZAP Character Assessment is required for all dogs born after 1st July 2017.

Can any puppy enter a ZAP Character Assessment?

To enter ZAP, it must be a pedigree German Shepherd Puppy, registered in the country of its birth, micro-chipped and aged between 9 and 13 months.

Can I enter an older puppy for the assessment?

Whilst the assessments are being introduced, there will be a period when it will be possible to enter a puppy that is over 13 months with permission of the SV. There is no upper age limit for the assessment provided SV approval is granted.

Do I have to be a member of the SV?

You must be a member of a WUSV Member Club. In the UK this would be BAGSD or GSD League of GB. It could also be the SV. All WUSV member clubs welcome members from other WUSV member clubs to their events.

What record do I get from the assessment?

To be confirmed

Will the assessment results be published?

The results of all assessments will be available to those who subscribe to SV-Dox

<https://www.sv-doxs.net/?lang=en>

Can I come and watch an assessment?

Yes, all assessments will be advertised on the WUSV Working Group website* and also BAGSD, GSDL and British Regional Group websites. Spectators are welcome but best to let the organiser know you are coming for catering purposes etc.

* Under construction

Where can I get more information?

The WUSV Working Group GB welcomes feedback and questions about ZAP to the general secretary, Carole Lister. Carolelister21@gmail.com

We will respond to specific questions and will use any commonly asked questions to further enhance this guide.

Step by Step Guide to entering a ZAP character assessment

Note that the ZAP1 Character Assessment is not yet available outside of Germany and so the detailed steps for entering in order to obtain full SV recognition are not yet available.

The following steps will be used for assessments carried out by BAGSD or GSD League during the pilot scheme period which will introduce GSD owners to the scheme in readiness.

- 1.** Ensure you have 5 generation Kennel Club* pedigree for your German Shepherd Dog – Ensure correct ownership on pedigree (Must be official pedigree – not homemade)

* Note that a KC pedigree is required for dogs born in the UK, for dogs born in other countries the pedigree must be from the registration authority of the country of birth.

- 2.** Ensure you are a member of BAGSD/GSDL/SV
- 3.** Contact the entry secretary of the assessment that you want to enter and request the entry form.
- 4.** Complete the forms and return to the entry secretary together with the entry fee of £20. (This fee is expected to be £25 when the scheme is ready to be submitted to the SV)
- 5.** Arrive at the venue in plenty of time and bring with you the pup's pedigree and micro-chip paperwork.

6. A certificate will be issued by the host organisation and signed by the SV qualified assessor.