

# **Pet Therapy Guide for Beginners**



## **An introduction to animal-assisted activities**

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# Welcome!

Hi, my name is Karen and I created this guide to help you explore the wonderful world of pet therapy - where the healing bond between animals and people changes lives every day.

LET'S 

## What is Pet Therapy? What is Animal-Assisted Activities (AAA)?

Pet therapy is a broad field that encompasses various approaches by using animals to improve human health and well-being. A common area of pet therapy is called *Animal-Assisted Activities* (AAA). AAA involves informal visits by pet therapy teams to facilities like hospitals, nursing homes, and schools. The primary goal is to provide comfort, enjoyment, and social interaction through animal companionship.

## Animal-Assisted Therapy (AAT)?

In contrast to AAA, *Animal-Assisted Therapy* (AAT) is a more structured and goal-oriented intervention. AAT is delivered by a qualified health or human service professional (e.g., therapist, counselor, or social worker) with specialized expertise. The animal serves as an integral part of the treatment process. AAT sessions are designed to address specific physical, emotional, cognitive, or social goals. Progress is carefully measured and documented.

# Are You Ready?

- ☐ Passionate About Helping Others
- ☐ Good Listener & Observant
- ☐ Able to Commit Time & Energy
- ☐ Reliable & On Time When Scheduled



# Is Your Pet Ready?

- ☐ One Year Old
- ☐ Calm & Confident
- ☐ Friendly & Loves People
- ☐ Obeys Commands



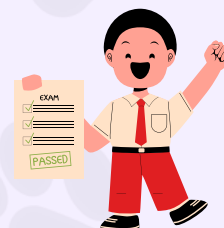
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While dogs are the most common type of therapy animal, other animals such as cats, rabbits, birds, guinea pigs, and even miniature horses can also be suitable. The most important factor is the animal's temperament and ability to interact positively with people.

# Steps To Follow:



1. **Assess your pet's temperament honestly. Be mindful and observant of their body language.**
2. **Think about where you would like to visit and contact local facilities for more information. Research online and select a reputable national pet therapy organization.**
3. **Most national organizations require you and your pet to complete a training program and pass an evaluation to assess your suitability for pet therapy. This typically involves the pet demonstrating basic obedience skills and you showing good handling skills.**
4. **Register with your chosen national pet therapy organization: Once you have successfully completed their prerequisites, you can register with that organization. Check to make sure they provide liability insurance coverage while you are volunteering. If you take your pet to work with you, as a working partner, you will need additional insurance.**
5. **After you are registered, you can start volunteering at approved facilities.**



# Some Places To Visit



Nursing Homes



Hospitals & Clinics



Veterans Groups



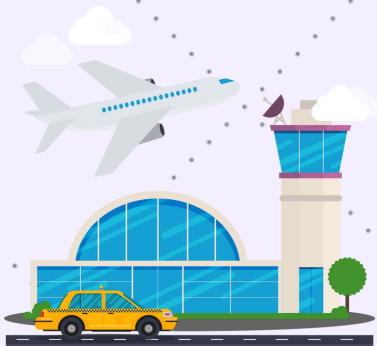
Rehabilitation Centers



Schools



Libraries (Reading Programs)



Airports



Adult & Juvenile Detention Centers

**And Many More Places! Dream Big!**

# Tips for a Successful Visit

- 🐾 Before each visit, make sure your pet is clean, well-groomed, and has relieved themselves.
- 🐕 Be mindful of your pet's well-being; watch and make sure that they are not stressed or overwhelmed.
- ✅ Follow facility guidelines: Adhere to the facility's rules and regulations, including hygiene and privacy protocols.
- OK Always ask for permission before approaching or interacting with a client.
- 👤 Listen and engage with clients in conversation.
- 👩♀️ Dress appropriately and conduct yourself in a professional and respectful manner.
- 📝 Optional: Record your visits, including the date, time, location, and a brief description of the activities.

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**Sign up now at [www.petluv.co](http://www.petluv.co)**







# Frequently Asked Questions

**How old does your pet need to be?** At least one year old.

**What breed or size?** Any breed or size; small pets can go in strollers or slings; bunnies can go in baskets for ease of transport.

**What kind of training or trainer should I look for?** Ask friends, neighbors, groomers or shelters for classes with trainers that use positive reinforcement training methods .

**Is a therapy dog the same as a service dog or an emotional support dog (ESA)?** No, service dogs work full time to help people with disabilities; ESA dogs help people with emotional support. Therapy dogs visit people & places in the community “putting smiles on people’s faces”. Service & therapy pets have special training.

**What is the difference between certification & registration?** You will become certified when you & your pet pass your evaluation; registration usually refers to the process of formerly joining a national organization.

**What is an evaluator looking for?** They are definitely looking for teamwork between you & your pet! They want to see you, the handler, giving calm commands & praise. They want to see a calm and happy pet, showing no fear around strangers.

**Can I do pet therapy without registering with a national organization?** Yes, but your choices of visiting some facilities might be limited and you won’t have the insurance to cover you.

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**Check out our Comparison Chart online at**  
**[www.petluv.co](http://www.petluv.co)**

**AVAILABLE NOW**



# **The Human-Animal Bond**

**There's a beneficial and dynamic relationship between people and animals that positively influences the health and well-being of both. All people need touch and love to maintain their mental and physical health. The rewards of sharing your pet are huge!**

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## **The Benefits of Pet Therapy**



**Interacting with a pet comes with some powerful health benefits, which include:**

**Improving Heart Health  
Inspiring Wellness  
Easing Loneliness  
Relieving Anxiety & Depression**

**Pretty Amazing Stuff!**



# RESOURCES

## Here's Some Helpful Resources to Check Out:

Alliance of Therapy Dogs: [www.therapydogs.com](http://www.therapydogs.com)

Pet Partners: [www.petpartners.org](http://www.petpartners.org)

Therapy Dogs International: [www.tdi-dog.org](http://www.tdi-dog.org)

Love on A Leash: [www.loveonaleash.org](http://www.loveonaleash.org)

Contact your local shelters for information on pet therapy classes or programs in your area.

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## Coming Soon! :



**“Pet Therapy Basics - Building the Bonds That Heal” Course for Beginners** that is self-paced and will walk you through all the steps to help you choose the right program, prepare your pet for an evaluation and start visiting with confidence.

**Check out our new website.**  
**[www.Petluv.co](http://www.Petluv.co)**



## Meet The Author

I'm Karen Simecka, a retired surgical technologist. About 35 years ago I got started showing Irish Setters and was also introduced to pet therapy by a dear friend. I'm a former Pet Partner evaluator, taught CGC classes and was a charter member of our local pet therapy organization.



There was so much to learn back then and I'm here today to help you start "Putting smiles on people's faces".

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## Meet Tessa & Follow Her Journey



She was dumped on the streets of Wichita, KS on a bitter cold day in January 2025 and was picked up starving - her matted coat covered in waste. After 6 months of healing, lots of love and training,, she's ready to take her ATD test in August.

Calm, curious, and filled with love, Tessa brings real-life experience to the lessons you're about to learn. I believe that learning alongside a dog who's going through the journey with you makes everything more relatable, practical, and encouraging.

**Check out Tessa's Corner at [www.Petluv.co](http://www.Petluv.co)**