

ANIMAL ACTORS SET-PREPPED AND SET-TRAINED **CERTIFICATION HANDBOOK**







acteur



cinéma



rôle principal







With over 600,000 animals employed each year, there is a constant demand for fresh faces. Every animal that has a scripted role on a TV or movie production is an animal actor, even if they appear to be doing natural animal behaviors.

WHAT IS AN ANIMAL ACTOR?

An animal actor can be a model in a print shoot, an actor in a movie or commercial, or a performer in a live show.

WHY DOES AN ANIMAL ACTOR NEED CERTIFICATION?

Movie productions and other film and photography sets are expensive endeavors. Time is money on these sets and a production company will not risk wasting time by hiring an animal that is ill-prepared for the job. Hiring an animal that has been vetted by a certified evaluator enables the production company to reduce risk

and increase the likelihood of a quality performance. Regulatory agencies (such as American Humane, USDA, Movie Animals Protected, and The Animal Protection Agency) require that animals on set be socialized and "trained and prepared in advance to perform the required action." Union sets, such as SAG-AFTRA, are heavily regulated and have even more restrictions related people and animals allowed to work on set.





'No Animals Were Harmed'





HOW DOES AN ANIMAL ACTOR BECOME CERTIFIED?

AAAI is the global certifying body for Animal Actors. An animal's level card credentials them to work on various types of sets by vouching for their stability and relevant training. Earn a certification card for the animal by submitting the skills on each level's checklist (live or via video) to an Animal Actor Certified Evaluator (AACE). A list of AACEs can be found on domorewithyourdog.com. You may submit video via a free Facebook AACE Spark Team.

HOW DOES A PERSON BECOME A CERTIFIED EVALUATOR?

All of our AACE evaluators have proven knowledge and skill in training animal behaviors with positive methods as demonstrated by their Certified Trick Dog Instructor (CTDI) credential. Register for the CTDI and AACE online courses at learn.domorewithyourdog.com

DOES THE ANIMAL GET A CERTIFICATION CARD?

With their Level 1 certification the animal will receive a display certificate and metal "black card." For each additional level the animal will receive the corresponding metal card, but no additional certificate.

HOW DOES AN ANIMAL ACTOR GET A JOB?

Animal acting agencies train and supply animals for acting jobs.

Agencies typically kennel a few dozen of their own animals, and rely upon private party animals for additional species, breeds, and skills which their kennel cannot supply. A production company's casting director will contact the animal acting agency with specific requests; either by look or by talent. Next will sometimes be a "go see" where animal actors display for the casting director. The animal may be paid about USD\$50 for this audition.

When an animal is hired, it is paid a daily wage (approximately USD\$50 to USD\$350). Unlike human actors, animals do not receive residuals. They are considered freelancers and are paid only a one-time fee. If there are specific behaviors that the animal needs to learn, it may be paid half-wage for each training day.

WHAT IS EXPECTED OF AN ANIMAL ACTOR ON SET?

Every job is different but typically an animal will be required on location for a full day, even if his role takes only a short time. The animal is usually transported and handled by a professional set trainer hired by the animal acting agency. If the animal's owner is a capable set trainer, they may possibly be hired for this job (paid approximately USD\$50/hr.)

SHOULD I BE CONCERNED ABOUT MY ANIMAL'S SAFETY?

Every big production will have an animal welfare advocate on set (such as American Humane Association). These agencies are responsible for movie claims such as "No Animals Were Harmed in the Making of This Film." These agencies check that animals are exercised, climate-controlled, and treated with strictly positive interactions on set. In the overwhelming majority of cases the cast and crew are delighted to be working alongside an animal and are very kind to them.

WHICH SPECIES CAN BE CERTIFIED AS AN ANIMAL ACTOR?

Within reason, any animal should be certified before being hired on set. The level criteria is general enough that it can be adapted for most animals. The certified evaluator is trained to evaluate each animal as is relevant to their potential job.

HOW DO I LEARN THE SKILLS TO TEACH MY ANIMAL?

Animal Actor Certified Evaluators (AACEs) can help you train your animal. Some AACEs offer free Facebook Spark Team groups to assist you.

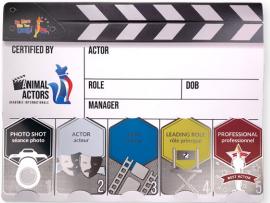


PHOTO SHOOT séance photo

"I got my Black Card!"

Does your animal have "the look"?
The Level 1 Photo Shoot certification credentials your animal to work on set posing for photo shoots, magazines, product packaging, billboards, web ads, art pieces, and more. Your animal's Black Card represents the proven foundation training, socialization, and confidence to be on set.









Kimba, Nordstrom's ad



"My dog's whole countenance lights up when she's being photographed. She just loves it!"















The Level 1 Animal Actor Set-Prepped certification represents an animal who has the temperament and foundation training to be worked on a print shoot set. At a print shoot, the trainer may speak to the animal and may employ toys and squeakers, but must remain out of frame.

1. SOCIALIZATION / STABILITY

1A □ ACCEPTS GROOMING

Animal allows itself to be brushed, cleaned, and handled.

1B □ WEAR CLOTHES

Animal is happy and confident wearing constraining or odd clothes such a hat, sunglasses, or shoes.

1C □ CAMERA FLASHES AND SOUNDS

Animal is not afraid of light flashes and camera sounds (fairly loud pops). OK to simulate with any loud sound.

2. MARK / POSITIONING

2A STAY

The foundation of photo shoot modeling is self-control; maintaining a "stay." Demonstrate the animal staying in position while looking at camera. Trainer shall be at least 3m (10 ft) from the animal.

2B POSITION ON A SET

Sometimes an animal needs to be positioned in a very specific spot; possibly in relation to other actors or props, or simply for continuity with previous shots. It is preferable for the animal to position itself, rather than to manipulate the animal into position. Mark a spot on the floor. Without using physical manipulation, get your animal to stand, sit, or lie down on that spot. You may use luring, hand target, or cues such as heel, or peekaboo. Leave your animal (3m/ 10ft) while it remains in position.

2C ☐ WATCH A "LOOK STICK"

A look stick is about 1m (3-4 ft) long with an easily visible tip and bait on the tip. The trainer moves the tip, causing the animal's gaze to follow it, as directed by the shoot director. Trainer shall be approximately 3m (10 ft) from the animal.





3A LEAVE IT

Show the animal next to food (perhaps a sandwich) and choosing to look at the camera and not eat the food. Trainer shall be approximately 3m (10 ft) from the animal.

An animal actor is trained to perform behaviors in response to a cue (verbal or signal). Cue the animal to do the following behaviors. You may give the cue while standing near the animal, and

then back away from them (3m/ 10ft) and have them remain in position. You may use a lure along with your cue.

3B □ SIT

3C ☐ LIE DOWN

3D | FEET UP (FRONT FEET ON SOMETHING)



4. MOVEMENT

4A WALK ON A LOOSE LEAD (9 M /30 FT)

A shot may require the animal to be walked on lead by a human actor who is not strong or not experienced with animals. Demonstrate the animal walking with a moderately loose lead.

5. EMOTE

5A □ PERK UP

"Perking up" is the most common emotion requested on a photo shoot. Perking up means the animal has wide open, alert eyes, pricked ears, upright posture. Trainer shall be approximately 3m (10 ft) from the animal.



6. SUBMIT MATERIAL

A hireable animal actor will have a resume and photos. Please submit the following.

6A ☐ RESUME

Please submit the animal's resume including:

- *Animal's Call Name
- *Owner's Contact Info
- *Breed or Type
- *Color
- *Age
- *Height at Withers (shoulders)
- *Weight
- *Special Skills or Unique Qualities

6B ☐ PHOTO: HEADSHOT

The eyes should be well-lit and looking into camera

6C ☐ PHOTO: HERO SHOT

Full-body shot of animal standing. The camera should be at animal height or lower.

6D PHOTO: WITH A PERSON
If there is not a person in
the Hero Shot photo, submit
a photo that includes a person, for scale.



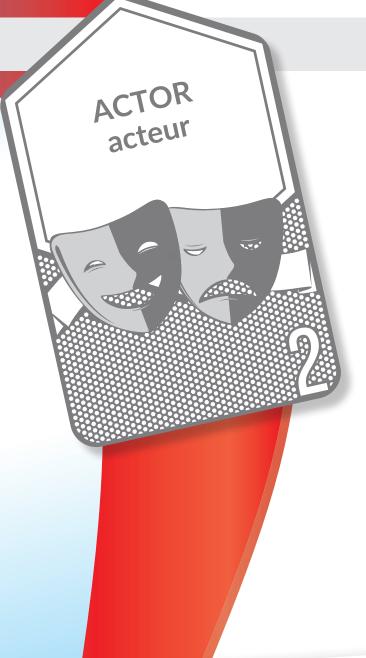
PHOTO SHOO

GET YOUR BLACK CARD

Earn your Level 1 Photo Shoot Set-Prepped certification by submitting the items on this checklist (live or via video) to a Animal Actor Certified Evaluator (AACE). A list of AACEs can be found on domorewithyourdog.com. You may submit to a AACE via video through one of our free Facebook Spark Team groups.

Once approved, pay online to receive your certificate and black card.

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"I got my White Card!"

The Level 2 Set-Prepped Actor card certifies the animal to work on a motion set environment with other actors. For this level we assume sound is not being captured which allows the trainer to verbally coach the animal.

The Set-Prepped White Card certifies the animal to perform motion on the set, to interact with other actors, and withstand a full day on location.







"Everyone on set treats the animals so well! She even had her own green room."

Chalcy, Purina One commercial

Jadie, Diesel Jeans magazine print ad







Green screen rooms are used to key out background









ACTOR acteur

The Level 2 Animal Actor Set-Prepped certification represents an animal who has the temperament and foundation training to be worked on a film shoot. A film shoot differs from a print shoot in that the animal must perform an action over a space of time, and often in proximity to other actors. It is standard to have two trainers whenever the animal has motion, for example running from one end of the set to the other.

1. SOCIALIZATION / STABILITY

Please demonstrate that the animal is at ease in a film shoot scenario.

1A □ CRATE-TRAINED

Animal willingly enters and settles calmly and quietly in a closed crate.

1B □ ACCEPTS PETTING

Allow a person (preferably one who is unfamiliar to the animal) to hug, cuddle, pet, or carry the animal. Animal should accept this willingly and happily.

2. MARK / POSITIONING

One of the most common behaviors asked of an animal actor is to go to a mark on set and stay there.

2A TRAVEL ACROSS SET

An animal actor may be asked to walk, run, or fly across the set. Demonstrate this. You may wish to send the animal to a platform at the opposite side of the set (which may have a reward on it).

2B ☐ STAY ON NON-STATIONARY OBJECT Examples include a rolling chair, rocking chair, wagon, etc.



3A ☐ UNDERSTANDS CLICKER TRAINING

Because a set trainer may need to quickly train a behavior on set, an animal actor should be familiar with the concept of learning new behaviors through the feedback of a clicker. Please show a short example which shows that the animal understands this concept.

3B ☐ STAND / ON YOUR FEET

With multiple people in position during a shoot (actors, makeup artists) it is impractical for the set trainer to frequently go in to reposition the animal. It is handy to be able to cue the animal to "stand" from afar. Demonstrate a "stand" (also called "on your feet") from 1m (3ft) from the animal.



4. MOVEMENT

4A □ COME

Demonstrate with the animal either coming toward camera, or perpendicular to the camera. The trainer must be at least 3 m (10 ft) from the animal. You may speak during this exercise.

5. EMOTE / WORK WITH AN ACTOR

5A \square BOND WITH ACTOR (STARE AT ACTOR)

This skill demonstrates the animal's willingness to work with another actor. Show the animal next to a person (preferably one who is unfamiliar to them) and staring at that person. This may be achieved with the actor priming the animal with treats or having treats in their shirt collar.

6. SUBMIT MATERIAL

6A ☐ VETERINARY RECORDS

Some scenarios may require animal actors to have certain vaccinations or records. Please have a folder prepared with your dog's records. We do not need to see the contents of this folder.

6B □ **EXERCISE PLAN**

Professional working animals are regulated by agencies (such as the USDA in America). As part of the care plan, it is required to have an exercise plan for the animal. Please submit a short exercise plan explaining how the animal is to be routinely exercised.

6C ☐ PHOTO ADVERTISING A PRODUCT

Submit a photo of the animal with a product as it might appear in an ad.



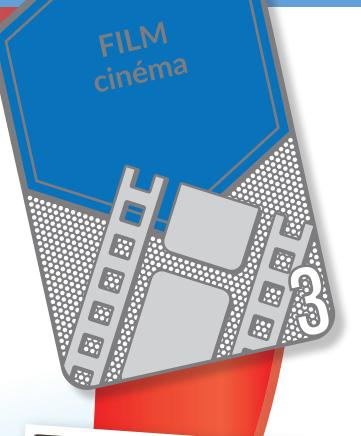
GET YOUR WHITE CARD

To get your Level 2 Actor Set-Prepped certification, submit the items on this checklist (live or via video) to a Animal Actor Certified Evaluator (AACE).

Once approved, pay online to receive your white card.

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"I got my Blue Card!"

With their Level 3 Film card, the animal is officially set-trained and certified to act alongside other actors in any feature film or commercial. A set trained animal is allowed to work on a "quiet set," which is a film set that is recording audio. The animal responds to silent cues on a quiet set.





Kimba, Lexus commercial starring alongside Matthew



Dogs at a "go see" audition for a role.





Set trainer, Kyra Sundance, with Bullseye the Target model.

"My dog really loves his job and is proud of himself. He gets residuals (treats) every time we see his commercial on air!"









Jadie, TAGG commercial thumbnails











FILM cinéma

The Level 3 Set Trained Animal Actor certification represents an animal who has the focus and advanced training to be worked on a film shoot and a "quiet set," where the trainer may not make any sound.

Demonstrate the following skills to a certified evaluator, either live or via video.

1. SOCIALIZATION / STABILITY

1A □ **LOAD** IN/OUT OF A VEHICLE

A film shoot employs many people and has a lot of equipment, noises, and commotion. Please demonstrate that your animal is at ease in busy environments. In whatever way you wish, show that the animal can be easily loaded into and out of a vehicle or livestock trailer.



2. MARK / POSITIONING

2A GO MARK

Show the animal starting 3m (10 ft) from a mark, and going to the mark and staying there. Mark shall be no larger than 30 cm (12 inches) diameter and 3 cm (1 inch) high.

2B GO MARK (FAR DISTANCE)

Send the animal 6 m (20 ft) to a mark. Mark can be any size. Animal shall stay at the mark. There shall be no food on the mark, as the mark may be part of the scene (a sofa, perhaps).

2C GO OUT OF SIGHT

Run out of the room, or behind a sofa. You may put a reward at the destination.



3A ☐ SILENT CUES

The trainer shall be silent and cue the animal with only hand signals. Show four silent, cued behaviors. Trainer shall be approximately 2m (6 ft) from the animal. Animal may be rewarded between each behavior. You may find it easiest to position the animal on a mark, first.

4. MOVEMENT

Demonstrate with the animal either coming toward camera, or perpendicular to the camera. The trainer must be at least 3 m (10 ft) away from the animal. You may speak during this exercise.

4A COME-EASY

Animal walks across the set.

4B ☐ COME-STOP

Animal travels halfway and stops. Do not use a mark, as we want the animal's eyeline up and not looking toward the floor.

5. EMOTE / WORK WITH AN ACTOR

5A GO TO AN ACTOR

Animal is directed to go to an actor and remain near actor. The actor may have hidden treats.

6. SUBMIT MATERIAL

6A ☐ LOG OF CUED BEHAVIORS

A log of your animal's cued behaviors will be advantageous in getting cast for a role, and also in helping other set trainers work with your animal. In order for the list to be helpful for other trainers, you need not list very basic behaviors (come, and stay), nor list behaviors that are unlikely to be used. Please submit a list of your animal's relevant behaviors and any associated cues. Limit your list to one easily-readable page.





GET YOUR BLUE CARD

To get your Level 3 Film Set-Trained certification, you'll need to submit the items on this checklist (live or via video) to a Animal Actor Certified Evaluator (AACE). A list of AACEs can be found on domorewithyourdog.com. The most common method of submitting to a AACE is via video through one of our free Facebook Spark Team groups.

Once approved, pay online to be listed on the website and receive your blue card.







Animal actors' clothing is usually custom made and tailored.

"Her leading role was so much fun! It allowed her to utilize all of her training and trainability."



Jadie, "Mercy" feature film. Set trainers Kyra Sundance and Claire Dore hiding out of camera view to direct the dogs.



"Small Talk", Katy Perry music video starring Nugget. Two dogs were used for this role; Katy's own dog, and a look-alike animal actor.













The Level 4 Set Trained Animal Actor certification represents an animal who has the drive and advanced training to work as a lead actor. This requires longer hours, more complex and varied behaviors, and a compelling "look" and personality.

Demonstrate the following skills to a certified evaluator, either live or via video.

1. SOCIALIZATION / STABILITY

1A □ PUBLIC PLACE

Show a video clip of your animal at ease in a busy public place such as a pet store, pedestrian mall, or train station.



2. MARK / POSITIONING

2A GO MARK (SMALL MARK)

Show the animal going to a small mark and staying there. The small mark shall be no larger than 15 cm (6 inches) diameter and 1 cm (1/2 inch) high. The animal shall start 4 m (15 ft) from the mark. The trainer shall be silent and cue the animal with only hand signals. It is not imperative that the animal touch the mark, but should go to, and stay, within about 15 cm (6 inches) from it.

2B ☐ A TO B MARKS

Set two marks on the floor (max diameter 30cm/12in, height 3 cm/1in). The two marks can be any distance apart from each other, but both must be at least 3 m (10 ft) from the trainer. The animal shall go the first mark, wait, go to the second mark, and wait.



3A ☐ SHOW SOME COMMON BEHAVIORS

An animal lead actor will be expected to perform a variety of behaviors. Demonstrate as many of the following behaviors as you can, or other common behaviors that your animal might be called upon to perform. The animal should be at least 1.5 m (5 ft) from the trainer. You may pay (reward) the animal between each behavior.

- Bark/Meow/Vocalize
- O Dig or paw at the floor or at a door
- O Drop it
- O Eye cover
- O Fetch
- Head down / Head lift
- O Hold an object in mouth (while staying/while moving)
- O Lay on their side
- O Leg hike (rear leg)
- O Lick lips/ act hungry
- O Lift a foot
- O Nudge a person/object
- O Place an object (put an object in/on a spot)
- O Pull on a rope
- Scratch their side (as if they have fleas)
- Shake an object (like killing it)
- Shake their body/shake off water

4. MOVEMENT

4A ☐ COME THROUGH OBSTACLE

With the trainer behind the camera, show the animal coming toward camera while navigating an obstacle (such as a jump or tunnel).

5. EMOTE / WORK WITH AN ACTOR

5A ☐ "GO WITH" AN ACTOR

The unleashed animal walks with an actor for about 6 m (20 ft). The actor may have hidden treats. This is a casual walk, and not a formal heel. It should appear like the actor is the animal's owner.



6. SUBMIT MATERIAL

6A □ VIDEO REEL

A video reel is a collection of short clips that showcase the animal's looks, talent, and abilities to potential employers. It need not be more than a minute in length. Clips should represent what the animal currently looks like.





GET YOUR YELLOW CARD

To get your Level 4 Leading Role certification, submit the items on this checklist (live or via video) to a Animal Actor Certified Evaluator (AACE).

LEADING ROL

Once approved, pay online to be listed on the website and receive your yellow card.

DoMoreWithYourDog.com



"I got my Red Card!"

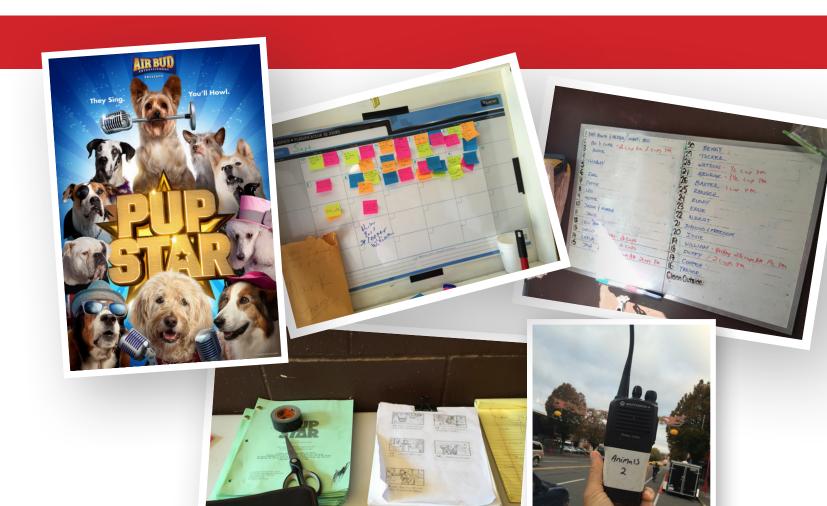
Now you're a professional! The elusive Level 5 Professional red card is awarded to animals who have proven themselves by performing up to expectations on a professional set. This is the highest level of animal acting certification and is accepted for every job.

The Red Card is awarded to professional, working dogs.

SET TRAINED

"It was a long road, but now that we have her red card she can get work anywhere."



















PROFESSIONAL professionnel

The Level 5 Set Trained Animal Actor certification represents a professional, experienced animal actor. This animal has demonstrated ability to perform up to expectations on a professional set.

Demonstrate the following skills to a certified evaluator, either live or via video.

1. SOCIALIZATION / STABILITY

1A □ UNUSUAL THINGS

Show a video clip of your animal at ease or confident in the presence of unusual people, animals, or things. This may include people in costumes, balloons, moving equipment, skateboards or bicycles, or vacuum cleaners.

2. MARK / POSITIONING

2A | INVISIBLE MARK

Sometimes a set trainer can get away with using a very small mark (such as a green button on a green-screen set). Other times it is not possible to have any mark at all. Practice sending your animal to a small mark a few times. Next, remove the mark, and point to the spot where it was, and send them to mark.

2B BACK UP A LITTLE

There are many actors and moving parts in a film scene. The director will not want the animal trainer constantly running in to fix their animal. The trainer must be able to reposition their animal from afar. Imagine your animal has taken a few steps toward camera and you need them to back up. Cue your animal to "back up."







3A ☐ BLIND CUES

Verbally cue your animal to do a behavior while they can't see you, such as have them bark from the other side of the door.

3B WORK AWAY (DO A BEHAVIOR WHILE LOOKING AWAY FROM TRAINER)

With the trainer behind the camera, the animal should be positioned with its back toward camera. Upon verbal instruction, the animal does a behavior, such as a sit. The animal continues to keep its back toward the trainer. You may wish to perform this by having the animal focus on a toy or food which is placed where you wish him to look.



4. MOVEMENT

4A ☐ GO THROUGH OBSTACLE

With the trainer behind the camera, demonstrate the animal moving away from camera while navigating an obstacle such as a bar jump or tunnel. You may wish to send the animal to a mark or reward positioned past the obstacle.

5. EMOTE / WORK WITH AN ACTOR

5A □ NUDGE OR PAW AT ACTOR

Show the animal nudging or pawing an actor, as if to get their attention. The actor may have hidden treats.



6. SUBMIT MATERIAL

Please submit one item of professional work that your animal has been hired to do.

6A ☐ ONE PROFESSIONAL WORK

Submit a video or print shoot from a professional job that your animal was hired for. The purpose of the red card is to show that the animal can handle the commotion of a shoot, and be able to work in that environment. If you are unable to get a professional job in your area, you and your friends could set up your own professional shoot; such as a commercial for your business, or a calendar. Plan ahead of time what shot you need from each animal, and have the animal be able to get that shot.



GET YOUR RED CARD

To get your Level 5 Professional certification, submit the items on this checklist (live or via video) to a Animal Actor Certified Evaluator (AACE).

Once approved, pay online to be listed on the website and receive your red card.

DoMoreWithYourDog.com



ACTORS OVERVIEW OF CERTIFICATION LEVELS



Posing for photo shoots.



ACTOR acteur

Work on a quiet set.

On a motion set with other actors.



Has drive and advanced training.



| Professional working animal. | |
|------------------------------|--|
| animal. | |

| 4. MOVEMENT | Leave it Sit Lie down Feet up | 3. BEHAVIORS / TRAINING | Stay Position on set Watch a "Look Stick" | 2. MARK / POSITIONING | Accepts grooming Wear clothes Camera flashes/ sounds | 1. SOCIALIZATION / STABILITY | SET-PF |
|-------------|--|-------------------------|--|-----------------------|--|------------------------------|-------------|
| | Understands clicker training Stand/ On your feet | | Travel across set Stay on non-stationary object | | Crate-trained Accepts Petting | LITY | SET-PREPPED |
| | Silent cues | | Go Mark Go Mark (Far distance) Go out of sight | | Load in/out of a vehicle | | |
| | Show some common behaviors | | Go Mark (Small Mark) A to B Marks | | Public Place | | SET-TRAINED |
| | Blind cues Work Away (Do a Behavior while looking away FROM Trainer) | | Invisible mark Back up a little | | Unusual things | | |

6. SUBMIT MATERIAL

Perk up

Bond with actor (stare at actor)

Go to an actor

"Go With" an actor

Nudge or paw at actor

Resumé Photo: headshot Photo: Hero shot

Photo: with a person

Photo advertising a product

Veterinary records Exercise Plan

Log of cued behaviors

Video reel

One Professional work

SET TRAINED

5. EMOTE / WORK WITH AN ACTOR

Walk on a loose Lead

Come

Come-Easy Come-stop

Come through obstacle

Go through obstacle