

# Ready to Help: Therapy Animals, Service Animals, and More

Read.

It's not unusual to see a dog playing fetch. It's not unusual to see a cat playing with a ball of yarn. And today, it's not unusual to see a dog or a cat in a hospital making sick people feel better. You won't walk into a hospital and hear someone asking for Dr. Buster or Dr. Cuddleboots by name. Yet you might see patients happy to get a lick from a dog or a cuddle from a cat.

Therapy dogs and cats are one type of service animal. They have just the right *temperament* to go from patient to patient in a hospital. Dogs and cats help reduce patient stress, lower blood pressure, and improve a patient's mood.

Dogs are the main type of service animal. They are able to perform a variety of tasks that help people with disabilities. This, in turn, means people with disabilities can lead more independent lives. The most common service animal you may think of is the guide dog, trained to help blind or visually impaired people. But did you know there are some animals trained to alert deaf people to sounds?

Service animals do more than comfort sick people or help blind people navigate sidewalks. Animals are trained to pick things up for the human, as well as open doors, pull wheelchairs, and assist with balance. Even more impressive, some service dogs seem to be able to detect a person's low blood sugar, which helps people with diabetes. Other sensitive service dogs seem to know when a person is about to have a seizure, which helps people with epilepsy.

Because service animals are not classified as pets, they are protected by specific laws that impact where they can go and how they are treated. Service animals are usually allowed on public transportation and in public buildings and workplaces. They can go wherever their human goes because the service animal must go along to help.



Some cats and dogs are more than just family pets. Many are service animals and help people in a variety of ways. IFAW works with Tiertafel, a volunteer organization in Berlin, Germany, to provide free veterinary care and food for pets of low-income and disabled residents.



In the townships of Johannesburg, South Africa, IFAW helps both dogs and young people at risk. As an alternative to prison, youth who have been arrested for animal cruelty engage with dogs that have been rescued from abuse. The goal is to use dog training as therapy and to increase communication skills between animals and people.

## Questions



Puppies training to be service animals will meet a lot of people and will learn to remain calm in a variety of situations.

- Which of these things is something a therapy dog or cat cannot do to help hospital patients:
  - lower blood pressure
  - reduce stress
  - cure rare diseases
  - improve patient mood
- True or false? Service animals are not protected by special laws that allow them on public transportation and in public buildings. Highlight this information in the passage.  
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- In your own words, what do you think the word **temperament** means in the second paragraph?  
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- Besides helping visually impaired people navigate sidewalks, stores, and elsewhere, what are some other things service animals do to help people with disabilities?  
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- True or false: Some service dogs have been found to be sensitive enough to know when someone with epilepsy is about to have a seizure.  
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## Answers

1. c
2. False
3. In reference to animals, the word **temperament** means the way an animal tends to behave most of the time.
4. Pick things up, open doors, pull wheelchairs, assist with balance, and in some cases detect a person's low blood sugar
5. True

