

# Opinion Performance Task: Service Animals

## Student Directions

### Task:

Your class is studying about the history of animals and how they have contributed to human growth and development. You are given three articles about service animals.

*Read the sources carefully to **write an opinion essay** in which you give your opinion about whether you agree with a new rule allowing only service dogs and miniature horses in public places, or whether you disagree with the rule. Make sure you clearly state your opinion and write several paragraphs supporting your opinion with reasons and details from the sources.*

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## Sources for Performance Task:

### Source #1

You have found a current article about capuchin monkeys on a website about service animals. The author is a veterinarian who writes articles for educational publications.

#### **Monkey Helpers**

by Tamra Orr

### **An Unusual Set of Helping Hands**

Every day people make countless moves that they tend to take for granted. They scratch their noses and pull on their backpacks. People grab something to eat and push up their glasses. They flip the pages of their textbooks and turn off their lights. For people living with injuries to the spinal cord, however, these basic movements are very difficult. For some, they are even impossible. For the past 35 years, more than 160 people with injuries to the spinal cord have found support from a very unusual set of helping hands: those of specially trained capuchin monkeys.

Capuchin monkeys are very small. Some weigh less than eight pounds, even when fully grown. They are also extremely smart. In the wild, they have shown the ability to pick up tools and use them to solve problems. Their hands can easily carry small tools. This makes it easier for them to handle modern items such as remotes and cell phones.

Although capuchin monkeys are smart and are able to handle small tools, not all types of monkeys are ideal to use as service animals. Some monkeys, such as howler monkeys, are too large or strong. Monkeys who have not been properly trained are also unreliable. They might behave in ways that are hard to predict. For example, a monkey could suddenly hurt a person if it got angry or frightened for some reason.

While some people believe capuchin monkeys are wonderful service animals, not everyone agrees. Capuchins are small, easy to train, and able to bond, or form close relationships, with humans. However, they are still, in the end, wild animals. April Truitt, director of the Primate Rescue Center in Kentucky, says that having a wild

animal in your home may put both the animal and the owner at increased risk of getting injured. She points out that it is possible for capuchins to become violent suddenly and this can be a danger to their owners and others.

### **Long Before School Starts**

Long before capuchin monkeys begin their training, they have already spent years around humans. Born in a Massachusetts zoo, they must live with foster families as long as twelve years before beginning their training on how to assist a person with a disability. During this time, they are taught how to share a house with humans. They get used to being around pets. They even learn basic tasks like how to take baths. This requires a great deal of time and effort.

### **Learning to Help**

Capuchin monkeys learn how to assist people with disabilities at Helping Hands, otherwise known as the monkey college, in Boston, Massachusetts. This college is not quite like going to a traditional school. Every day, for three to five years, capuchin monkeys learn new skills. Their lessons do not focus on reading and writing though. Days are spent learning how to load a DVD into a player and push play, or how to open and close microwave doors. This education takes time, patience, and money. The cost of educating just one monkey is close to \$40,000. Finally, after up to five years of training, the animals finish school. Now the monkeys are ready to go and live with someone who needs them to help make life a little bit easier.

### **The Simple Things**

Having a capuchin monkey in the house is not the same as having a dog or cat. Because of their training and their intelligence, these monkeys are able to do an amazing number of chores for the person who is disabled and cannot do them alone. Along with operating microwaves and DVD players, these service animals can also turn lights off and on for their new owners. They can open bottles and flip the pages of a book for their owner. They can even reach out and scratch an annoying itch.

Every year, Helping Hands places dozens of monkeys in homes of people with disabilities. The monkeys take good care of their owners. In return, the owners feel safer and more able to do tasks that so many others take for granted.

### **Sources Used**

- a. ABC News. (n.d.). Tearful Kentucky senator wants monkeys to be made service animals. Retrieved from: <http://abcnews.go.com/blogs/headlines/2014/01/tearful-kentucky-senator-wants-monkeys-to-be-made-service-animals/>
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- c. DiBlasio, N. (2013, July 4). Monkey see. Monkey do. USA Weekend. Retrieved from: <http://www.usaweekend.com/article/20130705/HEALTH/307050007/Graduates-of-Monkey-College-give-their-companions-a-sense-of-purpose>
- d. Helping Hands. (n.d.). Training center. Retrieved from: <http://www.monkeyhelpers.org>

## Source #2

You found an article about service animals in a 2002 issue of *Click*, a magazine for children.

### Animals Helping People

A monkey who helps you drink out of a straw? A dog that opens the refrigerator door when you want a snack? A pony gentle enough to ride even if you cannot see? When people need extra care, special animals are there to help!

Seeing Eye dogs are trained to be the eyes for people who cannot see. All over the world, Seeing Eye dogs are hard at work—work—guiding, protecting, and loving their blind masters.

Horseback riding is good exercise. It also helps people feel happy and confident. Even riders who cannot see, or who have trouble moving their muscles, can have fun on a quiet, gentle, well-trained horse.

Hearing dogs help people who are deaf or hard-of-hearing. These smart, friendly, energetic dogs are specially trained to let their owners know when the doorbell rings, the smoke alarm goes off, or the baby wakes up from a nap.

This boy needs both his hands and all his energy just to walk. Luckily, his assistance dog is there to carry his backpack. Assistance dogs are good helpers—helpers—and good friends!



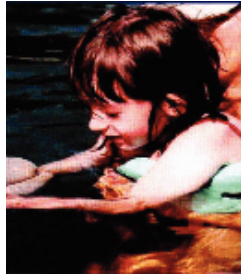
**An assistance dog is trained to help**

. . . . Assistance animals like this capuchin monkey are smart and nimble enough to help in lots of ways—ways—they can turn the lights on and off, play a CD, or get their owners a cool drink!



**A capuchin monkey helps with many tasks.**

This girl is part of a special program to help children with serious physical and learning difficulties. Swimming with dolphins helps the children relax—relax—and who wouldn't love being around such wild and beautiful creatures!



**Dolphins are calming creatures**

Source: Animals helping people. *Click*, 5(9), 21-23.

### **Source #3**

This article from a magazine about animal rights describes new service animal rules that are included as part of a federal law. The author is on staff at the magazine and has a legal background.

#### **New Service Animal Rules**

by Clare Mishica

*New rules regarding service animals were added to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in March 2011. The ADA is a law that protects the rights of people with disabilities.*

*The new rules limit the kind of service animals that people with disabilities can have in public places. Now, only dogs and miniature horses are allowed in public places. The changes were meant to clear up confusion regarding service animals in public places. Business owners were unclear about the kind of service animals that were allowed in their businesses. They were also unclear about the amount of responsibility that they had for service animals that were brought into their businesses.*

A man has a large snake draped over his shoulders. He wants to enter a café for lunch and says the snake is a service animal that helps and comforts him. In the past, the law would have required the café to allow the man to bring his snake inside. This was because people were allowed to choose any service animal as helpers, including pigs, birds, and lizards! Before the new rule, any type of animal could have been considered a service animal. As long as the owner felt that the animal provided him or him/her assistance, then any type of animal could be used as a service animal. Once the new rules went into effect, the only service animals permitted in public places are dogs and miniature horses.

#### **What Made the Changes Necessary?**

The changes were needed to protect people from diseases. Different animals carry certain diseases. When animals go into public places, they might pass illnesses to humans. In addition, some animals are not trained

to keep an area clean. For example, birds could leave droppings on a store floor. This creates an unhealthy setting for others.

Second, the law was changed to help business owners. In the past, businesses such as hotels had to accept all types of service animals, and that could create problems. For example, some animals are large or noisy. Others might cause damage or have special needs. Dogs and miniature horses, however, are tame. They have been used as pets for hundreds of years. They listen to commands. Both dogs and miniature horses are trained to guide the blind. These animals can be trusted by pet owners and business owners.

Some people prefer to use service animals other than dogs and miniature horses and this is still possible. The new rules limit only the kind of service animals permitted in public places. In private, people are able to choose other animals. Some people with disabilities use monkeys to help them do tasks in their homes. These monkeys have similar hand and finger control to humans, so they can perform more tasks than other animals.

Would you like to learn more about the federal rules for service animals? You can visit the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) website. It gives details and reasons for changes in the rules.

#### Sources Used

- a. Manning, S. (2011, April 11). Changing definitions new federal law limits service animals to dogs and mini-horses. Evansville Courier & Press. Retrieved from:  
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- b. U.S. Department of Justice. (2011, July 12). Service animals. Retrieved from:  
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