



Finding a Reputable Trainer

Training or “obedience training” is one of the best investments that you can make with your dog. The more manageable and mannered your dog is, the better your relationship. Training benefits you, your family, your dog and your community. Without exception, training should begin as early as possible with puppies and as soon as you obtain a dog.

A trainer should be truly interested in helping you find the best method to suit your individual needs - for both your skill set and considering your dog’s age, personality and temperament.

Humane trainers advocate positive ways of changing your dog’s behavior via reinforcement such as food, attention, play or praise; inhumane trainers compel compliance thru harsh techniques such as yelling, choking, shaking, striking, “stringing up” (hanging), shocking, or excessive use of corrections. Training should be fun for you and the dog!

Training is a two-way street – both dog and owner need to participate actively and willingly in the process. Shipping a dog off for training isn’t recommended for many reasons, including high cost, the fact that you may not be able to see the trainer’s methods in use, and potential behavior fall out (fear or aggression) from punitive or harsh methods.

Evaluating Instructors and Classes

○ Ask about the instructor’s credentials including the number of years in business, and whether they are members of any national training associations. Each association has different membership criteria – ask what is required to be a member so that you can objectively weight the credibility of such memberships.

○ Ask the instructor how they were trained. Did they have formal training? If so where (examples: SF SPCA Academy for Dog Trainers, Marine Humane Society, Cynology College, Animal Behavior College, Triple Crown) and did they complete the program?

○ Ask what methods they advocate and why.

○ Does the instructor allow you to audit or observe training sessions and to speak with current students/clients? During your observation, note the kinds of equipment used (plain buckle? choke chains? Pinch collars? Head-collars? Harnesses? Shock collars?)

- Are the people and dogs enjoying the classes, or do they appear to be stressed?
- How are the owners taught to correct their dogs or stop bad behaviors?
- Are the instructors or program licensed (city and state law) and insured?
- Do they have accredited certifications or plan to get such as CPDT, CDBC? Are they pursuing ongoing education opportunities?
- What does the program entail and what behaviors are covered?
- What is the cost of the program and how many weeks?
- Because of many variables involved between a dog/handler team, a trainer should not guarantee results of their training – BUT they should be willing to ensure satisfaction of their professional services.

A skilled instructor will:

- Provide a clear explanation of each lesson
- Have a syllabus or curriculum available to the students
- Demonstrate behaviors that students will be working on in class
- Provide clear instruction and written handouts on how to teach the behaviors
- Give students ample time to practice in class
- Coach individuals on proper implementation of mechanical training techniques

You should be comfortable with the training tools used by the instructor. A skilled professional will be able to use humane equipment effectively to teach your dog manners and reliability without the use of harmful methods. Avoid methods that include: hanging, beating, kicking, shocking, alpha rollovers, excessive forceful restraint, or training devices that could cause the dog pain, distress or that have imminent potential for physical harm.

You have the absolute right to stop any animal professional (trainer, vet, vet tech, groomer, etc) who, in your opinion, is causing your dog undue harm or distress.

Provided to you by South Bay Trainers – a network of professionals geared to humane and positive methods

— Information compiled from: How to Choose a Dog Trainer / APDT website and HSUS: Complete Guide to Dog Care.