



Choosing a Dog Trainer

What's the best fit for me and my dog?

Working with a professional dog trainer in group or private sessions can improve communication with your dog, teach polite manners, and increase the human-dog bond. Animal Friends recommends that dogs are trained using force-free, positive reinforcement methods, without use of physical corrections or correction equipment. Dogs are rewarded for the desired behavior with treats, praise, toys and play! Alternate behaviors are trained to replace the impolite behaviors.

Training methods which use punishment can result in inhibited learning, increase fearfulness or increase aggression in dogs. Animal Friends believes that punishment can damage the relationship between dogs and their humans. Punishment such as yelling, pushing, alpha rolls, leash jerking and electronic correction collars are not recommended.

Private training? Working with a private trainer is effective to address specific behavior issues including aggression, separation anxiety and resource guarding or fearful behavior. In-home training is a good fit for an individualized training plan to address behavior problems such as housetraining or greeting guests to the home.

Group training? Group classes teach your puppy or dog to focus with distractions and to be comfortable with other dogs and people. Puppy socialization classes are important for the social development of young puppies, building skills in dog body language and bite inhibition.

Dog sports? Scent games, agility, flyball and treibball are just a few of the sports and games that dogs and their humans enjoy. Dog sport activities help dogs to gain confidence and improve communication between dog and handler. And everyone has a great time!

Trainer credentials? When choosing a trainer, look for experience that matches your training goals. Not all dog trainers have experience with aggression, for example. There are a variety of certification organizations for dog professionals, with many encouraging their members to use reward-based training methods. Dog trainers should attend continuing education seminars to keep current in the field.

Resources:

For more information and searchable lists of member trainers:

Association of Professional Dog Trainers - www.apdt.com

Certification Council for Professional Dog Trainers - www.ccpdt.com

International Association of Animal Behavior Consultants - www.iaabc.org

If your dog is displaying a problem behavior, especially if there is a sudden change in behavior, a trip to your veterinarian is needed to determine if there is a medical cause for the behavior. Housetraining issues, for example, could be related to a urinary tract infection or digestive upset. Dog trainers should be aware of the medical causes of behavior issues and work with veterinary professionals. Your veterinarian can be a resource to find a behavior professional.