



Dog Training: What You Need to Know

Training a dog is about building a solid relationship between guardian and dog. This can be accomplished using communication techniques that guide and shape behavior. With training, practice, and consistent communication techniques, the dog-human relationship can develop where a leash may not be always necessary to manage dog behaviors. Having a trainer to help guide this relationship building process can speed things up and help ensure the best results.

Finding a good trainer is a very personal thing, because trainers will essentially be teaching you how to teach and communicate with your dog. You will find trainers who are committed to certain types of training. This can result in very different training techniques. Make sure you are aligned with a trainer that teaches the types of techniques you believe are best for your relationship with your dog. Look for a trainer who has a lot of experience, and one who feels like a good fit for both you and your dog.

A good trainer can work with a variety of people and dogs, will give you honest feedback about your chance of meeting your goals, and will use a range of methods and tools to help you achieve those goals. You will find trainers who are committed to certain types of training techniques, and trainers who are committed to a result regardless of the means of getting there. It will be your job to sort through and find what feels best for you. Not every trainer is meant for every person or dog. If the first person doesn't work out, try again! Also, not every dog is a good candidate for off-leash hiking. Be sure you find a trainer who may understand behavior or training limits related to your dog.

If you're looking for referrals, start with neighbors or friends whose dogs are really well-behaved, and ask if they had any help. Ask a person on the trail that has a well-behaved dog. Your veterinarian may also have suggestions.

Remember, the dog trainer is only part of the equation. Successful dog training really depends on the dedication of the dog guardian. Training requires consistent practice throughout the life of the dog. It is an ongoing partnership. Dogs are not robots. They do not learn things once and then remember them forever. The efforts you put towards training your dog will be worth it!

The following questions may help you find a trainer who is a good match:

- How long have you been training dogs?
- How many dogs have you worked with successfully?
- What is your philosophy towards training dogs?
- What training methods and tools do you use?
- Do you offer classes or private lessons?
- What are the limitations that you see my dog possibly having based on the breed and temperament?

- How long do you expect it to take to reach my goals for my dog?
- Have you been able to get dogs with histories of wildlife chasing to recall reliably off of wildlife? How?
- What kinds of dogs have you personally owned? Do you hike off leash with them? Can you recall them in any situation?
- When your clients are not able to get their dogs to obey reliably off leash, why is that?