



Finding a Trainer

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Dog training and pet owner education are two of the most important investments you can make in your relationship with your canine companion. A good dog trainer can help you and your new puppy/dog learn how to “read each other” and work better together as a team. Puppies have a steep learning curve that allows them to quickly absorb new concepts and ideas. Older dogs can also learn, but it may take them longer to learn what a puppy may quickly pick up. All dogs benefit from the leadership obtained by going to training classes.

Knowing the importance of a good canine education, our veterinary staff has talked to many of the dog trainers in our area and sat in on some of their classes. We would be happy to provide you with our list of recommendations. If you prefer to look for a trainer on your own, or go with a recommendation from family or friends, we respectfully ask that you sit in and observe a class with that trainer before signing up.

Here are some things to look for when observing a class:

- Does the trainer use positive reinforcement, like treats or petting, to reward the desired behavior instead of punishing the unwanted behavior? Punishing includes leash corrections (jerking on collar and leash) or **any** type of physical punishment.
- Does the trainer encourage the use of food treats as a reward? Food is an excellent training tool, especially given the intense stimulation of the training environment.
- Are the people having fun and being treated respectfully? Remember that you will be coming here on a weekly basis...will you look forward to it?
- Do the dogs look like they are having a good time?
- Talk with a few of the dog owners after the class and find out what they like most and least about the class, the trainers, and the training methods.

- Notice the types of collars that puppies are wearing and what the trainer is promoting the use of. Choke or pinch type collars should **NEVER** be used on puppies; they have too many important growing structures in their neck.

When it comes to training, it is important to understand that YOU are responsible for your dog having happy and positive experiences. For this reason:

- Don't be afraid to talk to a trainer if s/he is doing something to your dog that makes you uncomfortable or that you would not do at home. Remember that the goal of training is to develop trust and leadership between you and your dog. The role of the trainer is to facilitate that goal, not to make your dog listen to them.
- Inform our staff if **any** negative experiences occur at a training facility that we have recommended so that we can investigate it immediately.

Once you find a training facility that you like, ask about their policy on when to start training and their vaccination requirements. If you have a puppy, plan ahead and make a reservation to begin training when your puppy will meet their vaccination requirements since training classes book up quickly.

If it will be a while before you can enroll in a class with your puppy or dog, ask our staff for book and video recommendations to help get you started with this very important time in your relationship with your new canine companion. A small investment of time in your pet's education now, will pay off in the many years to follow.

*Adapted from Morehead D., Lagoni L., et al. *Guidelines for Bond-Centered Practice*, 2001. (Out of print.)