

How to pick a good dog trainer

Let's first look at a few ways a person can become a dog trainer. Some apprentice with an experienced trainer. Others have gone through vocational schools and some have worked their way up through shelters or small businesses. A number of trainers have obtained their knowledge by competing in areas such as obedience, tracking or agility while numerous have studied independently through course work and workshops. Lastly, there are those that have been educated through colleges.

Okay, so how do dog trainers get certified and are the certifications equal? Some certifications come through vocational programs and others are through independent testing and associations. Some require months of study along with external mentoring while others do not. A couple of certifying organizations require trainers to provide references and participate in continuing education.

In a nut shell, there isn't a required certification or a national standard to become a dog trainer; education and certification does not guarantee a good trainer. So what are some things to consider when choosing a trainer and/or class to participate in?

- Are the trainers methods based on positive reinforcement along with scientific principles or force and punishment? Are the methods humane or uncivilized? Understand the advantages and disadvantages of both before moving forward.
- Does the trainer recommend you come and observe a class or two before joining? Upon observation, was the trainer clear and concise when giving directions? Do you know the goals of the class you plan to participate in?
- How many pairs of handler/dog are in the class? Are there too many, where you can't get individual help?
- What kind of equipment is used? Good things are: flat buckle collar, treats, toys, praise, and harnesses. Unfavorable things are: electric shock, prong and choke collars; bark and citronella devices.
- Any signs of kicking, yelling, hanging or popping the leash are unnecessary punishments.
- What is the atmosphere in the class? Is everyone relaxed and enjoying themselves or stressed and out of control?
- Before class begins is a health certificate & id required? (Titer or Rabies and Bordetella)
- Don't be taken in by fancy websites and lavish advertising ask for references and call them.
- Investigate further when trainers use words or phrases like training collars, dominance and touch & tone; the use of these words usually indicates an inhumane method of training.

Major contributing factors to successfully training your dog come from the owner having patience, practicing and being consistent using Positive Reinforcement Methods. Training your dog is a life time commitment. Do some research, and take your time choosing the right trainer.