

Dog training classes

Training classes can be useful for some dogs and owners, with an opportunity for handlers to meet other owners and their dogs, and dogs to meet other dogs on a regular basis. However, trainers and training methods vary greatly, and a poor class can often cause more harm than good. Here is some information to help you choose the right class.

Finding a dog training club or class

Dog training classes are widely advertised, and often held in village halls and community centres. One of the best ways to find out about good training classes is to talk to friends and family with dogs for personal recommendations. After first contact, a visit to watch a training session **without** taking your dog is essential. This will give you the chance to watch how the trainer interacts with the dogs and owners without trying to train your own dog at the same time.

It is also worth checking with the **Family Dog** team as we may be able to signpost you to local trainers or training classes where the instructors know about **Family Dog** and will use similar training methods. We are currently working on building a network of trainers and behaviourists that are able to offer you one to one support.

Gwen Bailey's Puppy School and the APDT (Association of Pet Dog Trainers) have a national network of trainers offering classes in your area. The APBC (Association of Pet Behaviour Counsellors) also have qualified animal behaviourists that through vet referral are able to provide you with behaviour support should you be experiencing behavioural problems with your dog:



<http://www.puppyschool.co.uk/>

<http://www.apdt.co.uk/>

<http://www.apbc.org.uk/>

Classes are often run in blocks of one session a week for several weeks. Many trainers also offer follow on classes after you have completed puppy training or training classes for adult dogs. They may also offer group walks in other environments.

If children are likely to want to come along to classes, it is worth discussing this with the individual trainer.

Deciding if a training class is the right one for you

A good dog training class/trainer should:

- Promote responsible dog ownership and welfare
- Use positive reinforcement for training; praise, treats or toys to reward
- Encourage and enthuse dog owners
- Equip you with enough knowledge and experience to practise and carry out the training exercises at home in between classes and adapt them to different situations
- Be of a suitable size to ensure all handlers and dogs are awarded sufficient time and attention (around 6 dogs/handlers per trainer)
- Have the ability to demonstrate more than one way of teaching an activity as different dogs and owners learn in different ways
- Be an enjoyable experience for both dog and owner

A good dog training class/trainer should not:

- Use punishment methods - this includes: talk of 'dominance reduction' techniques, rough handling, shouting, water sprays, sound aversion, spray or electric collars, check chains, tightening harnesses or head collars, and so on
- Make owners feel uncomfortable or lose confidence in their abilities

If you have any concerns at all, please do consult a member of the Family Dog Team.

Kennel Club Good Citizen Scheme



We recommend The Kennel Club Good Citizen Dog Scheme. The scheme ranges from Puppy Foundation Assessments to Bronze, Silver and Gold Awards. Each stage is designed to promote responsible pet ownership and owner education at the same time as helping your canine companion to be a 'good citizen'.

www.thekennelclub.org.uk/dogtraining

The scheme is offered nationwide by various dog training classes and these can be found on The Kennel Club's website. Here you can also download the award criteria which can be a useful checklist to work through with your dog and it may be something children want to get involved in.



Also for children who love dogs, there is The Young Kennel Club, helping children learn new skills, build confidence and make new friends. They welcome anyone between the ages of 6 years right up to 24 years, whether you own a pedigree, crossbreed or just love dogs: <http://www.ykc.org.uk/>

If you are looking to get involved in fun activities with your dog such as agility, here is some more information: <http://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/activities/>