



Finding a Dog Trainer or Behavior Consultant

If your dog is having behavioral issues and you need help, contact our FREE Behavior Helpline. You can leave a voicemail or send an email and we will get back to you in 24-48 hours. The Nebraska Humane Society offers training classes and one-on-one training sessions, too. If you decide to go elsewhere for behavior help, keep the following tips in mind when looking for a dog trainer or behavior consultant.

Anyone can call themselves a dog trainer or behavior consultant, making it difficult to sort out the good from the bad. It is important to find someone that has an understanding of learning theory, dog behavior, and proven hands-on experience. Hiring the wrong dog trainer can actually make your dog's problems worse or create new ones.

A good behavior consultant/trainer will have education in learning theory and dog behavior, including dog body language and social behavior. This can be achieved through college classes, conferences such as those given by, APDT (Association of professional Dog Trainers), and seminars put on by persons having a degree as a Behaviorist or Ethologist. Ideally, they would have a certification such as CCPDT (Certification Council for Professional Dog Trainers) They should be keeping up with the most recent science in behavior modification. They must have hands on experience in your dog's area of need, using behaviorally-sound methods that avoid the use of punishment.

The consultant should be asking you lots of questions to determine the dog's issues and the best plan for your dog, and to determine if they are qualified to help you. Questions would include things like, health issues, visits to a vet to be cleared of any medical issues, what changes have happened recently in this dog's life (including diet changes), any past trauma, or past training experiences, etc.

Avoid trainers that use primarily punishment-based training, use harsh equipment, such as pinch collars or shock collars, or they use words like dominance or alpha. These trainers might not be keeping up with the science of dogs and behavior modification. Harsh training methods are NOT necessary to achieve desired results. Never let anyone talk you into doing something to your dog that you are uncomfortable with. Your dog is depending on you.

Interview the potential trainer/behavior consultant and talk to more than one trainer before hiring. Below are a few sample questions you could ask:

- Where did you receive your training?
- What continuing education or seminars have you attended?
- Which methods do you use? (If dealing with a serious problem, push for details)
- Is there a way to observe a lesson or class before hiring you?
- Cost (if it seems too expensive for what you get, it might be)
- What area of dog training are you most interested in?
- How would you handle more serious behavior problem if presented?
- What breeds have you trained personally?

Animal behavior questions?

Contact our FREE Behavior Helpline!

402-905-3421 | bhelp@nehumanesociety.org | www.nehumanesociety.org/behaviorhelp