AVSAB

HOW TO CHOOSE A TRAINER

AVSAB
American Veterinary Society of Animal Behavior

Method Matters

Positive reinforcement methods are highly effective, humane, and ethical. Research and decades of real-world application have proven these methods successful for all dog breeds, behavior challenges, and training goals.

Training methods which rely on force, intimidation or pain are unnecessary and unethical. Aversive methods can exacerbate unwanted or problematic behaviors, and can cause physical and long-lasting emotional harm.

Choice of Trainer Matters

STEP 1: Identify Training Goals

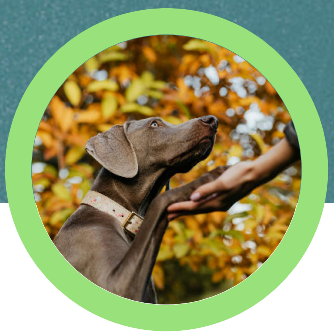
Examples:

- Puppy socialization
- Manners/Life skills
- Sports
- Service dog
- Behavior concerns

Seek out a trainer who prioritizes methods that exclude punishment and demonstrates a clear understanding of your objectives and your pet's specific requirements.

*If fear, anxiety or aggression are occurring, contact a veterinarian with advanced behavior knowledge, a vet behaviorist (DACVB), or a credentialed behavior consultant.

AVSAB



Recognizing Green and Red Flags

STEP 2: Look for Green Flags and Avoid Red Flags

Words, phrases, and observation of videos on trainer websites and social media often provide clues about their training techniques and professionalism.

Look for These = Green Flag	Avoid These = Red Flag
Rewards- treats, toys, praise	**Prong or shock collar, push, pull, poke, hit, leash jerks, roll dog onto their back, twist ears/lips, rattle can, water spray bottle**
Communication, cues, building a relationship or strong bond	**Boss, alpha, pack leader, dominant/submissive, respect, obey, command**
Clicker training, force free, positive reinforcement	**Balanced training**
Prevent unwanted behavior and teach a replacement behavior	**Punish/correct unwanted behavior**
Upbeat tone of voice and friendly body language	**Harsh tone of voice, yelling, stomping, or threatening body language**
Promotes outlets for normal dog behavior, choice and overall well-being	**Shut down normal dog behavior, limit choice, and demand control over the dog**

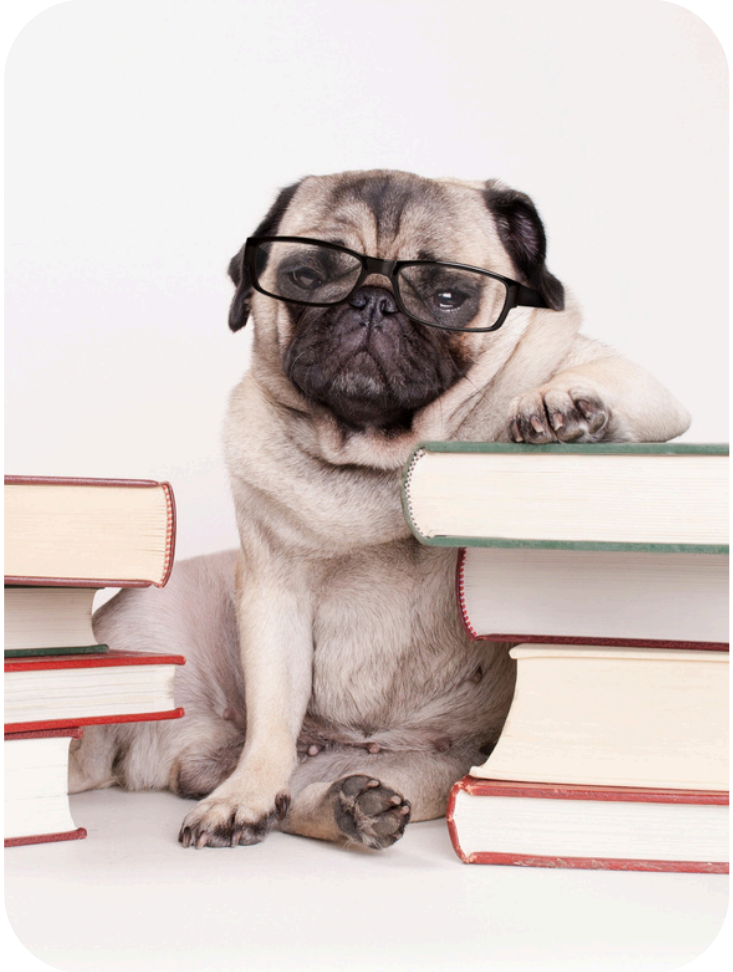
AVSAB

Education Matters

STEP 3: Check Education and Credentials

When choosing a trainer, look for a formal education from modern, science-based, humane training programs. Examples include the Karen Pryor Academy, Jean Donaldson's Academy for Dog Trainers, and the Victoria Stilwell Academy or involvement in organizations like the Pet Professional Guild, the International Association of Animal Behavior Consultants, and Fear Free®.

While credentials alone do not guarantee quality, trainers with these backgrounds are more likely to use positive reinforcement and avoid outdated, punishment-based techniques.



Step 4: Advocate for Your Dog and Yourself

Effective training should be enjoyable for dogs and people. Watch for any stressed or fearful body language. Speak out; ask for other options; choose a different trainer if you don't feel heard or supported.