

How to Choose a Trainer:

Choosing a dog trainer can be one of the most important decisions that you make in your dog's life. The techniques that a trainer uses can strongly affect how you interact with your dog for years to come. Therefore, it is very important to choose your trainer wisely. Here are some guidelines for choosing a dog trainer. Remember, training should be a fun experience for both you and your dog.

Reward-based training. There are numerous ways to train dogs. In addition, each animal has his/her own learning style and preferred motivators. AVSAB endorses training methods which allow animals to work for things (e.g., food, play, affection) that motivate them rather than techniques that focus on using fear or pain to punish them for undesirable behaviors. Look for a trainer who uses primarily or only reward-based training with treats, toys, and play. Avoid any trainer who advocates methods of physical force that can harm your pet such as hanging dogs by their collars or hitting them with their hands, feet, or leashes.

Research shows that **dogs do not need to be physically punished to learn how to behave, and there are significant risks associated with using punishment (such as inhibiting learning, increasing fear, and/or stimulating aggressive events). Therefore, trainers who routinely use choke collars, pinch collars, shock collars, and other methods of physical punishment as a primary training method should be avoided.**

Punishment should not be used as a general first-line approach; instead trainers using punishment should discuss specifically which situations may call for its use. General use of such punishment assumes that animals always know exactly what humans expect of them and are willfully disobeying. In fact, animals are often disobeying because people have accidentally reinforced the wrong behaviors or have not communicated clearly the appropriate behaviors. No learner wants to be in a situation where they have to constantly be afraid of making a mistake.

Continual education. Look for a trainer who demonstrates continual self-education. A conscientious trainer will keep up-to-date with new training theories and methods, and may attend workshops and conferences.

Respectful. A good trainer should be personable and respectful of both you and your dog. **Avoid trainers who recommend using physical force (e.g. alpha rolling, pushing a dog into position, hitting, choke chain or pinch collar correction)** or methods/devices that have the potential for harm, as an acceptable way to train.

There are no guarantees. Because of the variable and often unpredictable nature of behavior, a conscientious trainer cannot and will not guarantee the results of training. However they should be willing to ensure satisfaction of their services.