

# SELECTING A DOG PROFESSIONAL



## SELECTING A DOG TRAINER

The techniques that a trainer uses will effect your dog's behavior for years post-training, and possibly the entire lifetime of your dog. Because of the impact, It is very important to choose your trainer wisely.

Dog training is an unregulated industry, and while there are certifications and great training programs, they are not a guarantee of the quality of your, and your dog's, experience. Remember, training should be a fun experience for both you and your dog.

## SELECT QUESTIONS FOR A DOG TRAINER

- What dog training equipment do you recommend?
- What happens when you don't like my dog's respose?
- How do you ensure my dog is not inadvertently being punished?
- How would you stop an unwanted behavior?
- How do you know what is reinforcing to my dog?
- How will you know if my dog is anxious, stressed, or fearful?
- What do you do to ensure your client's success?
- In which professional dog training associations are you a member?
- Do you hold any certifications?
- What is your approach to your own continuing education?
- Do you consult with a veterinary behaviorist? If so, who?
- Do you work with my vet? If so, in what capacity?
- Do you work with my dog walker?

## WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN RESPONSES

A competent dog trainer takes animal behavior and training seriously and engages in continuous education through conferences, webinars, and consulting with other trainers, certified veterinary behaviorists, and certified dog behavior consultants. Look for trainers who avoid the use of fear, pain, and force in the course of training, and will look for subtle signs of anxiety, stress and fear as an indication to make adjustments to the training scenario, which may include taking a break.

A competent dog trainer will not 'stop' an unwanted behavior, rather they will look for an alternative scenario where the dog can learn an appropriate behavior, in addition to recommending and using good management strategies to prevent an unwanted behavior from occurring. Dog trainers never set dogs up to fail or to be punished. Competent dog trainers look for, and create, opportunities for dogs to be reinforced, and will conduct a 'preference test' to determine what is reinforcing to the animal.

## SELECTING A DOG WALKER

Fortunately, many dog walkers are people who love dogs and see the dog walking profession as a good way to combine their passion with a career. Unfortunately, there are no professional standards to prepare walkers for handling multiple dogs. Determine what your pet's needs are, and what their experience will be, before you start looking for your canine's new walking companion. Each outing with your dog walker should be an enjoyable and positive experience for you dog.

## SELECT QUESTIONS FOR A DOG WALKER

- In what types of activities do the dogs engage?
- Is the outing off-leash, on-leash or a supervised playgroup?
- For how long will you exercise my dog (excluding car time)?
- Do you include obedience during the walk? If so, how?
- What will you do if my dog does not come when called? Does not sit when requested? What if my dog doesn't want to get in the vehicle?
- What will you do if my dog jumps on you? On somebody else?
- What will you do if my dog growls at another dog? At a person?
- What sort of punishments or reinforcements do you use?
- Do you consult with a professional dog trainer? If so, who?
- What is your philosophy on keeping dogs under control?
- What is the maximum number of dogs you will walk on an outing?
- Do you separate dogs according to size? Age? Activity level?

## WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN RESPONSES

A competent dog walker takes the responsibility for the safety of your dog, other dogs, and people that they will encounter on walks seriously. Dog walkers often engage in continuous education through conferences, webinars, and consulting with other walkers and dog trainers. Look for walkers who avoid the use of fear, pain and force in the course of a walk, and will look for subtle signs of anxiety, stress and fear as an indication to make adjustments to the group walk, which may include recommending that the dog be part of another group of dogs, a smaller group of dog, or maybe a candidate for solo walks.

A competent dog walker will look for opportunities for the dogs to be reinforced for good trail and walking behavior, including coming when called. Competent dog walkers put the safety of their walking crew above all else, and may limit the number of dogs in each group.

## SELECTING A BOARDING OR DAY CARE FACILITY

A great boarding or day care facility can provide some really great experiences for your dog while you are away at work or traveling. Take care to select a boarding or day care facility that will treat your dog with the love and care that you would. Great boarding or day care facilities maintain safety and take into account each dogs' behavioral needs.

## SELECT QUESTIONS FOR A BOARDING OR DAY CARE FACILITY

- What dog training equipment do you recommend?
- What happens when my dog responds in the way you want him to?
- What happens when my dog responds in the way you do not want him to?
- How do you ensure that my dog is not inadvertently being punished?
- How will you know if my dog is anxious, stressed or fearful?
- In what types of activities do the dogs engage?
- Describe how you supervise playgroups.
- For how long will you exercise my dog each day?
- Do you include obedience training? If so, how?

## WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN RESPONSES

A great day care and boarding facility takes the responsibility for the safety of your dog, and the other dogs in their care, very seriously. Boarding facilities often employ qualified behavior staff, in addition to kennel staff, to provide comprehensive care for your dog. Great facilities provide continuous education for their staff.

Look for facilities who avoid the use of fear, pain, and force in the course of caring for your dog, and will look for subtle signs of anxiety, stress and fear as an indication to make adjustments to their care, including less time in playgroups or with other dogs.