



HUMANE SOCIETY OF BROWARD COUNTY Behavior Modification Handout

Choosing a Dog Trainer

Finding a good trainer can be like finding a good mechanic or a good hair dresser. You want someone knowledgeable and experienced but you also need someone you can communicate with. If you don't see eye to eye or even like your trainer much, chances are you will not find success training your pet with this person. Do your research.

Asking the Right Questions

As an organization concerned and committed to humane animal welfare, we recommend that you look for a trainer that uses positive reinforcement. This type of training uses mutual respect and a symbiotic relationship between people and their pets as a foundation, as well as many, many years of scientific study and research surrounding learning theory and how animals learn. Some of the specifics you should be looking for:

- Trained / studied in the use of positive reinforcement
- Accredited by an organization such as the Association of Pet Dog Trainers
- Experience (2 – 3 years minimum)
- Get references from past clients
- Attend a class or training event where the trainer is working to get a preview
- Group classes that are not too large, attendance should not be more than what the trainer and an assistant can handle

Take your time choosing a trainer before you write a check. Make sure you are comfortable with the class curriculum and the way it is presented before you make a commitment. Do your research early, your dog will benefit from training before behavior problems begin to surface.

Avoiding the Pitfalls

Start your dog or puppy off on the right paw. Puppies begin to learn the moment they enter the world and planning for early training and socialization will be a great way to avoid problems. Plan on a puppy beginner class for your new puppy or a basic obedience class for your new adult dog, waiting until behavior problems occur and then trying to "fix it" will be harder than planning ahead and anticipating problems and how they can be avoided.

If at first you don't succeed try, try again. If the trainer you selected does not live up to your expectations don't be afraid to ask for a refund and more importantly don't give up looking for a trainer that is the perfect fit for you and your pet. Your dog will thank you.