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Finding a dog trainer you can trust

The dog training industry is unregulated so unfortunately anyone can label themselves a trainer, behaviourist, or whisperer regardless of their qualifications (or lack of) and avoid ethical responsibilities.

Dog training requires an understanding of the science of learning in two species: humans and canines. Although both species learn the same way, the teaching obviously has to be adapted so it makes sense to both the person and the dog.

Unfortunately some bad habits (the use of force and punishment) and untruths (the dominance theory) have entered the dog training world and get perpetuated by those without scientific knowledge. Only by undertaking courses in ethology, behaviour, psychology and training and by keeping up to date with latest research, can this knowledge be acquired.

Dogs are sentient, emotional animals. They do not need to be trained by force and punishment. Your dog is in your care. You want a trusting relationship, a bond built on mutual attachment, emotional support and fun. No trainer should suggest or recommend aversive teaching methods which could put your dog's mental health at risk, and your own personal safety.

What you can ask before choosing a trainer:

- What methods do you use?
- What equipment do you use?
- What training have you had?
- How much experience do you have?
- Do you adapt techniques to suit the individual?
- Can I observe a class?

What you should ask yourself:

- Did I understand a word of what they said?
- Was it plain English or witch-crafty gobblede-gook?

When you should run away (or report them):

- When they say words such as: pack leader, punishment, alpha, show you're dominant, alpha roll, balanced training.
- When they support the use of choker chains, shock collars, noise discs
- Did they offer a guarantee? (beware guarantees- it's like promising your child's ATAR and ignores the complexities of real life and individuals)

What qualifications you should look for:

Certificate Programs vs. Professional Certification

Certificate programs provide instruction, test participants' achievement and award certificates only to their students. The certificate doesn't expire.

Professional certification comes from independent organisations that assess applicants' knowledge and skills and grant credentials to those who meet the standards. Professional certifications require continuing education and periodical renewal (Snyder KL).

- Certificate IV in Companion Animal Services
- MDI (CPDT) (Member of the Delta Institute (Certified Professional Dog Trainer))
- Bachelor of science: zoology, ethology, psychology, veterinary science
- DipCABT (COAPE Association of Applied Behaviourists and Trainers); levels 3 to 6
- CAPBT- (COAPE Association of Applied Pet Behaviourists and Trainers members, professional level)
- KPA-CTP (Karen Pryor Academy- Certified Training Partner)
- CBCC-KA (Certified Behaviour Consultant-Canine)
- CPDT-KSA (Certified Professional Dog Trainer- Knowledge and Skills Assessed)
- ACDCB (Associate Certified Dog Behaviour Consultant)
- CAAB (Certified Applied Animal Behaviourists)
- CDBC (Certified Dog Behaviour Consultant through CCPDT.org)

There are professional **Australian organisations** which will only accept members who abide by a strict code of ethics to protect dogs from punitive training methods. Finding a trainer/behaviourist who belongs to these will be a great start:

- **DPDTA**: Delta Professional Dog Trainers Association <https://deltainstitute.edu.au>
- **APDT**: Association of Pet Dog Trainers Australia Inc. <https://www.apdt.com.au/code-of-ethics.html>
- **PPGA**: Pet Professional Guild Australia <https://www.ppgaaustralia.net.au/PPGs-Guiding-Principles>
- **AVBIG**; Australian Veterinary Behaviour Interest Group- a special interest group of the Australian Veterinary Association <https://www.ava.com.au/avbig>
- **ANZCVS**: Australian and New Zealand College of Veterinary Scientists; Veterinary Behaviour Chapter <https://www.anzcvs.org.au/chapters/veterinary+behaviour+chapter>

Other affiliations dedicated to dog behaviour and training:

- **NDTF**: National Dog Trainers Federation – Australia (government accredited training body) <https://www.ndtf.net.au/aims-of-the-federation/>

- **IAABC:** International Association of Animal Behavior Consultants, iaabc.org. IAABC provides independent certification for behaviour consultants for dogs, cats, horses and parrots.
- **CCPDT** – Certification Council for Professional Dog Trainers, www.ccpdt.org/. An independent testing and certification group accredited by the (American) National Commission for Certifying Agencies.
- **AVSAB** – American Veterinary Society of Animal Behavior, <https://avsab.org/>
- **COAPE**- Centre of Applied Pet Ethology www.coape.org/

Find an accredited, force-free trainer (using locality guides in Australia) here:

<https://www.ppgaaustralia.net.au/Member-Search>

<https://deltainstitute.edu.au/trainers.php>

Further reading:

[Http://petprofessionalguild.com/Open-letter-to-veterinarians-on-referrals-to-training-and-behavior-professionals](http://petprofessionalguild.com/Open-letter-to-veterinarians-on-referrals-to-training-and-behavior-professionals)

Snyder KL 2016: <http://thewagazine.com/5-tips-for-picking-a-dog-trainer-or-behaviorist/>

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