

## How to find a good trainer

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If you are looking for someone to help with the training of your pet, here are some tips on what questions to ask before you make this important decision.

1. How did the trainer gain their experience and what is their education?
2. Is the trainer willing to show you their own dog, put him/her through its paces for you, and let you interact with him/her?
3. Is the trainer willing and happy to let you view a training class (without your pet) before committing?
4. Is there a focus on positive reward-based training methods (e.g. using praise, food treat and games with toys)? Is the training focused on increasing desired behaviours through reward, rather than correcting misbehaviour?
5. Is the focus on encouragement also applied to the owners? Does the trainer have good people communication skills (i.e. no humiliation or shaming of owners)?
6. Is the class calm and ordered?
7. Is any 'free' play carefully managed and supervised, with just a few animals being allowed off-lead for short periods of time, not allowing them to get over-aroused, or being put in a position where they may learn to be either fearful or bully others?
8. Are the people and their pets enjoying the class?
9. Are young animals and adult animals in separate classes? Are adolescent animals kept apart from adult and younger animals?
10. Are all animals within a class at a similar level, e.g. beginner, intermediate, advanced?
11. How big are the classes? (A maximum of 6–8 animals per trainer/assistant is suitable.)
12. Is the class relaxed and without signs of stress or tension?
13. Does the trainer have a flexible approach, using different methods for animals with different temperaments and in different situations, or do they insist on one way being followed?
14. Does the trainer have a flexible approach to how people learn and willing to help those who do not have good training skills?
15. Is the trainer respectful of other people's point of view, or do they criticise those who do not do it their way?

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16. Is there an absence of dependence on physical correction methods (e.g. check chains, leash jerks)?
17. Is there an absence of rough treatment (e.g. grabbing, shaking, shouting, pinning the animal to the floor)?
18. Is the attention of animals gained without frightening them or scaring them (e.g. throwing objects, loud alarms)?
19. Is the trainer willing to admit that they don't have all the solutions and refer on if they are out of their depth? How do they know when they are out of their depth?
20. Ask yourself: 'would my pet and I look forward to coming to this class? Do I respect and trust this individual?'

### **Resources and references**

Bailey G (2005) *Puppy School: 7 steps to the perfect puppy*. Hamlyn Publishers, UK  
([www.puppyschool.co.uk](http://www.puppyschool.co.uk))  
Wright H (personal communication)