

THE ROLAND & FRIENDS

GUIDE TO FINDING AND SELECTING A DOG TRAINER



a quick reference guide for
evaluating potential dog
trainers for your silly goose



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WHAT TO KNOW BEFORE GETTING STARTED

Anyone (yes, anyone) can call themselves a dog trainer. People can also call themselves a dog behaviorist, a behavioralist, etc without any qualifications to back up these claims.

Dog trainers should be held to appropriate standards of education and skill, just like we expect from plumbers, hair stylists, bus drivers, doctors, pilots, and teachers.

When looking for a trainer, it's important to know what training **goals** you have in mind, what **training situations** would work best for you and your dog, what a **humane trainer** looks like, and what **certifications** you might need to look for.

IDENTIFYING YOUR TRAINING GOALS

Be clear on what you want your dog to learn. Being clear on your goals can help you find the right trainer for your dog. Below are a few examples of common focus areas:

Standard Manners

Puppy socialization
Leash walking
Counter surfing
Puppy manners
Adult manners

Specialty Training

Service dog training
(aid you with a disability)
Therapy dog training
(support places like hospitals)
Dog sports
(agility, scent work, herding)

Behavior Issues

Reactivity
Fear
Aggression
Anxiety
Resource Guarding

Group classes are great for teaching manners or sports. Private training is usually the best option for behavior issues. It's rare to find great humane, effective board and train options!

Trainers all have different personalities: be sure to choose someone you work well with!

!! A dog trainer should make you feel safe and included. If you're uncomfortable with your trainer, or with their recommendations, it is OK to get a second opinion!

HUMANE TRAINING: POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT

Roland's Silly Goose Crew and Every Dog Austin recommend only working with trainers who use rewards-based, positive reinforcement methods. Tools or practices that are designed to cause fear, pain, or discomfort function only when the dogs are uncomfortable, and these tactics may create future behavior problems such as anxiety, fear, or aggression.

- ✓ They mention using positive reinforcement, being force free, being fear free, using clicker training, humane, or being rewards-based.
- ✓ They mention concepts like enrichment, reducing stress, improving the human-animal bond, or helping people and dogs live harmoniously together.

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- ✗ They talk about corrections or emphasize teaching the dog right and wrong.
 - ✗ They mention using some kind of special collar for training (shock collar, electronic or e-collar, prong, pinch, choke, slip lead, or even a bark collar, citronella collar, or a unique branded collar made by their facility)

EFFECTIVE TRAINING: MODERN BEHAVIOR SCIENCE & EDUCATION

Great dog trainers stay up-to-date on the science of animal behavior. They know at least the basics of applied behavior analysis and ethology, and are familiar with dog body language and methods of behavior change.

- ✓ They prioritize continuing education through conferences, seminars, or courses.
 - ✓ They refer to themselves as science-based, evidence based, or refer to modern behavior science.
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- ✗ They refer to being the “alpha,” pack leader,” or showing “dominance” or using “energy” to train.
 - ✗ They talk about dogs being stubborn and needing rigid structure and commands.
 - ✗ They guarantee behavior change in a certain time frame- “your dog will be fully trained in 2 weeks” or “we have a 100% guarantee to fix your dog’s aggression!”

CERTIFICATIONS & WHAT THEY MEAN

Working with a certified dog trainer or behavior consultant should give you an idea of the knowledge, skills, and experience they have (and what type of training they do).

Dog Trainers

Dog Trainer Certifications indicate knowledge and experience in:

- Teaching dogs new behaviors
- Helping overcome undesirable behaviors like counter surfing or leash pulling
- Basic knowledge of dog behavior, health, and appropriate puppy socialization

Well-Respected Certifications

CPDT-KA or CPDT-KSA as well as:
KPA-CTP, CTC, CDTK, VSA-CDT,
PCT-A, ABCDT, IAABC-ADT

Behavior Consultants

Behavior Consultant Certifications indicate knowledge and experience in:

- Working with dog behavior cases: things like resource guarding, aggression, reactivity fear, anxiety
- Certified behavior consultants should be able to help with more significant behavior problems, in addition to having the training knowledge of a dog trainer.

Well-Respected Certifications

CDBC, CBCC-KA, PCBC-A

Looking for even more information?

Check out the full companion Every Dog Austin article:
www.everydogaustin.org/HowToFindADogTrainer

SOURCES

- <https://avsab.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/AVSAB-Humane-Dog-Training-Position-Statement-2021.pdf>
- https://avsab.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/How_to_Choose_a_Trainer_AVSAB.pdf
- https://avsab.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Dominance_Position_Statement-download.pdf

SILLY GOOSE

fighting for
serious change.

Roland's Silly Goose Crew was founded to remember Roland, who tragically died at an Austin dog daycare in 2022. **Our mission is simple yet powerful: to advocate for change in the dog care industry, support local animal shelters and rescues, and educate the community on dog safety.** We want to make a difference in the lives of dogs and their families in Austin, and beyond. Our ultimate goal is to create more consistent safety standards and push for more accountability in the industry, so that no family ever has to experience the same tragedy as Roland's.

Finding the best dog trainer can be stressful because there are so many options out there—how do you know who's actually a good trainer?! Our hope is that this guide will help dog parents across Austin make informed decisions about the care of their four-legged family members. Roland was our first dog and it was so overwhelming trying to figure out what was best for him.

There are fantastic dog professionals out there who understand modern behavior science and use best practices to help you and your dog, but there are also some unsafe, ineffective, and unprofessional methods out there.

This should act as a tool to equip you with the questions and knowledge to think through the factors that are most important to you and your family so you can make a more informed decision for your silly goose.

We are so grateful to Every Dog Austin for partnering with us and lending their expertise to the creation of this guide. They are a 501(c)3 organization and their mission is to provide inclusive, accessible dog training and behavior resources to the Austin community.



Roland's Silly Goose Crew is a registered 501(c)3 Non-Profit (EIN: 92-2542861).

 katelyn@rolandsvoice.org
michael@rolandsvoice.org


 rolandsillygoosecrew.org

 [@rolandssillygeese](https://www.instagram.com/rolandssillygeese)


 [facebook.com/rolandssillygoosecrew](https://www.facebook.com/rolandssillygoosecrew)



Every Dog Behavior and Training is a 501(c)3 organization: EIN: 84-3322289.

 info@everydogaustin.org

 everydogaustin.org

 [@everydogaustin](https://www.instagram.com/everydogaustin)

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