



EVALUATION GUIDE

Dog Training Evaluation Guide

A toolkit to help you evaluate dog trainers and make more informed decisions about your **silly goose**'s training and behavior support.

Created in partnership with Every Dog Austin





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	Specialty Training	Behavioral Issues
Puppy socialization	Service dog training <i>(aid you with a disability)</i>	Reactivity
Leash walking		Fear
Counter surfing	Therapy dog training <i>(support places like hospitals)</i>	Aggression
Puppy manners	Dog sports <i>(agility, scent work, herding)</i>	Anxiety
Adult manners		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 and 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.
- ✗ 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.
- ✘ 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	Behavior Consultants
<p>Dog Trainer Certifications indicate knowledge and experience in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching dogs new behaviors • Helping overcome undesirable behaviors like counter surfing or leash pulling • Basic knowledge of dog behavior, health, and appropriate puppy socialization 	<p>Behavior Consultant Certifications indicate knowledge and experience in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.
<p style="text-align: center;">Well-Respected Certifications</p> <p style="text-align: center;">CPDT-KA or CPDT-KSA as well as: KPA-CTP, CTC, CDTK, VSA-CDT, PCT-A, ABCDT, IAABC-ADT</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Well-Respected Certifications</p> <p style="text-align: center;">CDBC, CBCC-KA, PCBC-A</p>



SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTIONS

- How do they communicate progress between sessions?
- What does their training plan look like? Will they put it in writing?
- What happens if the approach isn't working? Will they adjust?
- How do they handle an emergency during a session? How do they inform clients?

Looking for even more information?
 Check out the full companion Every Dog Austin article:
www.everydogaustin.org/HowToFindADogTrainer

OUR PHILOSOPHY

*Asking questions is an act of love. This guide exists to help you ask the ones that matter most for the care of your **silly goose**.*

ABOUT ROLAND'S SILLY GOOSE CREW

Roland's Silly Goose Crew is an Austin, Texas 501c3 nonprofit founded after our dog Roland was killed at a local dog daycare in October 2022. He escaped through an unsecured door and was hit by a car. There were no consequences, no required reporting, and no required proactive disclosures to other families.

We started RSGC so no other family would face what we did without information, resources, or recourse. Through free evaluation guides, community partnerships, and legislative advocacy, we're working to bring transparency and accountability to the dog care industry.

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 501c3 organization and their mission is to provide inclusive, accessible dog training and behavior resources to the Austin community.

Support Our Mission

Every guide we create and distribute is free. Your tax-deductible donation helps us reach more families, develop new resources, and advocate for stronger protections for dogs in Texas.



All Our Guides

Free digital versions + new guides as they launch



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SOURCES

avsab.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/AVSAB-Humane-Dog-Training-Position-Statement-2021.pdf

avsab.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/How_to_Choose_a_Trainer_AVSAB.pdf

avsab.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Dominance_Position_Statement-download.pdf



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