

Rossmoor Dog Park Club: How to choose the right dog trainer

By Jung Fitzpatrick
Club correspondent

January is International Train Your Dog Month (<https://trainyourdogmonth.com>), launched by the Association of Professional Dog Trainers (APDT) in 2010. APDT started this campaign to “unite dog owners and professionals in recognizing the transformative impact of dog training.” The association lists four benefits to training your dog: strengthening the bond between you and your dog, improving understanding of your dog, reducing stress in your home and increasing safety with your dog around other people and animals.

Their website provides free resources for dog guardians to learn more about dog behavior, the importance of training, and how to teach their dog new skills. They also encourage dog guardians to seek expert guidance and support from professional dog trainers. So if you’re looking for help from a professional dog trainer, how do you choose the right dog trainer?

You love your dog. You want the best for them – the healthiest food, the tastiest treats, the softest beds. You want the best dog trainer, too, but with so much conflicting information, how do you choose?

Two things you need to know:

Dog training is unregulated

... Unlike your doctor, lawyer, and CPA, dog trainers have no official regulating body. That means no required education, no enforced best practices, and



no ethics oversight. The results are vast variations in dog trainers' skills, knowledge and methodologies – and a confusing chaos of advice ... but dog training science is clear.

While the lack of regulation means trainers do not have to adhere to the science of behavior and training, the science itself is clear about how dogs learn and how best to teach them.

In fact, veterinary bodies worldwide agree that reward-based training is the safest, most effective way to train all dogs.

Now that you're in the know, look for a dog trainer who:

- Uses only force-free training

For your dog's safety and your peace of mind, choose a trainer dedicated to force-free training. Reward-based training is the safest, most effective route to happy, well-behaved dogs of all sizes, breeds and temperaments.

- Makes the right guarantees

Professional associations and schools prohibit the unethical practice of guaranteeing specific training results. Your trainer should guarantee top-notch support to set you and your dog up for success.

- Seeks ongoing profes-

al education

Professional learning isn't yet required, but real pros seek it out – because you and your dog deserve effective, up-to-date methods that do no harm.

- Is honest and transparent

Real training results require time and effort. Be wary of quick-fix promises and miraculous easy buttons. If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.

- Is dog and people friendly

You deserve to feel comfortable, heard and supported by your dog trainer, never criticized or judged. If the relationship doesn't feel right, trust your gut and keep looking.

Ready to choose your dog trainer?

In addition to asking your community, including the Rossmoor Dog Park Club, for recommendations for local professional dog trainers, here are a few more resources for finding or cross-checking referrals:

- The Pet Professional Guild (PPG) has a directory of pet professionals who pledge to PPG's strict code of conduct which states, “No shock, no prong, no choke collars and no pain, no fear, no force are ever employed in the training, behavior modification, care or management of any pet.” PPG is the only pet professional member association to have such a code dedicated to positive reinforcement methods. <https://www.petprofessionalguild.com/find-a-ppg-professional>

- The Fear Free Directory lists animal professionals who have certified with Fear Free's programs. Fear Free's mission

is to “prevent and alleviate fear, anxiety, and stress in pets by inspiring and educating the people who care for them.” <https://directory.fearfree.com>

- The APDT also has a directory of pet professionals. APDT is a certifying body for professional dog trainers but neither ascribes to only positive reinforcement methods nor requires it from its members. <https://training.apdt.com>

Upcoming speaker at next RDPC meeting

On Friday, Jan. 30 at 1 p.m. in Multipurpose Room 3, Diane Krenzer, certified Pet Nutritionist, will present on in-home alternatives to visiting the dog park and walking your dog. A Q&A session will follow the presentation. RSVP is required. Nonmembers pay \$5 at the door. See this club's other article in the Rossmoor News for more details.

Join the RDPC community

The RDPC is a Rossmoor Walnut Creek-sanctioned social and advisory club dedicated to maintaining a safe, welcoming, and well-kept dog park for residents and their pups. RDPC also serves as an educational and community resource, hosting speakers, organizing fundraisers for local rescues, and supporting responsible pet ownership within Rossmoor. Annual dues are \$20. Benefits include free entry to regular club meeting speakers, priority registration and discounts for special events, and member newsletter and network.

Visit <https://rossmoordogpark.com> to learn more or to become a member.