

Is Pet Dog Training the Career for You?

Whether you will be happy and successful in a career in pet dog training is not simply a matter of your technical competence in dog training.

Pet dog training is a service occupation which often requires that you subordinate your own goals to those of your clients, and interact primarily with dog guardians, rather than with the dogs themselves. Technical competence as a trainer is, of course, required, but you apply these skills mostly by proxy through unskilled people. And most professional opportunity in this field involves self employment, so entrepreneurial traits of initiative and organization are crucial.

The Academy experience is designed to require many of the same attributes as actual work in the field, within a sequence of structured experiences supported by faculty guidance. Taking a few minutes to do an honest self-assessment based on the questions below will help you decide whether pet dog training is for you. It will also give you an idea of whether the Academy experience is likely to be stimulating and fulfilling or stressful and frustrating for you. The more of these questions you can genuinely answer with a "yes," the better the Academy experience will be for you.

1. Will you be happy working in a field where many important questions have not yet been answered, and where there are always multiple possible effective solutions to any specific problem?
2. Are you comfortable with a profession where your income is determined entirely by your own efforts and has no guarantees?
3. Can you exist comfortably in a field that is currently unregulated? Although The Academy offers a certificate to successful graduates and the APDT offers a CPDT certification to trainers who complete the requirements, none of these is recognized, acknowledged or mandatory, the way a license, degree or other qualification is in other professions.
4. Do you enjoy planning complex projects that you have not attempted before on your own, based on your understanding of theory?
5. Do you enjoy coaching novices who have specific, concrete goals of their own and who are not interested in reaching your level of expertise?
6. Can you calmly accept others' beliefs that you know to be erroneous?
7. Can you respectfully help people revise their beliefs only when it is absolutely necessary and without directly contradicting them?
8. Do you enjoy projects that unfold gradually through a process of many, many small steps?

9. Do you enjoy troubleshooting training dogs who respond differently from dogs you've worked with in the past, who show little interest in the food you've planned to use, for example, or who require many approximations before completing a behavior like a sit or a down?
10. When one small step in a project doesn't go as expected, do you simply move on, rather than spending time going over it?
11. When things don't go as you planned or unexpected hurdles crop up, do you think up and try several solutions on your own before asking someone for help?
12. Will you be happy working with clients who do not have the same goals for living with their dogs that you have for living with yours?
13. Are you comfortable working under deadlines even when you have to make quick adaptations because things haven't gone according to plan?
14. Do you find the study of science both intrinsically interesting and more convincing than "common sense"?
15. Do you expect your professional life to be one of seeking out continuing education in your field?

Thank you for answering these questions honestly. For more information on the field of dog training, go to the APDT website: www.apdt.com .