



A Guide for Aspiring Dog Trainers. OUR ETHOS

Welfare First

Prioritizing the long-term welfare of dogs in training ensures they can live harmoniously within society. This approach not only addresses the immediate goals of behaviour modification but also considers the dog's overall well-being and ability to adapt to various social situations. By focusing on welfare, trainers contribute to the development of well-adjusted dogs that are less likely to exhibit problematic behaviours, fostering positive relationships between dogs and their human companions, and promoting a safer community for everyone.





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Humane Training

Dog-friendly training methods focus on building a positive human-canine relationship through understanding, patience, and mutual respect. These methods employ positive reinforcement techniques, such as treats, praise, and play, to encourage good behaviour rather than punishing or correcting undesirable behaviour. This approach enhances the bond between dog and owner, promotes trust, and facilitates effective communication. It recognizes the emotional and psychological needs of the dog, ensuring training is a rewarding and enjoyable experience for both the dog and the trainer.





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Professional Conduct

Treating clients with respect and without discrimination, while ensuring safety, is foundational in dog training. This principle emphasizes the importance of creating an inclusive, supportive environment where all clients feel valued and secure. Safety protocols protect clients, trainers, and dogs, minimizing risks during training sessions. By fostering respect and prioritizing safety, trainers can cultivate positive, productive relationships with clients, conducive to effective learning and mutual understanding, thereby enhancing the overall training experience for everyone involved.

A hand holding a black marker is shown writing the words 'CODE OF CONDUCT' in a white, hand-drawn, chalk-like font on a black background. The text is arranged in three lines: 'CODE' on the top line, 'OF' in the middle, and 'CONDUCT' on the bottom line. The hand is positioned on the right side of the frame, with the marker tip touching the end of the word 'CONDUCT'.



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Confidentiality is Key

Maintaining client confidentiality and securing informed consent for any recordings are paramount practices in dog training. This ensures that personal and sensitive information is protected, respecting clients' privacy rights. It also means that any use of recordings, whether for educational, promotional, or other purposes, is done transparently and with explicit approval from the client. These practices build trust, demonstrate professionalism, and uphold ethical standards, reinforcing a safe and respectful training environment.





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No Aversives

Avoiding tools and methods that rely on force, fear, or intimidation is crucial in dog training. This includes avoiding devices like pet correctors that emit air hisses, noise-emitting devices such as Dog Stop or ultrasonic tools, training discs, any form of spray collars, electronic stimulation collars, and restrictive collars like slip chains or prong collars. These practices can harm the dog's physical and psychological well-being, eroding trust and hindering effective learning. For a comprehensive understanding of ethical guidelines, refer to the full code of ethics on the APDTNZ website.





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Continuous Learning

Engaging in professional development is essential for dog trainers to stay updated with the latest best practices and sound scientific principles in animal behaviour and training methodologies. This commitment to continual learning not only enhances a trainer's skill set but also ensures that they can offer the most effective, humane, and evidence-based training techniques. Staying informed about advancements in the field helps trainers adapt to new knowledge, improving outcomes for dogs and their owners while maintaining the highest standards of professionalism and ethical practice.





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Stay Within Your Competency

Providing advice only within one's areas of expertise and referring behavioural or medical concerns to qualified professionals, such as behaviourists and veterinarians, is crucial in dog training. Venturing beyond one's knowledge base can lead to misdiagnosis or incorrect handling, potentially exacerbating a dog's behavioural issues or health problems. This misstep not only undermines the trust between client and trainer but can also result in harm to the dog and liability issues for the trainer. It underscores the importance of recognizing the limits of one's expertise for the well-being of the dogs and the integrity of the profession.





A Guide for Aspiring Dog Trainers. YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES

Promote Responsible Dog Ownership

Educating on the responsibilities of being a dog owner in New Zealand involves understanding and adhering to specific laws designed to ensure the welfare of dogs and the safety of the community. This includes registering your dog with the local council, microchipping for identification, and adhering to local bylaws related to leash requirements, noise control, and the provision of adequate care and control. New Zealand's Animal Welfare Act also mandates the humane treatment of dogs, prohibiting neglect and cruelty. These regulations underscore the importance of responsible dog ownership, including providing proper healthcare, socialization, and training based on positive reinforcement, aligning with the APDTNZ's ethical guidelines.





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Professional Integrity

In the unregulated field of dog training, maintaining professional liability insurance and accurately representing one's qualifications becomes even more critical. This approach not only safeguards the trainer in an industry without standardized regulations but also ensures clients are engaging with professionals committed to ethical and effective practices. Honesty about one's skills and continuous professional development are key to upholding the integrity and trustworthiness of the dog training profession, emphasizing the responsibility trainers must provide quality service and contribute positively to the field.





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Prohibited Techniques and Tools

Recent scientific research has consistently highlighted the negative consequences of using aversive or fear-based training methods on dogs. Studies show that such techniques can lead to increased stress, anxiety, and aggression in dogs, potentially damaging the human-animal bond. Furthermore, aversive methods have been linked to a higher risk of developing behavioural problems, as they may inhibit learning and trust between the dog and owner. This body of evidence supports the stance of organizations like the APDTNZ, advocating for the prohibition of devices and methods that cause fear, pain, or discomfort, emphasizing the importance of positive reinforcement and humane training practices.





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Ensure you are upto date with information

The latest academic understanding of dog social interactions emphasizes complex, fluid hierarchies rather than the outdated 'pack theory' which implies strict dominance structures. Modern research suggests that dogs engage in social interactions based on factors like individual personality, previous experiences, and context-specific behaviours rather than fixed roles of dominance and submission. This approach recognizes the importance of communication, cooperation, and learning in the social lives of dogs, moving away from the simplistic and often misleading notions of alpha status and pack dynamics. This perspective encourages training methods that focus on positive reinforcement, understanding individual behaviour, and fostering healthy socialization, aligning with the principles advocated by organizations like the APDTNZ.

