

Obedience Training

Dog obedience classes are the best investment you can make. It will most probably save your dogs life and definitely save your sanity. Obedience is a funny word. It conjures up slavish deference and that makes people very uncomfortable. On the other hand, dogs are pack animals they look for a leader. If they do not find one, they will take the lead and that is where the trouble can start. So think of it as training your dog to take cues from you, to instil trust that your commands are for his benefit. To understand that there are rewards for acceptable behaviour and consequences for not following the rules.

In reality, the classes will teach dog owners what they need to learn about being in charge. The classes teach owners the importance of consistency and simplicity for commands. Phrases like “sit” and “down” instead of: “Spike, you are making mommy very unhappy when you pull like that please hold still for a moment while I get my arm back in its socket” or remembering to use the same command every time. Does “down” mean “lie down” or “get off the kitchen counter”?

Do not overlook the importance of socialising your dog. There are many types of dogs in the class. Some more aggressive, some very passive and one of the few times size doesn't matter is in the dominance of character. Teach your dog how to be around other dogs and play nice. Nothing is sadder than a dog confined to the back yard because of poor training.

Looking for classes or trainers can be like treading into a minefield. There are as many specialists as there are “fleas on a hound dog” so do your homework. Ask around. Visit classes before hand. Make sure the class times and location will suit your schedule. I have seen many people come in to classes tired and frazzled just going through the motions and that serves no one. The philosophies of the training are important. Too many trainers believe that you must dominate through intimidation. That can be one way to go, but others will take a more loving cause and effect approach.

Some people believe that they should send their dogs away to have them trained by someone else. That will makes dogs obedient but to whom? I don't believe that there is an easy way. You have to put in the time. Also, as I stated, the classes teach the owners how to teach the dogs that means you train your dog 24 hours a day, not just once a week at the class. You will be given the tools but you must use them.

Fall is a time when we think about getting back into a groove, after a lazy summer, so now is the best time to get your pooch in to a class. It will make him more fun to be around, and easier, to get your life back to “normal”... whatever that is!