



## **Why You Need a Professional Dog Trainer**

Does the idea of hiring a dog trainer sound expensive to you? Replacing a chewed up sofa would probably be a lot more.

A professional is definitely a better value than shelling out countless dollars for “training systems” or equipment that doesn’t work. New books, ebooks and DVDs are cropping up in stores and online. Infomercials and Internet sites promise to save you money from having to hire a professional trainer. But dog owners need to remember the adage “Buyer Beware”.

A good media resource definitely has its place. Learning about dog behavior and the science behind training is invaluable. Books and videos are great to have as handy references. But when it comes to teaching you how to train, these sources have some significant limitations.

The main issue with books is fairly obvious. No matter how many great photos may be included in the training manual, the visuals are not as effective as actual demonstrations. Text that is unclear, technical or even over-simplified risks misinterpretation. This leads to miscommunication between owner and dog, leading to further problems.

Another limitation of any media is the absence of feedback. Clear communication and timing are critical to train any animal. Often owners may give their dog a verbal cue, while the body language says the opposite. Another common error is correcting at inappropriate times. These mistakes cause confusion in the dog leading to undesired outcomes. A video or book can’t let you know if you cued the dog properly or not.

Further owner confusion occurs due to assumptions like “if it worked for that dog, it should work for mine”. Many owners seem to ignore TV show disclaimers and want to believe they can fix their dog’s issues without additional help. The fallacy, however, is that behavior modification does not happen in 10, 20 or even 60 minutes. A lot of work must be done that doesn’t make the final cut.

Working directly with an experienced professional is, therefore, the best bet. A good trainer has to be a good educator. After all, he or she is training you. The skilled trainer will work with you to develop a program specifically suited to your needs. A quality program will include learning what drives behaviors, improving canine-human communication, proper correction and more. In addition to instructing you on managing your dog, an experienced professional trainer will help you learn to weed good information from bad. And, let’s face it, there is a lot of misinformation out there, especially on the Internet.

If you are finally convinced to get professional help, be sure the trainer is right for you and your dog. Every dog-owner team is unique. There is no systematic training that works for everyone. For additional advice, check out my tip on “Finding A Trainer” ([http://head-to-tail.com/files/find\\_a\\_trainer.pdf](http://head-to-tail.com/files/find_a_trainer.pdf)).