

# Finding a Trainer



## Our Training Philosophy

Second City Canine Rescue's mission has always been to Rescue Responsibly. Part of rescuing responsibly includes doing what is best for pets and their people. Force-free training methods focusing on positive reinforcement helps to strengthen the human-animal bond. Scientific research shows that it works more consistently and effectively than the use of aversive methods, such as prong or electronic collars, choke chains, etc. We want to help set you and your dog up for success, and using appropriate training methods is one of the best ways you can do that!

## Dog training: An Unregulated Industry

Did you know that there are ZERO qualifications required to become a dog trainer? Anyone in the world can wake up, decide they're going to be a dog trainer and start charging money! Without any learning or hands-on experience.

Unfortunately it is not uncommon for dogs to be mishandled, mistreated, abused, and even killed by irresponsible and abusive trainers, which is why it is critically important that you VET your trainer. There are training techniques still being used today that can cause lifelong trauma and behavior issues for your dog! Included in this brochure are some things to avoid and to look for when hiring a trainer.

## All Dogs Learn Best Through Positive Training: *Fear, Submission, and Pain Should Not Be Involved*

When hiring a trainer, look for someone who says they use 'positive reinforcement', 'force free', or 'LIMA' training. Unfortunately, because training is an unregulated field, trainers can SAY they are using positive methods when in fact they aren't! This is why it's important to ask a trainer the following questions.

### Red Flags To Watch Out For:

- Lots of talk about dominance. Dominance is irrelevant to dog training: this is a huge red flag!
- Claims that behavior change will be immediate. Behavior change takes time and trainers who are able to "achieve results" in one session are typically suppressing behaviors using pain or intimidation.
- Guarantees results. Any reputable trainer will NOT be offering guarantees; behavior is far too complex to do so.
- Claims to only be self-taught. If the trainer has no continuing education that should be a red flag. The best trainers are always learning.
- Refusal to use food. If a trainer refuses to use food to train, they are likely either completely ineffective OR inhumane, OR, BOTH.
- Calls themselves a behaviorist. The title behaviorist should be reserved for veterinary behaviorists and certified applied animal behaviorists.

### Questions to ask:

#### What happens when my dog gets it right?

They should give the dog food, toys, play, or something the dog REALLY likes to tell them they did a good job! Just a pat on the head isn't enough!

#### What happens when my dog gets it wrong?

If the trainer says they'll give the dog a "correction", ask them what that looks like. Will they be getting physical with the dog? Hitting them? Yanking on their necks? A humane trainer will not use physical corrections; instead they will remove whatever it is the dog is finding reinforcing, and teach the dog an incompatible behavior to do instead!

#### What techniques or tools will they use?

The trainer should use food generously, and may choose to use toys as well. If the trainer uses any device that is designed to make the dog uncomfortable (shock collars, prong collars, and choke chains are most commonly used) look for another trainer. These tools come with serious risks of side effects including increased fear and aggression.

### Recommended Local Trainers

A Sound Beginning (Chicagoland)  
[asoundbeginningprogram.com](http://asoundbeginningprogram.com)

Dog Behavior Solutions (Chicago)  
[dogbehaviorsolutions.net](http://dogbehaviorsolutions.net)

Mindful Methods (Chicagoland)  
[mindfulmethodstraining.com](http://mindfulmethodstraining.com)

Happy Hound University (NW Suburbs)  
[happyhounduniversity.com](http://happyhounduniversity.com)

#### Certified Veterinary Behaviorist:

Insight Animal Behavior Services (Chicago)  
[insightfulanimals.com](http://insightfulanimals.com)

For additional training assistance, contact:  
[Training@sccrescue.org](mailto:Training@sccrescue.org)

# Aversive Training Tools + Techniques: what they are & why to avoid them



(adapted from "Position Statement on Humane Dog Training," American Veterinary Society of Animal Behavior, 2021).

## What are aversive training tools and techniques?

### Tools that inflict pain:

- choke chains
- prong collars
- electronic shock collars
- vibrate collars
- citronella spray collars

### Intimidation:

- squirt bottles
- shaker noise cans
- compressed air cans
- "bonking" or hitting
- shouting
- forceful manipulation such as "alpha rolls" or "dominance downs"

### Physical correction

- leash jerking
- physical force
- flooding ("exposure") in a way that feels unsafe to a dog & does not give them the choice to opt out of the session

## Why should aversive tools & techniques be avoided?

The consequences (and lasting effects) from aversive (physically or emotionally unpleasant) training methods are well documented by research. Use of aversive training can result in:

- increased anxiety and fear-related aggression
- avoidance and learned helplessness (acting helpless and powerless)
- decreased motivation to engage in training
- decreased interaction with human members of the household

The scariest outcome that we often see in rescue is that dogs trained with fear-based tools or techniques are more likely to snap or bite suddenly or "out of nowhere" because they have learned to suppress warning signs such as growling or barking.

## Is aversive training appropriate for dogs exhibiting aggression?

Aggression should be treated with effective, compassionate, and humane methods of training, rather than with "a heavy hand." If you observe any signs of aggression, consult a reward-based trainer, board-certified veterinary behaviorist, or certified applied animal behaviorist.

For specific trainer referrals and information on how to find a reward-based trainer, please refer to the other side of this sheet and the list of recommended trainers included in this adoption packet.

## Does reward-based training allow dogs to do unwanted behaviors?

Use of reward-based methods does NOT mean dogs are allowed to do anything they want. All animals learn best when given appropriate structure, routine, and guidelines. However, it is imperative that these boundaries be taught without the use of fear, intimidation, or pain.