



Willow Service Dogs L.L.C.

## Trainer Interview Questions

When interviewing a trainer it can get complicated. Some hold certification where others gained education through reading, books, webinars and workshops.

That does not mean all Certified Trainers are good nor does it mean Uncertified Trainers are bad. There are many ways to get education in an unregulated field that offers no formal education through an accredited school. I have simplified this for you and made a downloadable pdf for you to interview any trainer you would like to hire to make things simple

The first thing you want to do is visit the website of the trainer. Then visit the websites of any certifying organization of any certificate they have to make sure they are legitimate. Memberships certificates will say membership on them. Dog science is advancing every day and things are changing fast. Continuing education is important and where memberships come in. The methods from 20 years ago of jerking dogs around by the collar and using Pack Theory or Alpha Rolls are outdated. Science has found a more humane way. Zoo's have done wonderful work in teaching us this. Don't believe me grab an alligator by the collar and give it a yank...Zoo's have been able to train alligators to be still while they draw blood from its tail with no stress to animal or human by using positive training methods.

All dogs should be trained humanely free of fear or pain. Much like a child development program. This will be your partner and is unlikely you will build trust by using pain and fear. Remember your life depends on this relationship.

The trainer must not only have education. They must have experience working with dogs. Most certifying organizations provide education on line or are knowledge assessed. This means they have passed a test but that does not mean they can apply what they know at the right time for that situation. There are some programs taken at the site of the certifying body but most only have 1 to 3 dogs on site for the student to work with. A good trainer has worked with over 50 dogs of various breeds before they ever start taking clients.

There are lots of fun dog sports out there from Confirmation like you see on TV, Agility, Obedience, Dock Diving, Lure Coursing, Nose Work and Hunting titles to Freestyle and Dog Dancing. You want to know if your trainer competes their own dogs and has titles for the activities they compete in. This shows they can train a dog at competition level.

In this electronic age with cell phones every trainer should be able to provide you with unedited video of them working with a dog. This will show you how they train and interact with the dog and if they are using fear or punishment. Are they having a good

time or does the dog hate it? If they are not using fear or pain and the dog seems to dislike the



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training, The trainer may be using pain and fear when the camera is off. Most reputable trainers post video on their Facebook page or Instagram of them working with the dogs they train. A Program that does not do this I would question. When you look at the video make sure it is not shared from another organization's page either. Some trainers, unfortunately will do this as a trick to get you to think it is their work when it is not.

Is the trainer willing to provide you with references from other trainers and clients not affiliated with their program. This is important. The new movement in education is to get trainers in a way that is fun for the dog, human and trainer, forming relationships by teaching dogs what we want them to do rather than causing fear or pain when they do something wrong. Trainer networking is what makes this happen. Sometimes the trainer may need to consult with another trainer or to refer you out if the situation is above their level of expertise. Scientific dog training is Psychology and NO Trainer knows everything..If they do, find another trainer even if they have a Phd.

This is a quote from Victoria Stilwell-Positivity who specializes in Pet Dog Trainer

“That alphabet soup that shows up behind your trainer’s name means that he/she cared enough to seek out an education. You may find the following letters: CCPDT-KA, CPDT, IAABC, PCT-A, KPA-CPT and others listed beside or under your trainer’s name. If you are curious about his or her background, heading to the source of these letters is a good first step. Some indicate a certification and others are positive affiliations that they can join. Understanding your trainer’s credentials and their philosophy may help you feel more confident when it comes to developing a treatment and training plan.”

### Summery

Certification is not the Gold Stamp There are good and bad dog trainers both certified and uncertified. Service Dog Training is a specialty along with Detection, Sport Dog Training and Puppy Classes. Any trainer you hire for a specialty should have experience in the area they specialize in. The best advice I can give is watch video of the trainer working with dogs or better yet their clients working with the dogs. The dog will tell you what you need to know. Most of the video I post are unedited so they are not pretty or perfect to look at nor are they commercial ready and some are boring if we are waiting for an odor to pool for a room search. I post what I get in one take. Poke around my webpage. All of my information is here along with video’s of the dogs training and working. You can also find more video and information by visiting my facebook page.

These are questions to ask if you are hiring any trainer from service work to taking a puppy class, obedience class or a class for a dog sport.



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### Trainer Check Sheet

Company or Trainer Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_  
Email Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Website \_\_\_\_\_

1. Are they educated? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No
2. Do they hold Professional memberships and continue  
Their education? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No
3. How many successful dogs have they trained in their specialty? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Have they titled their own dogs in sport competition? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No
5. How many dogs and breeds have they worked with total? \_\_\_\_\_
6. Can they provide you video of a dog they trained \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No
7. Do they avoid use of aversive tools such as prong  
collars, electric shock collars, and Choke collars? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No
8. Can they provide you with a reference from a  
Professional Trainer? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No
9. Can they provide you with a letter of recommendation from  
a client? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No
10. Does the trainer seem Trustworthy? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No