



Course Information, Terms and Rules

Thank you for your interest in our classes. Puppies and young dogs need to experience and enjoy a well-planned socialisation and training programme from an early age if they are to develop into well-adjusted, happy adult dogs with no behavioural problems. Puppy class is aimed at puppies under 4 ½ months of age at the start of the course. Juniors classes do not have an age limit, but are aimed at dogs that have had at least some prior training – either in a class or at home – although beginners can be accommodated. Training classes are intended to provide training and help owners train their dogs and encourage good behaviours. However, they do not and cannot address serious aggression or other behavioural issues - if your dog has aggression issues towards people or other dogs, please discuss this with me before joining as, depending on the nature of the problem, a behavioural consultation is sometimes necessary before s/he can be allowed to join a class so we can ensure your dog will not be overly-stressed by attending, and that other people and dogs are kept safe.

This class relies entirely on “reward-based” training methods. Good or correct behaviour is rewarded, while owners are taught how to make incorrect behaviour *non-rewarding*. Any “punishment” used during training involves removal of something rewarding, rather than application of something unpleasant. Reward-based methods are more effective than old fashioned punishment-based methods because they encourage dogs to work enthusiastically and voluntarily in an attempt to earn a reward. Reward-based methods also help to build (rather than break down) trust and the bond between dog and owner and tend to build, rather than erode trust in people in general. Using harsh punishments in an attempt to stop a dog from doing something is generally very ineffective as the dog will often not fully understand which particular piece of behaviour he is being punished for and will often choose to inhibit *all* of his behaviour in an attempt to prevent further punishment. Even worse, use of harsh methods and reprimands very often give rise to aggression and other behavioural problems, as the dog becomes more fearful and defensive, as well as confused. Food rewards of varying levels of desirability are used initially in reward-based training because they are the most practical and effective way of teaching a new skill. Once a skill has been learned sufficiently, food rewards can be gradually reduced and/or replaced by other rewards such as toys, games, praise, attention, freedom etc.

Class sizes are kept small to allow for more individual attention and to ensure that the experience is positive for all attendees. For puppy class a typical class size is 8-10, maximum 12. For Juniors, A typical class is 8, maximum is normally 8 (although occasionally I may allow 9 if two people apply on the same day or in the same puppy class). Classes are held on Mondays, although there are no classes on the second Monday of each month (due to other bookings in the hall) and most Bank holidays – but check the booking slip for your class for confirmation of exact dates.

Helen Taylor has an honours degree in Zoology from Southampton University and an Advanced Diploma in Canine Behavioural Management, and is a full-time professional pet behavioural counsellor and dog trainer. She is a full member of two of the most highly respected and recognised professional organisations in the UK:

- The Association of Pet Dog Trainers (APDT No 881) – the UK association for pet dog trainers using positive training methods only - “kind, fair and effective”.
- The Association of Pet Behaviour Counsellors (APBC) – The only organisation for professional behavioural counsellors in the UK that is universally recognised by veterinary bodies, animal charities and insurance companies.

Both organisations operate extremely stringent entry criteria based on assessment of qualifications, experience and actual effectiveness, and both have very strict rules barring the use of any harsh methods whatsoever. No punitive methods or equipment are allowed, including choke chains, slip leads, noise devices, spray or shock collars. Most animal welfare organisations, charities and veterinary organisations now only endorse trainers and behaviourists that are members of the APDT

or APBC respectively as understanding of the dangers of using harsh methods becomes more widespread.

Please bring the following with you to class each week:

1. **Very important:** Your dog's vaccination certificate or other proof of vaccination (first night only).
2. A bum bag or treat pouch to hold treats, etc. A bag is better than pockets as it helps to free up your hands and allow you to keep treats out of range of your dog while you are working with him. Please do not use plastic bags as these can be fatal for a dog (yours or someone else's) if swallowed. Treat pouches may be available to buy at class.
3. Smelly training treats. **Please don't rely just on pieces of your dog's complete food even if this works at home!** Make sure any treat is deliverable in tiny pieces no bigger than the nail on your little finger but please bring plenty – at least a mug-full of tiny treats are required.
4. A water bowl (optional). Water is available in the hall but communal water bowl is not provided.
5. One or two toys and maybe a chew to keep your dog occupied in between exercises.
6. A suitable collar and lead (see below) and a harness if you have one.
7. A mat or piece of bedding for your dog to lie on if you wish.
8. A leather or webbing lead (not a retractable lead). If you have a harness or headcollar for your dog, please bring this also.

Course Rules and Terms and Conditions

Your puppy or dog must be up to date on all conventional vaccinations (kennel cough is NOT required) and **you must bring his vaccination certificate with you on the first night.**

Homeopathic vaccinations are not acceptable. Puppies may be accepted after their first vaccination – at the owner's risk - but, if this is the case, do not put your puppy down outside the hall.

Course places are allocated on a first come, first served basis and payment is required to secure a place. Normal class size is 8 dogs or 10 puppies, although we sometimes accept extras in puppies (if demand is high and puppies would be too old to join at the next intake) – up to an absolute maximum of 12 puppies. If the class you are joining is full, you will be offered the choice of a full refund, transfer onto another class, or a one to one training session (and refund of any balance outstanding).

All dogs must be kept under the control and supervision of their owners. You must watch and control your own dog at all times (with help and advice from us) so that you do not allow it to frighten or hurt another – whether intentionally or not. Whilst all reasonable precautions are taken, all dogs and people attend these activities at the owner's risk and the organisers cannot take responsibility for loss, damage, or injury however caused to dogs, persons, or property.

Children in class

Well-behaved children of any age are warmly welcomed, and can add to the fun. Children under 16 cannot be held legally responsible for a dog so must always be accompanied by a responsible adult at all times. Attending children will need to be capable of sitting quietly for periods of up to 10 minutes at a time (interspersed with practical sessions that they can join in with) and must not cause a disruption to teaching or a nuisance to other attendees. It can be helpful to bring an additional adult to help with the children.