

***Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's)
About Innovative Training Beginner's Classes***

Please read these FAQ's and the information on our training application. If you still have questions, it is best to email us with your specific question(s). If necessary, telephone us and leave a message and state your specific question(s). Then leave your name and evening telephone number.

Is my dog too young (or too old) for your beginner's classes?

Puppies may be enrolled as young as 16 weeks (provided they are reasonably confident and have been well-socialized with people and other puppies). There is no upper age limit. Older dogs, and even seniors can also benefit from training. The average starting age is 5 to 9 months, although there are usually some adult dogs in classes.

How many dogs are enrolled in a class?

Class size is limited to about 14 dogs. Gary, Kathy and Pat teach the classes.

What day(s) and time(s) are your classes held? How many classes are there in a session?

Beginner's classes are held on Tuesday evenings from 6:45 to 8:15 PM. There are eight 1½ hour classes (1 class each week) per session. See the Training Application for specific dates.

I have scheduling conflicts so I will miss a class or two. How much of a problem is this?

It is not unusual to have to miss 1 or 2 classes. If possible, we recommend that you not miss the first 3 classes of the session, or at least be able to attend 2 of the 3 first 3 classes. We provide detailed lesson plans each week to give you an excellent review of information covered in class.

Do you train my dog or do I do the training?

We can briefly demonstrate with your dog, but you do the "hands on" training. We provide lots of instruction and feedback to teach you how to train your dog in small groups.

Besides learning to teach some basic skills, will I also receive training and guidance to stop my dog's problem behaviors (be it jumping up on people, getting into the garbage, excessive barking, destructive chewing, etc.)?

Yes, preventing and reducing problem behaviors is an important part of obedience training. After teaching you to teach your dog basic skills, we spend time during the second half of our session helping to equip owners with strategies to alleviate their dog's problem behaviors. We offer a Question & Answer session during the 5th week of class to specifically address behavior problems occurring at home.

What training equipment will I need to bring to class?

You will need a 4-foot leather leash and a properly sized training collar (usually starting with a buckle collar, a so-called "choke chain" or an Easy Walk™ harness). To ensure that our students have the correct equipment, we have these items available at competitive prices. Wait until the first night of class to purchase your equipment to be sure that it is properly sized. If you have purchased equipment, bring it with you for our inspection.

Have you ever had [my dog's breed] in class before? How does this breed do in your classes?

Over the many years, we have had almost every breed and temperament represented in classes. All dogs, including those within the same breed, are uniquely different. All dogs are capable of growth and development and can greatly benefit from a solid training program.

I would like my [young] son or daughter to take the class. Is this O.K.?

Please check the minimum age restrictions for a trainer. These are listed on the reverse side of our application.

My dog has bitten another dog or a person. Is my dog appropriate for your class?

If your dog mouths or chews on you or others in play, this is not true aggression. However, we cannot enroll dogs with true aggression problems. If your dog is biting and causing injury (breaking the skin) to people or other dogs without provocation, your dog is not suitable for our classes.

Can I bring a family member with me when I come to class?

Yes. Observing classes is an excellent learning opportunity for a spouse or family member. However, if bringing a child or adolescent, they must remain seated in the building and not be disruptive. See also *Training Rules* on the reverse side of the Training Application.

Can I observe a class (before I decide whether to enroll my dog)?

Yes. You may sit quietly and observe a part of, or one entire beginners class. If a beginner class is not currently in session, you may observe one advanced class.

What do I do about attending class if my dog is ill, or my female dog is in season?

If your dog is ill, or injured, come to observe class without your dog and pick up the lesson plan for that week. If your female is coming in or is in season, contact your instructor as it may or may not be appropriate to bring her.

Can I expect my dog to be much improved after the 8-week session? Do you offer any such guarantees?

With rare exceptions, there are vast improvements in our class graduates. We strive to provide you with the best set of procedures and tools, based upon and tailored to how your dog is responding. However, we cannot guarantee “success,” as we cannot ensure that all students will follow through with training their dogs outside of class, and employ the procedures practiced in class.

My dog has already taken an obedience class from [another training organization] but [pulls excessively when walking, does not come when called, etc.] Can we still benefit from taking an Innovative Training beginner class?

Yes. We have over 25 years of experience and successes with students. Since we also utilize a teaching assistant, we offer an unusually favorable teacher-student ratio. Unlike many other obedience organizations, we have students and dogs up for floor practice in small groups. This allows for an exchange of timely feedback to students learning new behaviors. Immediate feedback is critical when learning new skills. Timely feedback prevents students from practicing the wrong behaviors, thereby developing bad habits that become difficult to break. See also next question below.

How are Innovative Training classes different from other classes? What kinds of training methods do you use?

Among other things, we break down the training exercises into very small steps. This makes teaching and learning easier for you and your dog. We use dog friendly training procedures. Our classes are 90 minutes, whereas most other organizations provide a 60-minute class. We quickly and effectively use food to teach and reward behaviors. Then we gradually reduce the use of food. We also recognize that most dogs benefit from a balanced approach to training. “Balance” means that after teaching with positive motivation, we later gently enforce our instructions when necessary to ensure reliability. After we have shown the dog what to do, and made it easy and attractive to do an action, he may choose to not do it. We use the lowest level of enforcement (discipline) that is necessary. Effective teaching, the use of rewards and judicious use of enforcement result in happy and obedient dogs — and happier owners too!