

Dog Trainer Practices and Preferences Survey – Pilot

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Study Purpose

- The study is a descriptive study of current dog trainer practices and preferences.
- The study was developed to be used by trainers as a formative assessment by allowing them to refer their clients to an Owner/handler (client) satisfaction survey.
- The study would allow the greater dog training community to see how owners/handlers respond to different training methods and equipment.

Definitions

- **Dog Trainer** – anyone who provides any service to dog owners or handlers that claims to modify a dog's behavior, to increase desired behaviors, to decrease undesired behaviors; including those who claim to teach dog owners or handlers how to train their own dog(s). This applies whether or not the Dog Trainer is paid or volunteers.
- **Dog Owner/Handler** – anyone who hires or seeks a Dog Trainer's (as defined above) advice, or attends a class in which dogs and owners are present.

Definitions

- **Practices** – The methods and resources provided by dog trainers to their client(s).
- **Preferences** – measured by a semantic differential scale with 5 equal points and end references of “1 – Never” and “5- most frequently.”
 - Items related to preference, ask how frequently a dog trainer recommends a piece of training equipment to their client(s).
- **Training equipment** – any item manufactured or used to control or secure a dog while training, to reward or punish, or otherwise enhance training efforts.

Two Surveys were developed

- Dog Trainer Practices and Preferences Survey
 - Demographics – location and professional role
 - Short response items regarding classes, sessions, recommended daily practice
 - Fixed response items regarding services provided.
 - Fixed response items regarding training equipment
 - Open response items; given 3 common behavioral complaints from owners/handlers asks how the trainer might likely respond.
- Dog Owner/handler Satisfaction Survey
 - Fixed response items regarding satisfaction
 - Fixed response items regarding their dog's current behavior

The surveys were administered online and were open to the public.

- A website^{1a, 1b} was created with a description of the survey
- Survey was developed using Google Documents, spreadsheets and forms.²
- A Facebook (FB) page³ was created leading to the webpage
- A FB advertisement was placed.
- The FB Ad targeted those on FB:
 - who live in the United States
 - are age 18 and older
 - who like animal behavior, canine central, canines, dog lovers, dog trainer, dog training or veterinarian
- Several invitations were posted to internet groups⁴ with an interest in dog training
- An additional invitation was posted on a dog training group within LinkedIn⁵

The responses for each of the surveys were exported and examined in Excel¹

- For the Dog Trainer Survey there were a total of 72 responses**
- For the Owner/Handler Survey there were a total of 18 responses**

1) Further examination to be done in PASW 18, formerly known as SPSS

Dog Trainer Survey Demographic Item – Practice Location

- **In which state is your practice located?**
 - Respondents represented 25 states within the US.
 - Several responses came from Europe, Canada and other countries.

In which COUNTY is your practice located?

- From the responses, the word “COUNTY” appears not to have been clear
 - many respondents supplied their “Country”
 - this item needs to be clarified prior to subsequent administration of the survey.
- It was not anticipated that there would be several responses from Europe, Canada, and other countries.
 - Trainers from those areas did respond
 - ✦ Additional items need to be added to allow proper collection of this information.
 - The number of responses from those outside the US was too low to be reported outside the aggregate responses without compromising anonymity.

Professional Role – Length of Practice

Professional Role	N	%
Single trainer or consultant	50	69
Owner of a training facility with multiple trainers	9	13
Employee at a training facility	9	13
Others	4	6
total	72	101
(rounding error of 1)		

Length of Practice in Years		
Averages	Mean	11.5
	Mode	3 0
	Median	8 0
Spread	Minimum	1 0
	Maximum	40 0

Services Provided ¹	
Private training	65
Behavioral Consultations	62
Puppy classes	51
Other ²	40
CGC classes	36
Temperament Testing	32
AKC Obedience ³	20
Agility classes	17

- 1) Respondents may select more than one checkbox, so percentages add up to more than 100.
- 2) Since so many chose “Other” the short open responses will be grouped and categories added as needed.
- 3) Since there were respondents from outside the US, “AKC” will be removed and the item will read “Obedience Training”

Description of Services

Service	Yes		No		N/A	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
I encourage clients to call or email between sessions with questions.	68	94	4	6	0	
I provide additional handouts and references to my students.	66	93	4	6	1	1
I encourage all household members to try, at home, what was learned in the session.	66	92	4	6	2	3
I encourage all household members (at least all children over a certain age) to attend training sessions.	64	90	3	4	4	6
I provide an outline of the entire course on the first session.	45	63	21	30	5	7
I have a website with resources posted.	40	56	27	38	4	6
I request that dogs are not in attendance on the first session.	28	41	35	51	6	9
I recommend that one person in the household work with the dog during the course.	16	23	51	73	3	4
I recommend that one person practice with the dog at home.	10	14	58	83	2	3



Rate the following training equipment based on how frequently you recommend its use to clients.

Equipment	Most Frequently ←————→ Never										Valid Responses			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	Mean	Mode	Median
6' leash	61	87.1	5	7.1	4	5.7	0	0.0	0	0.0	70	4.81	5	5
Treats	60	84.5	3	4.2	6	8.5	1	1.4	1	1.4	71	4.69	5	5
Toys	49	69.0	14	19.7	6	8.5	0	0.0	2	2.8	71	4.52	5	5
Regular Collar	48	66.7	12	16.7	11	15.3	1	1.4	0	0.0	72	4.49	5	5
Clicker	38	53.5	9	12.7	9	12.7	5	7.0	10	14.1	71	3.85	5	5
20' leash	28	40.6	9	13.0	18	26.1	8	11.6	6	8.7	69	3.65	5	4
Target	22	30.6	20	27.8	16	22.2	7	9.7	7	9.7	72	3.60	5	4
No-pull Harness	18	25.0	14	19.4	16	22.2	6	8.3	18	25.0	72	3.11	5	3
Target Stick	15	21.1	14	19.7	16	22.5	10	14.1	16	22.5	71	3.03	3 & 1	3
Head Collar (dog halter)	10	14.1	13	18.3	18	25.4	16	22.5	14	19.7	71	2.85	3	3
D.A.P. (Dog Appeasing Pheromone)	6	9.1	7	10.6	14	21.2	13	19.7	26	39.4	66	2.30	1	2
Choke Collar	6	8.3	3	4.2	8	11.1	9	12.5	46	63.9	72	1.81	1	1
Prong Collar	3	4.3	4	5.8	8	11.6	15	21.7	39	56.5	69	1.80	1	1
Electric Collar	2	2.8	1	1.4	2	2.8	8	11.3	58	81.7	71	1.32	1	1
Heeling Stick	2	2.8	5	7.0	10	14.1	10	14.1	44	62.0	71	1.75	1	1

Short answer item responses

- Average number of dogs per class
 - Range was 1 to 20 dogs per class
 - Most frequently the range was 6 to 10
- Average number of dogs per trainer within class
 - Range was 1 to 12
 - Most frequently the range was 5 or 6

Short answers continued

- Frequency and duration of classes or sessions. For each course, sessions are held:
 - More than once a week (same handler/dog teams)
 - Majority of those who provide classes hold them once per week, with consultants providing sessions depending on client need.
 - Weekly (same handler/dog teams)
 - Majority of weekly classes last one hour
 - Monthly (same handler/dog teams)
 - Several trainers provide specialty training on a monthly basis, these include trick training, and bird dog, and tracking
 - Length of sessions (in minutes)
 - Classes range from 45 minutes to 2 hours
 - Length of course (in weeks)
 - Courses range between 4 and 12 weeks with the majority running 6 to 8 weeks.

Short answers continued

- Between visits or classes, what frequency and duration do you recommend that your clients/patients practice?
 - Total amount of practice daily (number of minutes)
 - Range between 10 minutes and 120 minutes per day
 - Mean of 30 minutes
 - Duration or length of practice session (number of minutes)
 - Range between 2 and 120 minutes per session
 - Mean of 16 minutes

Short answers continued

- Other –describe (i.e., incorporating behavior into daily life)
 - The three most frequent additional pieces of advice were:
 - Provide your dog with plenty of exercise
 - Incorporate training into your daily life (**Nothing In Life Is Free**)
 - Praise your dog for any behavior you want repeated