

Helen Taylor, Certificated Clinical Animal Behaviourist (CCAB)

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Course Information 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. I run three different classes:

1. Puppy class is aimed at puppies from 8 weeks to 5 to 5 ½ months of age at the start of the course.
2. Beginners classes are aimed at those who missed out on puppy classes, but are still under approximately 15-16 months of age. In both cases, no prior training is necessary.
3. Junior Intermediates class - for graduates of a previous Puppy Class or Beginners course (at some point – it does not have to have been immediately prior to the class).

Training classes are intended to help owners train their puppies or young dogs and encourage good behaviours and responsiveness to cues. Puppies and young dogs are taught a variety of useful behaviours on cue including sit, down, stand, stay, wait, give, leave it, recall, lead walking etc, and a variety of theory topics relevant to the age of the puppy are also covered such as mouthing, biting, house-training, socialisation, how to deal with fearfulness and other emerging issues, pros and cons of neutering, exercise, the importance of play, sleep and nosework etc etc. However, classes are not suitable for all dogs. Dogs or puppies that are already moderately to severely fearful of unfamiliar dogs or people (whether this manifests itself as aggression or attempted avoidance) can very easily be made worse by this type of experience. Therefore, if your dog has significant aggression issues towards people or other dogs, or is very fearful, please discuss this with me before joining so we can determine if a class is the right environment for him. On some occasions, depending on the severity of the problem, a behavioural consultation or one-to-one training may be a better alternative to a class. This class is also not suitable for dogs that bark persistently at other dogs or people. While some barking is inevitable in the first week, persistent barking is a sign of significant stress and – through no fault of their own – prevents the other attendees and their dogs from enjoying the class. If you are concerned about your pup's barking or behaviour, please contact me so we can determine whether this is likely to be a problem or not.

This class relies entirely on force-free, reward-based training methods. Good or correct behaviour is rewarded, while owners are taught how to prevent undesired behaviour from being practiced, but instead to set up desirable behaviours to be more rewarding. No aversives or "punishment" are used during training. Reward-based methods are more effective than old fashioned punishment-based or "balanced" methods because they encourage dogs to work enthusiastically and voluntarily in an attempt to earn a reward without causing fearfulness (a common side effect of using aversives). 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.

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.

Helen is also a Certificated Clinical Animal Behaviourist and is listed on the Animal Behaviour and Training Council’s registers of Clinical Animal Behaviourists and Animal Training Instructors.

All these 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:

- **Very important: Your dog’s vaccination certificate or, if this has not yet been issued, some proof from your vet that your dog or puppy has had core vaccinations (Parvovirus, Canine Hepatitis and Distemper) appropriate to his age.** For young puppies, this means at least one set of core vaccinations, but ideally two. If you prefer, you can send in a photocopy or email a scan of this with your application form. Your puppy cannot attend the class until we have seen that he has had at least one set of core vaccines.
- Lots of high value training treats. These should consist of real meat (eg cooked beef, lamb, turkey, hot dog or “moist” commercial treats such as Naturesdiet treats or J R Pet Products Pate) chopped into tiny pieces. While it is useful to bring kibble or lower value treats AS WELL, please do not rely on this alone as what works at home will not necessarily work in the highly distracting class environment (at least at first). Ensure you bring at least a mug-full of tiny treats in total.
- 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.
- A water bowl (optional). Water is available in the hall but communal water bowl is not provided.
- One or two toys and maybe a chew to keep your dog occupied in between exercises.
- A mat or piece of bedding for your dog to lie on if you wish.
- A collar and clip lead (at least 1 metre in length) made of leather or webbing. Please do not use a retractable lead or chain lead in class and note that slip leads and full-check choke chains are not permissible under APDT rules). If you have a harness or headcollar for your dog, please bring this also.
- Poo bags (a bin is provided)

Course Rules and Terms and Conditions

Your puppy or dog must be up to date on all conventional core vaccinations appropriate to his age. Kennel cough is NOT required. As mentioned above, ***you must either send a copy in advance or bring with you to the first session some proof of vaccination (eg his vaccination certificate, or a printout from your vet)***. As your puppy will not be allowed to attend until we have seen this! **Homeopathic vaccinations are not acceptable**. Puppies may be accepted after only one set of core vaccines – at the owner’s risk - but, if this is the case, please carry your puppy in and out of the hall and do not put him down outside at all.

This class is very much a “course” in that each week builds on concepts taught the previous week, so please try to attend all six sessions. It is particularly important that you do not miss Week 1 as many vital concepts are introduced in this first session and it is difficult for owners to catch up if they miss this one. If you know that you will be unable to come to this first session, it may be better to book onto the next class (usually 7 weeks later) rather than miss the first class. However, if you are able to attend, even if your puppy is not (for example due to illness, injury or being in season), please attend without your puppy so you don’t miss anything.

Please be prompt when attending class as classes, allowing time to let your puppy toilet outside the hall if needed. Classes start on time and do not over-run, and latecomers are a distraction to the other attendees, both two and four-legged!

Class sizes (usually maximum 8, but sometimes we may allow 9 on puppy class) are kept small and one experienced class assistant is also provided to allow for more individual attention and to ensure that the experience is positive for all attendees. Course places are allocated on a first come, first served basis and payment is required to secure a place.

Please note that these courses are NOT a puppy party or a playgroup and, in most cases, off-lead free play does not form part of the class. This is because it is very easy for puppies to learn the *wrong* things - especially from play with other puppies – and can learn to bully or be fearful of other dogs in just a few minutes of unmanaged play. A short session of managed play and “meet and greets” are done some weeks so that the puppies are able to practice appropriate interactions but these are normally done on-lead so that any inappropriate behaviour can be prevented immediately before it causes a problem. This is very much the norm among qualified dog trainers and behaviourists in recent years. This also teaches owners how to manage their pup’s interactions with other dogs to help minimise the risk of problems developing, and helps to teach puppies self-control, and helps them to learn to deal with the frustration of not being able to run up to every other person or dog they see!

Extensive handouts are provided electronically to support concepts taught and discussed on this course. These will be made available for download from my website after the first class. If you would prefer a paper copy of the handouts, these are available on request for an additional £5 charge. Please note that all written materials are copyright and not to be distributed or shared with anyone outside the owner’s immediate family without written permission.

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.

For toileting your puppy, please use the grassy edges of the car park or any other grass areas unless marked as “no dogs”. Please pick up after your dog (a bin is provided for bagged dog poo).

Please park carefully to leave space for other attendees, including a few early arrivals for the next class! If you have a four-wheeled drive vehicle, you can park on the grass to increase the parking area. It is NOT recommended that two-wheeled drive cars park on the grass in the winter! Please also feel free to block in my silver Ford Galaxy (that will usually be parked at the end of the hall). Please enter the hall via the main doors half way down the front of the building.

Covid Precautions and Issues

We ask you to limit numbers of attendees to two per puppy if possible. If you wish to bring one or two additional family members to involve them in your puppy’s training, please contact me to discuss. Once I know the overall number and make-up of class attendees I can review numbers of desired “extra” attendees are practical and will accommodate this if I can.

Please use hand-gel (which will be provided) on arrival. Face coverings are not mandatory, and the trainers do not wear them (unless they become mandated by law) as this makes it difficult for attendees to hear properly.

Please do not attend class if you are experiencing any Covid symptoms.

If the instructor has to self-isolate due to Covid symptoms, the class will be paused and restarted after one or two weeks when self-isolation ends

If another lockdown renders indoor classes unlawful, then the remainder of any course currently running will automatically revert to live online sessions via Zoom. If any attendee is unable to use Zoom, a partial pro-rata refund of any remaining sessions (less a course overheads fee of £30) will be offered.

Booking and payment

Payment via BACS with forms sent via email is preferred (and is also the quickest) but you can also pay via cheque with forms sent in the post. See the relevant booking slip for prices and details.

Refund policy

If the class you are trying to join is full by the time your forms and payment reach me, you will be offered the choice of a full refund, a transfer onto another class, or a one-to-one training session (and refund of any additional fees paid). Much more rarely, if there are insufficient numbers to run a class (minimum 5) the start date may be delayed by a week or two. In this instance you will be offered a full refund if you do not wish to wait for the class to start.

More than 10 days prior to the class start date, if you wish to cancel, a full refund will be given. Except in very exceptional circumstances, cancellations requested less than 10 days prior to the course start date will only be refunded **if the place held for you can be filled**. An admin fee of £5 will be deducted from all refunds.

Children in class

Well-behaved children of any age may attend by arrangement (and they need to be taken into account when considering numbers). Children under 16 cannot be held legally responsible for a dog so must always be accompanied and supervised by a responsible adult at all times. All attending children must be capable of sitting quietly for periods of up to 10 minutes at a time while their guardian listens to the trainer (interspersed with practical sessions that they can join in with). Attending children must not approach other attendees' puppies/dogs without their owners' permission, and must not cause a disruption to teaching or a distraction to other attendees. Children can join in with the practical sessions and/or can be occupied with other quiet activities (eg colouring, reading or playing computer games with the sound off).