



East Bay SPCA / Oakland Zoo Teen Wild Guide Exchange Resources

Shelter opportunities

[Foster/Field Trip/Sleepover programs](#)

[General Volunteer Information \(including available roles\)](#)

- [Training Class Assistant Volunteer Description](#)

[Counselor in Training \(CIT\) and Youth Program Assistant \(YPA\) Positions](#) (applications open March 1st for Summer Animal Camp)

[Shelter Scouts](#)

Behavior Career Information

When considering a career in animal training, it's important to remember a few important things:

- Animal training is an unregulated industry. This means that anyone who chooses, regardless of their education, experience, or methods, can set up shop and advertise themselves as an animal trainer.
- Behavior science is a science, like physics and chemistry. And like physics and chemistry, it has natural laws, and is extensively studied in universities all over the world. This is important to understand because of #3:
- The behavioral scientific community overwhelmingly agrees that using positive reinforcement is the most effective and humane training method. Studies have consistently shown that aversive methods, such as the use of punishment (discomfort/intimidation) and the long-disproven "dominance theory" to train behaviors lead to behavioral fallout such as fear, aggression, and learned helplessness, and are not as effective as positive reinforcement.
- Various certification programs DO exist that provide a scientifically based, up-to-date, ethical framework for training dogs. Though as stated in #1, they are not required by law in order to call oneself a trainer.
- **Look for volunteer opportunities!** Not only will you be able to easily discover mentors who can guide you as you explore the industry, but you can get a feel for what aspects of the work are ones that interest you most!



Potential Animal Training Career Pathways

- **A degree in animal behavior or behavior related science**
- **A certification from a program requiring case studies and experience hours.** Perhaps the most highly respected in the industry is the [International Association of Animal Behavior Consultants \(IAABC\)](#). This organization allows you to pursue training credentials for many different species!
- **An immersive program**, such as the [Moorpark Teaching Zoo](#). This intense and competitive program is respected throughout the world.
- **Various seminar and workshop programs**. There are a ton of these out there! Our personal favorite is the [Living and Learning with Animals for Professionals Course \(LLA\)](#) taught by the legendary Susan Friedman. **This is probably the course we would most highly recommend for anyone looking to do a deep dive into the training world!**
- **A training certification** which demonstrates that you have collected a requisite number of hours and have passed some form of test or exam to demonstrate your knowledge in the training world. Some of these are general, and others are specific to one kind of behavior challenge. Here is a rundown of some of the most common:
 - [Certified Professional Dog Trainer or Behavior Consultant \(CPDT/CDBC\)](#). This program is perhaps the most accessibly priced, but is competency-based; that is, you largely get out of it what you bring into it. Many trainers with CPDT credentials are up to date and knowledgeable, but they are not always *required* to be. There can be lax standards in enforcing safeguards for members who choose to use aversive methods.
 - [Karen Pryor Academy \(KPA-CTP\)](#). This is more expensive, but also more immersive—definitely geared towards those who want a more hands-on approach. Tends to have a better track record in terms of being up to date with their methods.
 - [CSAT/SA Pro](#). These two certifications are both focused on specifically training for separation anxiety.
- **Find a trainer you admire, and ASK THEM. Seriously!** Even if this is someone you don't know at all, or is famous/well known in the industry. Most trainers are happy to do what is known as an “informational interview” where you take an hour or so (in person or via Zoom) to ask questions, hear what their pathway was like, and get advice on how you might do something similar!

There are those programs which are slightly “out of date” (still uses some aversive training methods) which we would approach with a grain of salt:

- Animal Behavior College (ABC)
- Association for Professional Dog Training (APDT)

In approaching training, we want to make sure that the certification or program is following the latest in ethical and effective guidelines of our industry. [A great overview is the IAABC statement on the “LIMA” hierarchy](#). We want to make sure that credentials are not mixing aversive methods with positive reinforcement. This “Balanced” training may sound desirable, but studies have shown that mixing aversive methods with positive reinforcement can lead to significant behavioral fallout.



Here are a few of our favorite online training content creators:

- <https://www.instagram.com/jwdogtraining/>
- <https://www.instagram.com/clickerkittens/>
- <https://www.instagram.com/clickstartdogacademy/>
- https://www.instagram.com/ken_ramirez_kpct/
- <https://www.instagram.com/kiki.yablon/>
- Hannah Brannigan's podcast [Drinking from the Toilet](#)
- Alex Kurland/Dominique Day's podcast [Equiosity](#) (my personal fav, even if you're not a horse person! This was how I got my start in the “technical” side of training science)