

Back to School

Helping your canine kids put their best paw forward

It's the start of a new year and time to turn the attention to sending the kiddies back to school—dog school, that is.

This is a great time to plan for attending the obedience and dog training classes held at your local dog-training club throughout the coming year. Regular dog training has some great benefits. The obvious is that (hopefully) you'll have a more obedient dog by your side through the regular sessions.

Regular training also has a social element for you and your dog. You'll meet all sorts of people and all sorts of breeds and mixes of dog. Social interaction at the end of the lead also reinforces canine manners. Most dog clubs only charge a nominal yearly joining fee and thereafter you pay a couple of dollars for each session you attend. You won't be expected to book your slot in advance—just turn up on the day and pay your session fee. A rough guide would be an annual joining fee of around \$15–\$20 and each session \$2–\$4.

Most clubs operate their training on Sunday mornings, rain or shine. Before enrolling you'll have to prove your dog is fully vaccinated, so bring along your certificate from the vet.

Many of the trainers you find at dog clubs are very knowledgeable and can give general training advice. Most will be able to refer you to good dog behaviourists or vets in the area, should you have more pressing or serious health and behaviour questions.

Dog clubs are open to anyone wanting to participate, so you can make it a family activity. Responsible children over 12 are actively encouraged to participate and learn good dog-handling skills. Lessons in how to train your dog to sit, stay, heel and drop are just the basics. Many clubs promote other dog sports like agility and flyball. Introduction to these sports may well bring out your competitive edge and spur you on to seek out regular dog sport training sessions.

What to bring to training

- sun protection
- bum bag or training bag to carry treats, poo bags, money, phone, etc
- motivators for your dog – squeaky toy, training treats, etc
- poo pick-up bags
- appropriate leash and collar – many clubs won't allow retractable or extendable leads as they're deemed unsuitable
- socially and friendly dog



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