

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Before contacting the Club via email or telephone, please read both sides of the New Member Application Form and browse the following list of Frequently Asked Questions.

How do I join the ACT Companion Dog Club?

You must complete a New Member Application Form and nominate the training activity/s that you intend to participate in when applying to join the Club. In order to retain access to the Club's facilities, you are expected to regularly participate in the training activity/s you have nominated. Participation in training activities is routinely monitored.

Under the Club's Constitution, all applications for membership are decided by the Committee. If your application is approved, you will become a member of the Club and be bound by its Constitution and Rules. If your application is rejected, the Committee will - as soon as practicable - notify you and refund any funds you have paid as part of the application process. The Committee meets on the last Tuesday of each month (except December).

How much does it cost?

The amount that you are required to pay to join the Club will depend on the number of activities you wish to participate in and the number of dogs you are enrolling. In most cases, new members will apply to join Behaviour Training classes and pay \$315 for a twelve-month membership comprising a joining fee, an activity fee for one dog and an annual membership fee. The cost for a second dog in the same activity is \$67.50. Discounts apply to current holders of ACT/NSW Government Seniors Cards and current Commonwealth Government Centrelink Concession Cards. Contact the Club office for further information about concessions.

When can I start classes?

Term dates for Behaviour Training classes are provided on the [Calendar](#) page. Each level of Behaviour Training classes is delivered over 8-9 weeks, and we run four terms of classes each year. When you join the Club, you are entitled to attend one class per week each term until your membership expires.

What do the Behaviour Training classes cover? Where do I start?

The majority of new members will start at Level 1 (Foundation), and then will progress on to Level 2 (Consolidation), then Level 3 (Graduation), then Level 4 (Companion). Some exceptions are made for dogs that have undertaken previous training through other training clubs and businesses (other than puppy pre-school level). Details of the activities covered in Level 1 are provided at the end of this document.

The Foundation level is age-based, with classes offered for puppies 3-6 months, puppies between 6-12 months (where possible) and dogs over 12 months so that instructors can tailor the class content according to the socialisation needs of the dogs.

Our goal is to help you develop a bond with your dog based on mutual trust, to help you understand how dogs 'learn to learn', and to give you the knowledge and skills to teach your dog family-friendly practical skills so that it becomes a well-behaved good companion at home and in the community. As you progress from level to level, we provide more advanced training to help you successfully

transition into the Club's dog sports appropriate to your interests and the capability and age of your dog.

What days and times are Behaviour Training classes held?

Details of class times are available on the [Class Timetable](#) page. Please nominate the day you wish to attend classes when completing your New Member Application Form.

What training methods and equipment do you use at the Club?

The Club uses rewards-based force-free training methods and equipment. We do not use pain, fear, physical force, physical moulding (or manipulation), verbal intimidation or compulsion in training classes or in the treatment of dogs on the grounds at any time. We focus on helping you to positively reinforce desired behaviours and to always consider what you want your dog to do (not what you want it to stop doing) as this will help you to identify what to train and reinforce. We use food to reinforce desired behaviour in class as well as toys and play at the higher levels. Please read our [Training Ethos](#) document for further information.

What do I need to bring to Behaviour Training classes?

As a new member you are required to attend a 'new members presentation' (without your dog) on the first week of scheduled classes. At the presentation we will provide you with more information about the Club and advice about what to bring to class. This will include advice on training aids (such as harnesses, leads, treat pouches and stuffed Kongs), food rewards for your dog and a washable mat for your dog to lie on. More information about the presentation will be provided to you when we confirm your booking.

What vaccinations must my dog have to attend classes?

Your dog must be fully vaccinated against Distemper, Canine Hepatitis and Parvovirus in order to start classes. We also recommend vaccination against Canine (Kennel) Cough and protection against heartworm. Current Australian Veterinary Association protocols for triennial vaccinations and an annual booster for Canine Cough are accepted. Proof of immunity must be provided when applying to join the Club and subsequently on request.

If your dog is younger than 16 weeks of age and yet to receive its full course of puppy vaccinations, you may still apply to join the Club on the proviso that you will provide proof of its final vaccination as soon as it is available (ie within 1-2 weeks of the start of term). Please be aware that your puppy may not attend classes until it is fully vaccinated. However, you may attend without it so that you can start to practice activities at home.

How many dogs are in each Behaviour Training class?

In Level 1 (Foundation) we limit class numbers to eight handlers and dogs to provide a more personalised experience for members and instructors alike. Where possible we try to retain this ratio at the higher levels as well.

I would like my child to train our dog in class. Is this possible?

Children must be at least 11 years old to handle a dog in class and must be accompanied and supervised by an adult member until 16 years old. Whether it is appropriate for children in this age

range to handle the dog in class will depend on the child's level of interest and commitment, its relationship with the dog and its ability to physically manage the dog in proximity to other dogs and people. We will discuss options with you if we feel that the welfare of your child, dog or other members is compromised.

My partner and I would both like to train the dog in class. Is this possible?

Dogs learn best through consistency and it is often difficult for different handlers to use the same cues, timing and observational skills. We strongly recommend that the same person handles the dog in class each week. Under the Club's current COVID arrangements (3 January 2021) one other person from the same household can also observe classes.

My dog is reactive to other dogs and/or people – can Behaviour Training classes help us?

This depends on your dog's level of reactivity. Some dogs react because they are excited or frustrated. Others react because they are afraid. You may find that your dog initially finds the Club environment a little overwhelming but that it will learn to settle with time.

All prospective new members are required to complete a Dog Profile Form before starting classes (this will be provided to you at the new members' presentation). Please use this form to honestly describe your dog's issues as best you can. Our instructors will review this information prior to classes starting and may contact you for further information if required.

We use chairs and mats in class to help you and your dog to settle and focus. In some classes, we may use screens to provide a visual and physical barrier for dogs who are easily distracted or worried by other dogs and/or people in class. This can help both dogs and handlers to relax and provides a more positive experience for everyone. Despite these measures, some dogs do not cope in a group class setting and it is detrimental to their welfare to persist with classes. We will discuss other options with you if we feel your dog is not well-suited to group classes.

I want to join the Club to socialise my dog. Will classes help?

Socialisation is much more than 'up close and personal' interaction with other dogs. It is critical for all dogs to have a good experience when learning to interact with each other and not have a negative experience that could impact their entire life. For this reason, your instructor will decide if it is appropriate for dogs in class to interact and what form that interaction will take. The process of socialisation is all about learning by association – and that is why it is so important to expose your dog to sights, sounds, people and things in a positive, controlled and thoughtful manner – including its exposure to other dogs. Your instructor will discuss socialisation principles in class.

I want to train my dog as an assistance/service dog. Can the Club help me?

The Club does not provide specific training for dogs to perform physical or emotional support roles or to pass the Public Access Test (PAT) that is required by some jurisdictions. However, some assistance/service dog organisations recommend that prospective assistance/service dogs undertake basic behaviour training as part of the service training process. The Club's Behaviour Training classes help handlers to understand canine behaviour and teach handlers how to train their dog to be a well-behaved companion. Activities covered in the first level of the Club's Behaviour Training program are provided at the end of this document. It is likely that members will also need to seek one-on-one training outside the Club to teach their dog particular physical or emotional support roles and to prepare the handler and dog for the Public Access Test. In some cases, handlers will also

find one-on-one training more effective for their purposes than group classes. The Club can refer members to qualified rewards-based force-free private trainers.

I have two sibling puppies that I'd like to enrol in training at the same time. Is this ok?

It is certainly possible to enrol sibling puppies in classes but it will cost more (\$67.50 for the extra dog) and you will need an extra handler for the second dog or attend classes on two different days if you are the sole handler. The second handler must reside at the same address and must be registered as the handler when applying for membership. If attending classes on the same day we will normally assign the puppies to different classes. Please read the article '[Together apart](#)' in the June 2018 issue of the Club's magazine for some advice on raising sibling puppies.

I have a young puppy and an older untrained dog I'd like to enrol in training at the same time. Is this ok?

It is certainly possible to enrol two dogs from the same household in classes but it will cost more (\$67.50 for the extra dog) and you will need an extra handler for the second dog or attend on two different days if you are the sole handler. The second handler must reside at the same address and must be registered as the handler when applying for membership. If you have not trained a dog before you may find it easier to enrol the younger dog first and apply the lessons learnt at home to the older dog as well. If you are encountering behavioural issues between your young puppy and older dog please contact the Club office to discuss the issues before applying for membership.

I just want to enrol my dog in a dog sport. Is this possible?

It depends. Each of the Club's dog sports has different eligibility requirements and some have waiting lists due to the level of demand. Please email the Club office for further information.

Do you offer one-on-one training?

No. We only offer training in group classes. If you require one-on-one training, please send us an email and we will refer you to a qualified rewards-based force-free trainer.

Can I join the Club to access the grounds? I do not want to attend classes.

No. The Club does not offer membership to use the grounds. The Club's facilities have been developed to provide dog training services and related trials and competitions. Prospective and existing members must regularly participate in the Club's training activities to obtain and retain membership.

Do you have further questions?

Please read both sides of the New Member Application Form and check the Frequently Asked Questions. If you are still unsure, please email us at contact@actcdc.org.au (preferred) or phone 02-62957764. Our office hours are Tuesday-Friday 10.00am – 2.00pm (excluding public holidays).

ACTIVITIES COVERED IN LEVEL 1 (FOUNDATION)

The Foundation level aims to meet the needs of the majority of the Club's new members. This

level provides an introduction to dog training over 8-9 weeks. It is designed to help you start to teach your dog practical, family-friendly behaviours that are relevant to your everyday needs. It also incorporates some elementary behaviours that will help you and your dog participate in the Club's various dog sports (such as Rally, Agility, Flyball, Dances With Dogs, Tricks and Obedience Trialling) once you have established a strong mutual bond.

During this level you will develop a basic knowledge and understanding of:

- how dogs learn (by association and through the consequences of actions);
- rewards-based, force-free training methods;
- appropriate use of training equipment and the application of handling techniques (including use of physical and verbal cues);
- benevolent leadership skills;
- dog welfare and care; and
- dog body language.

This knowledge and understanding will help you teach your dog anything!

Subject to regular attendance at class and practice between classes, you will teach your dog how to:

- Love and reliably respond to its name;
- Pay attention to you – voluntarily and when asked;
- Remain steady and accept gentle handling all over and grooming by you and other family members;
- Move towards and deliberately touch – or 'target' – your stationary hand at a distance of 60cm and to closely follow your moving hand for at least 3 paces on the left and right (as a prelude to other behaviours including tricks and dog sports exercises);
- Happily settle and relax on a mat (or bed) – with a chew toy to occupy it;
- Sit when asked and remain in position for 30 seconds until released;
- Drop (ie lie down) when asked and remain in position for 30 seconds until released;
- Demonstrate self-control with meal-time manners, saying 'please' before playing, taking food gently, door/gate/car etiquette and clipping/unclipping the lead;
- Under minimal distraction, walk on a loose lead and respond to casual changes in direction with prompting (eg 'this way') and verbal reinforcement
- Enthusiastically come when called in very controlled circumstances (with mild distraction);
- Accept being gently restrained by its collar;
- Give and take objects ('swap') in exchange for objects of equal or better value;
- Keep four feet on the ground when a friendly stranger approaches (without contact); and
- Remain calm and relaxed in proximity to other dogs and people (without contact).

We hope that the Foundation level will help you develop a strong relationship with your dog that is based on mutual trust and that you and your dog will gain essential skills to support your future training efforts. This level is the prerequisite for the Club's next training level – Consolidation (Level Two). Remember – the Foundation level provides an introduction to training and developing a well-mannered companion; perfection will take longer than 8-9 weeks! Your dog is relying on you to help it learn and to master these skills through positive reinforcement, consistency and patience.