

About the Trainer

Kasia Mikurda, PhD, MS, CPDT has been involved with dog training even before coming to the United States, but it was after she adopted her dog from a local rescue group that she started to volunteer in Houston area shelters and rescues. When working with homeless dogs she understood the importance of science-based dog training and began her journey to become a professional dog trainer. Kasia is a graduate of the Houston SPCA Train the Trainer program and a member of the American Pet Dog Trainers Association. She is an accredited AKC Canine Good Citizen evaluator and earned the Certified Pet Dog Trainer title (CPDT-KA, visit www.ccpdt.org for more information). Kasia frequently participates in professional workshops and conferences to bring the newest training and behavior counseling techniques to her clients and she is a member of the Behavior Education Network. Kasia is also a training and behavior consultant for Friends For Life Animal and has several titles in dog sport events like Obedience, Agility and Rally Obedience. She has been recently accepted to be listed in the Truly Dog-Friendly trainers directory (www.trulydogfriendly.com - listing in this directory is by recommendation only and all trainers listed must have proven their commitment to pain-free dog training).

Training Philosophy

When it comes to training tools I strive to use techniques and tools that are least invasive and most effective. On one hand I'm committed to positive reinforcement techniques, on the other hand the owners often come to me much too late, at the end of their ropes and expect quick results. While I try to respond to clients' needs and keep the dogs in their homes at the same time, I will never compromise my professional integrity by using tools or techniques that I consider inhumane (shock collars, "alpha roll-overs"....).

I'm very interested in the idea of environmental enrichment and I'm always happy to give my clients ideas on how to mentally stimulate their dogs. Many people are simply not aware for a dog's need for mental stimulation. Many of the most common behavior issues (like barking, chewing, digging) have their roots in boredom and can be successfully addressed by making even small

changes to the dog's environment. The changes in dog's behavior are often spectacular and owners almost cannot believe that it was all it took.

But most importantly: I focus on establishing dog-human relationship. I always start by helping owners to communicate with their dogs (and vice versa). I put emphasis on canine body language, how to understand it and pay attention to it. These things alone often turn things around. People feel helpless, because they don't understand their dog. Dogs feel frustrated, because humans do not pay attention to what they are trying to communicate. With the communication flowing any training or behavior modification technique is so much more effective, because dogs and humans start feeling that they are on the same team and not fighting each other. I'm thrilled just the same every time it happens.

About CPDT-KA certification requirements:

Dog training certifications are not all the same. The Certification Council for Professional Dog Trainer's® certification is an international certification process for dog training professionals. Certified Professional Dog Trainers—Knowledge Assessed are experienced trainers who are committed to continuing education and professional excellence.

To become a Certified Professional Dog Trainer—Knowledge Assessed® trainers must have at least 300 hours of dog training experience and are required to provide recommendations from a veterinarian, a client, and a colleague. In addition, they must pass a written science-based exam to demonstrate a specific body of knowledge.

About Truly Dog-Friendly Trainers:

The trainers have told us that they are committed to dog-friendly methods. We define dog-friendly methods as reward-based rather than force-based. This style of training is effective because dogs learn to choose the behaviors that humans desire. Dog-friendly trainers do not use shock collars (e-collars), nor do they use coercion, intimidation, or pain. Instead, they teach with a gentle, fair approach so that dogs truly will enjoy learning and form a trusting bond with their owners.