



Pawsitive Experience
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Introduction to Dog Training Classes with Meredith Gage

Welcome to my dog training classes. I used to hold one day of class with no dogs, as an orientation to provide an introduction to dog training, and what to expect in class. I found that everyone was anxious and excited to get started right away with their dogs, so I have decided to put my orientation in writing for you to read before you start week one with your dogs. So, please do bring your dogs the first week of class, and try to make time to read this before class starts.

Introduction: My name is Meredith Gage and my training business is called Pawsitive Experience. I came up to Bend from the SF Bay Area. I have had the opportunity to train under and attend seminars from some of the top trainers and behaviorists in the country. In the Bay Area, this includes Jean Donaldson, Trish King, Ian Dunbar, and Donna Duford. I attend seminars from all over, so I am influenced by a wide variety of top trainers and their ideals, and you will hear me reference trainers from all over the country in my classes. I have a strong background in dog behavior as well as dog training. My goal is to make dog training fun and enjoyable for you and your dog, so you will want to continue working with your dog long after classes end. I want you to be addicted to training your dog. I strive to make my classes fun, filled with information on dog training as well as behavior, provide lots of personal attention, but very low key with no pressure put on you or your dog. I am a reward based trainer, which means the dog gets rewarded for doing the behavior we ask of them.

Leashes: To the first class please bring a 6 foot leash (if you only have a four foot that is fine). Please, no Flexi Leashes. If your dog is over 40 pounds please have a leash that is at least $\frac{3}{4}$ " wide. If smaller than 40 lbs $\frac{1}{2}$ " wide leash is fine.

Collars: Your dog's regular collar is fine, but I would highly recommend a limited-slip collar, also known as a martingale collar. If your dog pulls on a leash, this will be a must by week 3 when we start leash walking skills. Puppies and young dogs do best on these types of collars as well, and all dogs will benefit, making your training experience much easier. Many varieties of these limited-slip collars can be found at both locations of Bend Pet Express, and if you bring your dog in, they will help you fit them. It is good to have them fitted before you come to class, so I don't have to take up class time to fit them for you. If you fit them yourself, I would be glad to check it, to make sure it is properly fit. I like the limited slip that has a small chain piece the best. The metal chain never touches the dog, it is designed to give sound recognition to the dog. Cons on the limited-slip collar is, it is ineffective for the dedicated puller, or dog easily distracted. Options for these dogs, see below.

Other Collars and Harnesses: Training Tools for Class:

Sensible Harness: This is my favorite piece of equipment out there. It is different than a regular harness because the leash attachment is in the front of the dog, not attached to the back. Having the leash attachment on the back actually can encourage dogs to pull-think about how sled dogs pull. The Sensible Harness, like many new innovative pieces of equipment for dogs now, come from concepts used on horses, using gentle pressure to give cues to your dogs. The thing I like best about this harness is it is hard to hurt or injure your dog if misused. I'd say 90% of my clients who have used them, see an immediate improvement. Where the limited-slip collars work on the light pulling dogs, the Sensible Harness works on

the moderate pulling dogs. I have been selling them myself because no one in town was selling them, but I am glad to announce that a new pet store in town, Healthy Paws, sells them as well. So, you can purchase them from me, or Healthy Paws. If you buy one from me and have a growing puppy, when he grows out of a size, if I have the next size up, I will exchange it, or if not, refund you, if the harness is not dog-chewed. I will also let you try them for a week to see if you like them before making a purchase. I sell them for \$20, and Healthy Paws has them for \$25, I think.

Easy Walk Harness: The Premier brand has now knocked off the Sensible Harness called the Easy Walk. I actually ordered 15 of these and returned them. I didn't like the way the harness fit as well as the Sensible Harness, but they work on the same principle. Pam Reid, PhD, a top behaviorist, and VP of the NYC ASPCA Animal Behavior Center, uses the Easy Walk in her program, as I have witnessed watching the Animal Planet show, Animal Precinct. I certainly trust her judgment. So, this is an option, and they are carried at the Bend Pet Express, and also can be found at Petco. **Update: I have been getting some feedback from a few clients who have bought the Easy Walk that the straps dig into their dog's shoulder, and I've switched them to the Sensible and it worked better for them.**

Gentle Leader: This is a head collar based on the same opposition reflex theory as the Sensible and Easy Walk Harnesses, except instead of going over the back and across the chest, it goes on the face. Like the harnesses, the leash attachment is in the front of the dog, and in this case, below the chin. This is the best device for the heavy pulling, highly distracted dogs, and the fearful and anxious dogs, especially the ones with leash aggression issues. Many dogs never get used to having this device on their face, and takes most dogs time to get used to them, so I like using the harnesses if possible. They can be purchased at Petco, PetSmart, and Bend Pet Express. I would go to Bend Pet Express, as these are not always intuitive to fit, and they have experienced staff to fit them for you, if you bring your dog in. They do come in sizes, so be sure to bring you dog in.

Halti: The Gentle Leader works well, I think, on about 80-90% of the dogs. But, the GL doesn't work well on short and broad muzzled dogs (think Rotts, Pits, Pugs, etc), and on some long muzzle dogs (think Collie). I like the control you get better from the GL, but the Halti fits more dogs and it puts less pressure on the face, so dogs usually like them better. If you go to Bend Pet Express, they carry both. They will fit you to both, and you can test drive them at the store. Petco, PetSmart and the Pet Mini Mart carry them as well.

Pinch or Prong Collars: This is actually a limited-slip collar with blunt ended prongs that pinch a dog's neck. I only recommend this collar in very rare cases. This collar can easily be abused without even knowing it, and the dog learns nothing. So, owner gets instant success, but once the collar is removed, the old pulling behavior returns. So, once used, often it is difficult to go to a less invasive piece of equipment. Keep in mind; this collar works because when the dog pulls, it hurts.

Choke Chains: I don't recommend these at all. It is so easy to abuse your dog. To apply enough pressure for the dog to feel it, it is actually choking the dog. It can cause arthritis to the trachea, collapsed tracheas, and possibly laryngeal paralysis. Some of my clients, who have been using them for years, and know how to use them properly, do bring them to class, but I don't recommend them to the novice dog owner. To be honest, I don't know how to use them properly, and there is more modern and better training equipment available now. Most trainers consider them old school.

Training Treats: The most important thing here is to bring lots of treats and bring a hungry dog to class. If classes are in the evenings, feed little to no dinner before coming to class. If classes are on Saturday mornings, feed little to no breakfast. Bring treats your dog loves. Cut up in very tiny pieces, especially for the small dogs since they will fill up quickly. Hard biscuits don't work well since we want food they can swallow easily and not spend time chewing. For myself, I like food that tastes good, but is inexpensive. Natural Balance Dog Food that comes in a sausage roll (found at Bend Pet Express and Petco) is inexpensive and most dogs really like it. It is a dog food, but primarily used as training treats. A \$7.00 roll can last 2-4 months. I also like hotdogs, cheese (Grocery Outlet has cheap cheese), lunch meat (also try Grocery Outlet), and what I often do is cut up any left over meat from dinner, and put it in a ziplock for when I train. If your dog has skin allergies that might be food related, Bend Pet Express and Healthy Paws

have lots of natural training treats. Many training treats have wheat as an ingredient, and often dogs with allergies are allergic to wheat. Some dogs are more motivated if the treats you provide change each week, or even bring a variety to one class, and the dog gets a new and fun taste with every skill he/she achieves.

Bait Bags: You will need a bag to put your training treats in. Bait Bags are sold at Bend Pet Express, Healthy Paws, Petco, and Petsmart. Another inexpensive method is to go to Ace Hardware, Lowes, or Home Depot, and buy a nail belt. It is a cloth belt that goes around your waist with 3 pockets. They cost around \$2.00, where bait bags cost around \$10-20.

Books for Further Education-listed from most recommended:

Family Friendly Dog Training- another fabulous book by Patricia McConnell. This is a how to book on dog training with a six week program for you and your dog. The book closely aligns my 6 week program with a lot of other good tips I may not get to. It is a great book to reference back to after training classes are over or read a chapter each week as we train together. I buy this book directly from Patricia and sell it for \$15.00.

Puppy Primer Book- Yet another book by Patricia McConnell- This is geared for puppies under four months of age. It tackles the common puppy issues like housebreaking, crate training, puppy biting and chewing, socialization, and much, much more. I sell the book for \$12.00.

How To Be the Leader of the Pack-and Have Your Dog Love You For It, by Patricia McConnell PhD- This is a \$5.00 booklet. Patricia McConnell is, in my opinion, the best behaviorist in the world. I have been lucky enough to hear her speak several times, and own 8 of her books and 6 of her DVDs. This little booklet teaches you how to raise your status as a pack leader by having your dog follow some simple and consistent rules. It is only 15 pages long but packed with good information. The problem is the book can't be found locally, and Amazon charges \$8.00 shipping for a \$5.00 book. I went directly to Patricia, the author, and she will give me free shipping, if I buy 25 copies at a time. So, you can buy this booklet from me.

The Other End of the Leash, by Patricia McConnell PhD. I have never read any other book more than once, but have read this one three times. This book is not a how to training book, but about dog behavior and how we humans tend to miscommunicate what we want to our dogs, creating a very confused and misguided dog. Trisha is such a good writer, and you will laugh and cry when reading this book. Really a must read for any pet owner. This book can be found at Barnes and Noble.

Parenting Your Dog, by Trish King- Trish was my academy instructor and a nationally acclaimed dog trainer and behaviorist. This is a book that covers well both dog behavior as well as training, and covers how to resolve many of the dog issues we have. Trish writes with simplicity and easy to follow instructions with lots of examples. Why I attended Trish's dog academy is, she approaches training as an art as well as a science. I do as well, and don't believe any two dogs should be trained the same, as dogs are as individual as people, and very complex. Then partner the dog with a human that is an individual and very complex. This is what makes dog training very creative and fun, always finding new and inventive ways to motivate our dogs. There is a chapter devoted to training adult dogs and Trish is the Director of Training and Behavior at the Marin Humane Society, so this book is a good book for owners of recently adopted shelter dogs. I have seen it at Barnes and Noble, but not at the Bend store location, so the best resource is Amazon.

Culture Clash, by Jean Donaldson- I have studied under Jean Donaldson by attending a number of her seminars in the SF Bay Area. This book has a similar message to The Other End of the Leash, but written with a format to educate you on learning theory and the science of behavior. I have learned a lot from Jean. If you are really into learning about the science of behavior you will find this book fascinating and educational. This book tends to be in and out of stock at Barnes and Noble.

In Closing: I hope you enjoy my training classes. I am very approachable and my classes are very interactive, so don't hesitate to ask questions.