



SF/SPCA Academy Frequently Asked Questions

I am thinking of attending the six-week Certificate In Training and Counseling (CTC) program. How do I know if it is appropriate for me?

The six-week CTC is an accelerated program. This means the pace is intense, both physically and academically, which is not for everyone.

There is a presumption of basic dog handling ability. Student backgrounds that tend to do better in the CTC are: trainers (professional trainers or competitors in sports such as obedience, agility etc.), professional dog walkers, veterinary technicians and experienced animal shelter staff and volunteers. If you do not have such a background, we strongly urge you to acquire handling experience by volunteering at a local animal shelter and/or learning a sport(s) with your own dog(s). The minimum handling requirements are listed below as well as on the CTC Application.

The subjects taught in the CTC are animal learning theory, dog behavior and development, obedience and clicker training, class teaching, treating common behavior problems, critical thinking and one-on-one counseling.

Are there any pre-requisites for the CTC program?

Yes, applicants to the CTC program must have completed the following before applying:

1. Have read the following 3 books:
 - ♦ *Culture Clash* by Jean Donaldson
 - ♦ *How to Teach a New Dog Old Tricks* by Ian Dunbar
 - ♦ *Don't Shoot the Dog* by Karen Pryor
2. Be fluent in English (written as well as spoken). If you are not certain, contact us for a self-test.
3. Be physically able to leash-handle all sizes of dog, including untrained dogs that jump, mouth, and pull on leash.
4. Have sufficient dog handling experience, as described below.
 - ♦ Professional dog trainer: experience teaching at least 6 obedience classes
 - ♦ Professional dog trainer: experience working with at least 12 behavior problem clients
 - ♦ Dog sports enthusiast and participant who has qualified at least one dog at the first level of the sport (agility, flyball, etc)

While professional trainers and dog sports enthusiasts (as described above) have the necessary handling background, those *new to the field or not already in the field* of dog training may must complete least one of the minimum requirements below before applying to the CTC program:

- ♦ 100 hours volunteering as a dog walker at a local shelter
- ♦ Experience as a full-time dog walker for at least 1 month
- ♦ Experience as a full-time vet-tech for at least 1 month or part-time for 3 months
- ♦ Experience as a full-time dog kennel attendant for at least 1 month or part-time for 3 months
- ♦ Experience fostering at least 12 dogs
- ♦ Pet-sitting experience for 12 different dogs
- ♦ Experience teaching at least 6 obedience classes
- ♦ Experience working with at least 12 behavior problem clients

How good must my English be?

English language skills must be excellent. Strong English fluency, both oral and written, is an absolute must. The CTC program subject matter is extremely technical. At this time, we do not have anyone available to translate material for students.



What is the application process for the Certificate in Training and Counseling (CTC) program?

Please see CTC Policy handout for details. The application process for the CTC program is as follows:

- THE INFORMATION PACKET: Prospective students should review the information packet carefully. If you have not done so already, please request one by sending your name and postal mailing address via email to dogacademy@sfpca.org or by calling the Academy at (415) 554-3095.
- THE APPLICATION: all pre-requisites (i.e. all required reading and all required dog handling experience) must be completed in full before applying. Applications found to have incomplete pre-requisites will be returned without review. Payment cannot be sent in advance to save a spot in a program before the application has been received.
- THE DEPOSIT: Completed applications are to be sent along with payment for the \$750.00 deposit. See Academy Policy for program tuition fee details.
- PAYMENT can be made by:
 - ♦ Check or money order, payable to the *SF/SPCA Academy for Dog Trainers*
 - ♦ Credit card (Visa, Master Card, Discover, or American Express). Attach a page to your application with credit card information/signature and fax to (415) 554-3017 or mail. Or arrange to call in your payment at (415) 554-3095. Financial privacy is maintained.
 - ♦ Cash must be paid in person. Please call for an appointment.
- SEND THE APPLICATION with the deposit by: fax, email (as an attachment), or postal mail. Applications must be signed by the prospective student and must include payment of deposit.
- THE APPLICATION REVIEW PROCESS usually takes between three to four weeks, depending upon instructor schedules. Once reviewed, we will contact each applicant immediately regardless of the decision made.
- IF AN APPLICATION IS ACCEPTED, we will mail the student an acceptance package. This package will include a copy of Exel-erated Learning, legal documents (to be signed and returned), a detailed list for room rentals and travel resources, among other essential information. Accepted applicants are enrolled in the order that we receive their completed application and deposit.
- IF AN APPLICATION IS NOT ACCEPTED we will contact the applicant and send a letter along with a full refund of the deposit.
- THE WAIT LIST: Only a total of 7 accepted applicants are eligible to be on a CTC session wait list.
 - ♦ Accepted applicants may be enrolled in their second choice session while waitlisted for another. We will contact the applicant if a space opens up in their first choice session. We will not contact them if a space does not open up.
 - ♦ Accepted applicants may also choose to be only on a session Wait list (rather than enroll in a second choice). Please see CTC Policy handout for potential fees and other details.
- THE FINAL TUITION: For accepted applicants, the remainder of the tuition is due no later than 30 days prior to the CTC program start date. All tuition due date information is provided in the acceptance letter.

I am almost done with my CTC pre-requisites, but not quite. I promise that I will be done by the time my desired session starts. Should I apply anyway? I really don't want that session to fill before I apply!

The pre-requisites are designed to help you submit an application that is competitive with the many others we receive worldwide. These are *minimum* requirements. As with any field, the more reading and experience you have, the better off you will be as both trainer and applicant. You want to put your best foot forward and demonstrate that you are more than ready and qualified. If you don't complete the pre-requisites but apply anyway, you will have an incomplete application, which we will return. Keep in mind that these pre-requisites are also designed to help you make an informed decision about whether the CTC program (and pet dog training in general) are right for you and your future.



Do you offer any programs other than the CTC?

Yes we do! Check our Program Calendar for upcoming seminars in topics such as: *Teaching Classes for Cantankerous Canines, Curriculum Design & Classroom Management Techniques, Evolution, Dog Behavior & Dog Bites* and more. These seminars are presented by renowned experts in their chosen field, be it dog behavior, behavioral science, dog training, animal welfare, and more. Check our website to learn more: <http://www.sfpca.org/academy/seminars.shtml>

Do all students in the CTC program graduate and receive a Certificate of Training and Counseling?

The graduation rate of students from the CTC program is over 80%. Students unable to meet the requirements for graduation are not eligible to receive a Certificate of Training and Counseling from the Academy. If eligible, the student may have a signed letter verifying their Academy CTC program attendance.

How many students are in a class?

The CTC allows a maximum of ten students per session. A waitlist is available (see previous questions and CTC Policy).

How often are sessions offered?

The CTC program runs four times per year.

Can I bring my dog?

Unfortunately, no. Since we have limited shelter space, a large volume of shelter and staff dogs on the premises, and student time constraints, bringing your own dog is simply not feasible. You will have your hands more than full with your assignment dogs during your stay. If you live locally and have dogs, we strongly suggest getting a dog walker, dog boarder, or have a friend help with your dogs' exercise and care. You will be here for long hours. On the hours you're not here, you will have limited time to rest and study at home. We urge you to contact recent CTC alumni from our website: www.sfpca.org/academy/referral.shtml.

Will I have time to work while enrolled? Are weekends off?

No. The workload is extremely heavy in all programs so it is inadvisable to attempt to fit in much else while enrolled if you'd like to do well and get a lot out of your experience. For the CTC program, weekend attendance may be required for special learning opportunities that will be evaluated as part of your overall grade. Since curriculum varies, details will be given on the first day of the CTC program. Please view the sample schedule (included in the information packet) for a detailed calendar of a typical CTC program.

What does the Academy provide for students?

- ♦ Lectures, classes, and one-on-one coaching conducted by accomplished teacher-trainers Jean Donaldson, Janis Bradley, and John Buginas
- ♦ Access to invaluable SF/SPCA shelter resources including shelter dogs and knowledgeable staff
- ♦ Access to Maddie's Pet Adoption Center's groundbreaking facility where dogs awaiting adoption live in light, comfortable dog apartments
- ♦ Training pens, indoor & outdoor dog areas, lecture area
- ♦ Extensive literature rack
- ♦ Reference library of books and videos
- ♦ Kitchen with refrigerator/freezer unit, utensils, hot water pot, and microwave oven
- ♦ Plastic storage bin and locker for each student
- ♦ Two computers with wireless internet access, laser printer
- ♦ Binder for hand-outs/lecture presentations
- ♦ Free street parking or daytime parking in employee lot
- ♦ Dog food and feeding supplies
- ♦ Basic dog bait (cheese, Natural Balance) – students should be prepared to seek out other bait options as needed



Is Housing included with the tuition?

No, housing and transportation costs are not included in the tuition. Estimated expenses are outlined in the information packet materials and in the acceptance packet. Students arrange for housing on their own. The Academy offers referrals as a courtesy, but regretfully we do not have the staff or resources to make arrangements for students. We provide accepted students with a detailed listing of room rentals and recommended lodging. Sorry, we cannot disclose private room rental contact information to any prospective students.

Can I have a specific course schedule before I arrive?

A sample course schedule is included in the Information Packet, but schedules vary slightly for each CTC session. Up to the program start date, instructors work out scheduling details with the many other contributing SF SPCA staff. When you arrive for your first day of the program, you will receive a calendar at orientation.

Do I need to bring anything?

A detailed packet of materials is sent to all accepted students that includes a list of what to bring. For CTC students, prepare to bring your own lunches or grab a bite at one of the food vendors in the neighborhood. Students in the CTC program are supplied with course materials, two computers and a printer. A laptop computer is recommended, but not required. Hand-written assignments are also perfectly acceptable. More details are sent to accepted students.

What should I bring to wear?

San Francisco is a maritime climate so bring plenty of layers. It can be pleasant (60's-70's) during the day throughout the year but much colder at night. It can also rain like crazy at certain times of the year. Academy chic is very dressed-down – you're training shelter dogs. You may, however, want to bring a nice outfit for graduation, but this is up to you. A detailed packet of materials is sent to all accepted students to help them prepare for the program logistics.

Is there anything I can do ahead of time to get ready?

Yes! Read and re-read the following books, which are required in order to apply to the CTC program:

Culture Clash by Jean Donaldson

Don't Shoot the Dog by Karen Pryor

How to Teach a Dog New Tricks by Ian Dunbar

For those accepted into the CTC program, the following additional reading is required before the program start date. These will be sent to the student in the acceptance packet materials.

Excel-Erased Learning by Pamela Reid

Academy Student Handbook

It is crucial to have read all of the required books prior to starting class. In addition, we strongly suggest you read some of the books on the *Recommended Reading List*. Be sure to rest up a couple of days before your program starts.

Are there any internships available post-graduation?

Yes, successful graduates may now pursue practical internships in The SF/SPCA Behavior and Training Department. Details about this will be made available to you close to graduation.