FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT MEMBERSHIP

Before contacting the Club via email or telephone, please read:

- the information on the 'Membership' webpage;
- the information on the 'What We Offer' webpages;
- these Frequently Asked Questions; and
- the Club Rules (see link on the 'Membership' webpage).

How do I register to attend training classes?

You must apply to join the Club and nominate the training activity/s that you intend to participate in as part of the application process. If you are interested in Behaviour Training classes you must apply online (click on the button 'Enrolments open') on the website. Please note that you will NOT be able to apply for a class online if classes are fully booked. Carefully read the information provided on the 'Welcome' screen after clicking on the 'Enrolments open' button to determine if classes are available.

PLEASE NOTE: If the button is labelled 'Enrolments closed' you will need to wait until the next round of bookings open. The Club announces the opening of bookings on the website (check the rolling news banner), on its Calendar (see the 'What We Offer > Calendar' webpage) and on its public Facebook page (https://www.facebook.com/ACTCompaniondogclub/).

The Club does NOT take a wait-list for its Behaviour Training classes.

If you are interested in Dog Sport classes read the information about the sports activities on the 'What We Offer' pages, check that you meet the eligibility requirements and email the Club for further information about opportunities to join.

In order to retain access to the Club's facilities, you are expected to regularly participate in the training activity/s you have nominated by attending classes throughout the year. Participation in training activities is routinely monitored. You may NOT apply to join the Club to only do Tracking or Scent Work due to the short duration of these activities.

Under the Club's Constitution, membership applies to 'households'. If you wish to nominate an extra person or persons to join the Club as part of the application process they must permanently reside at the same residence as the principal applicant.

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* (see 'Support > Resources' webpage). 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 dogs you are enrolling in training activities. In most cases, new members will apply to join Behaviour Training classes and pay $468.00 (inc GST) for a twelve-month membership

comprising a joining fee ($115.00) and an annual membership fee ($353.00). The cost for an additional dog is $56.00 (inc GST). Discounts apply to current holders of an ACT or NSW Government Seniors Card or a Services Australia Pensioner Concession Card, Services Australia Commonwealth Seniors Health Card or Services Australia Health Care Card. Contact the Club office for further information about concessions.

If you wish to continue training your dog after the first twelve-month membership, you will need to apply to renew your membership. The cost for a twelve-month renewal is $353.00 (inc GST). The cost for an additional dog is $56.00 (inc GST). Renewal reminders will be sent out and payment must be made within one month of your expiry date. Participation in training activities is checked when you apply to renew.

Currently the Club's 'flat-fee' structure allows you to participate in more than one activity with your dog for your annual membership fee however you must still apply to join the activity/s you are interested in, meet the eligibility requirements and be allocated a class place.

Read the information about the Club's activities on the 'What We Offer' pages, check that you meet the eligibility requirements and email the Club for further information about opportunities to join.

When can I start classes?

Term dates for Behaviour Training classes are provided on the 'What We Offer > Calendar' webpage. Each level of Behaviour Training classes is delivered over 9 weeks, and we run four terms of classes each year with a break for ACT school holidays.

Obedience Trialling, Rally, Dances With Dogs, Trick Dog and Flyball also run four terms of classes each year coinciding with Behaviour Training terms. Agility classes are held over five eight-week sessions and classes continue through the school holidays. Scent Work short courses are offered to members periodically during the year and Tracking is a seasonal winter activity.

When you join the Club, you are entitled to attend one class per week per activity per dog 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 between 16 weeks and 6 months old (subject to final vaccination), 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 'What We Offer > Class Timetables' webpage. Please nominate the day you wish to attend classes when completing your online application. Class times may vary from term to term and season to season.

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

The Club uses contemporary humane rewards-based force-free training methods and equipment (including clickers and other markers). 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 on the 'Support > Resources' webpage 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 clickers, 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 (ie C3 vaccination) in order to start classes in any activity. 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. You must provide proof of immunity when applying to join the Club and subsequently on request.

If your dog is younger than 16 weeks of age at enrolment 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 directly supervised by an adult member of the household 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. This can cause the dog confusion and impact on its progress with training. We strongly recommend that the same person handles the dog in class each week. Apart from the chosen handler, another person permanently residing in the same household can attend the grounds and observe classes provided they have been nominated in the membership application.

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

This depends on the level and nature of your dog's 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 in class with time.

All prospective new members are required to complete a Member and Dog Profile form before starting classes (this will be provided to on enrolment). 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, mats, stuffed Kongs (or similar food puzzles) and other food in Behaviour Training classes 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.

If you feel your dog may struggle to cope in class please contact the Club office to discuss the issues before you apply to join the Club so that we can discuss your needs with you.

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. Our class management protocols are designed to provide a positive experience. 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 or specialized 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. Just as group classes can be overwhelming for some dogs, group classes can also be overwhelming for some handlers. In these cases, it is best to consider what type of learning environment is going to provide the optimum experience for both the handler and the dog. We encourage you to contact the Club before applying for membership to check whether the Club can provide an appropriate learning environment for you and your dog.

The Club can refer members and prospective members to qualified rewards-based force-free private trainers including trainers who are registered with the ACT Government's Domestic Animal Services to undertake the local Public Access Test assessment.

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 ($56.00 inc GST 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 permanently reside at the same residential 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' on the 'Support > Training Tips' webpage 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 ($56.00 inc GST 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 permanently reside at the same residential 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 an older dog, please contact the Club office to discuss the issues before applying for membership.

I am an existing member and would like to enrol another dog in Behaviour Training classes. Do I need to wait for the online enrolment process to open?

No. As an existing member you can contact the Club office and ask for your additional dog to be added to your membership and have a place reserved in the next term's classes. You should do this at least a week before online enrolments open so that a place can be held for you. You can also complete the Additional Dog form on the 'Resources > Forms' webpage and submit it to the office. Please indicate on the form which term and day you wish to enrol the dog in. You will need to pay an extra $56.00 (inc GST) to enrol each additional dog.

Can you recommend some reliable sources of information to help me raise and train my dog?

Yes. Please read our Training Tips article 'Know better – do better' on the 'Support > Training Tips' webpage.

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. Look at the information about each activity provided on the 'What We Offer' webpage and email the Club office if you meet the requirements.

Do you offer one-on-one training?

No. We only offer training in group classes and are limited in the amount of tailored advice we can provide in this learning environment. If you require one-on-one training, please send an email to the Club office and we will refer you to a local qualified rewards-based force-free trainer aligned with the Club's training ethos.

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 classes throughout the year to obtain and retain membership.

The ACT Government provides a variety of areas to exercise dogs off-lead. Further information is available at https://www.cityservices.act.gov.au/pets-and-wildlife/dogs/recreation-with-my-dog . Canberra Dog Walks also offers information about dog-friendly public spaces around Canberra, see https://www.canberradogwalks.com.au/. The Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional Council (NSW) provides information about off-lead areas in its municipality at https://www.qprc.nsw.gov.au/Services/Animals/Find-an-Off-Lead-Dog-Park. The Yass Valley Council provides information about off-lead areas in its municipality at https://www.yassvalley.nsw.gov.au/Our-Services/Pets-and-Livestock/Dogs/Off-leash-locations.

Do you have further questions?

Please read the information on the 'Membership' webpage and read the Club Rules (see 'Support > Resources'). If you are still unsure, please email the Club at contact@actcdc.org.au (preferred) or phone 02-6295 7764. Our office hours are Tuesdays 10.00am – 2.00pm (excluding public holidays) and in conjunction with Behaviour Training classes (https://actcdc.org.au/class-timetables/). We break over the Christmas period (mid-December to mid-January).

ACTIVITIES AND CONCEPTS 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.

Concepts, mechanics and techniques (introduction)

- Mark and Reward
- Condition the marker
- Reinforcers (food, toys)
- Reinforcement zone

- Luring
- Generalising
- Targeting
- Visual and verbal cues
- Start and finish cues
- Release cue
- Lead skills
- Using a long line
- Situational awareness
- A dog's trust account

Focus (introduction)
- Name responsiveness
- Check-in (voluntary)
- Watch/Look
- Catch
- Spin left and right
- Paws Up

Loose lead walking (introduction)
- Proximity
- Reinforcement zone
- Follow me
- Let's go/this way
- Change of direction
- Change of pace
- Get It game
- Emergency U-turn
- Parallel walking
- Say Hi 1,2,3 Go
- The crazy owner's game

Positions (30 sec duration - in front of or/and at either side of handler
- Sit
- Drop/Down
- Middle
- Duration in positions using a release cue to finish exercise

Come when called from 4 – 6 metres (introduction)
- Orientation game on a long line
- Games to encourage value in returning to handler
- Collar touch/hold

Target (introduction)
- Go to mat (from 1 metre)
- Hand target/touch
- Follow the hand

Co-operative care (introduction)
- Is your dog happy to be touched – what are the (body language) signs they are not?
- Gentle handling

- Gentle slow stroking
- Using a scratch pad

Social skills (introduction)

- Greeting people
- Greeting other dogs
- Parking
- Swap
- Puppy class only – appropriate puppy play between 1-3 suitable puppies in puppy pen

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.