

A Better Pet LLC



Guide to Supervised Owner-Trained Working Dog Training

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Many roads may have led you here. Perhaps you have been thinking about acquiring a Service Dog¹ for you or a loved one for some time, perhaps this is a brand new concept for you. For those interested in Therapy Dog Training, you've thought your own dog would be perfect but you're not sure what to do next. Maybe you've had dogs all your life, or maybe this is your first time considering a dog. Maybe you already live with a dog you envision training as a service dog for you or a loved one, perhaps you have no idea how to even go about getting the right dog. Wherever you come from, Welcome.



¹ A Service Dog is one trained to mitigate the disability of his/her handler. A Therapy Dog is trained to help a professional in his or her role -- i.e., psychotherapists, speech pathologists, psychologists, PT's, OT's, teachers, funeral home directors, etc. NOTE: There are differences between the rights of a Service Dog versus a Therapy Dog and some dogs can be both.

Getting Started

Please read the entire document thoroughly and carefully. This document is meant to provide a general overview of the services offered here at **A Better Pet LLC** as well as to assess whether or not the services are right for you. We are here to help you through the journey of training or fine tuning your own dog for service. The degree of need may vary by individual but the the goal is always the same -- to provide assistance in a variety of forms to aid you in defining and achieving your goals. Whether your needs are great or small, taking on a dog for working purposes requires effort, commitment and patience as well as an openness and willingness to learn and trust.



Once you feel comfortable with your decision about whether a Service Dog might be right for you or your loved one, and that the services available through **A Better Pet LLC** might work well for you, we'd like a written **WISH LIST** (by [email](#) or snail mail).

What is The Wish List?

Owning and working with a Service or Therapy Dog could be one of the most satisfying and beneficial experiences of your life. However, it could also prove to be a frustrating and taxing endeavor. The difference between benefit and burden often lies in pre-planning and education so you get started on the best possible path of success.

Since you are considering training your own dog, you have probably already dreamed of all of the benefits this magnificent animal might bring you. This is your chance to share those dreams in written form to help more clearly define the role of a dog for you in your life at this time. This is your time to carve out a fantasy wish list of what this dog would be for you including breed or breed type, size, gender, age, energy level, coat type, color, personality type and functions you envision the dog providing. If this dog would be living with multiple people, or your goal is to train it for a family member, we strongly suggest you have a Family Meeting and give all members a role in this wish list so all can be a part of this process²

Whether you continue on with A Better Pet LLC or not, the purpose of The Wish List is to put on paper what you envision a dog can do for you and what you are aware of with respect to your own role in the process.

What Is A Trained Dog?

It is critical that you understand that, to be exact, there is no such thing as a “trained dog”. There are dogs that have been highly educated to perform certain skills and tasks. At **A Better Pet LLC**, we educate you on how to train your dog using *The Six Pillars of Dog Training Wisdom* approach developed over 10 years by Rachel Friedman, President of **A Better Pet LLC**. The Six Pillars Approach is a user-friendly guide to imparting a deeper understanding of how dogs think. *The Six Pillars of Dog Training Wisdom* teaches you how to get your dog to do what you want your dog to do and have your dog want to do it using positive, non-force based methods. The only real difference between a service dog and a pet dog is the degree of accountability and the function of the dog to the individual's needs. Taking a proactive approach -- setting the dog up to succeed -- helps put the handler in the

² Should you wish to see a sample wish list, please [email](#) a request.

driver seat. The role of the Trainer is to help coach, teach, guide, support and hold handler to appropriate expectations based on the dog's temperament, socialization, age, size, function and opportunity to practice in the real world.

As the owner-trainer of a Service Dog it will be your responsibility to follow through with the training that you learn through **A Better Pet LLC** (see [TRAINING PAGES](#) to see some of the direct private and group training options available). You must ask yourself whether you are willing and able to rehearse skills and reinforce behaviors³ with your dog every day for the duration of his service to you (+/- 10 years).

Taking On a Service Dog Companion

Assuming responsibility for a Service Dog will be very much like tending to a young child. For the first six months to one year having a new Service dog can be much like having a toddler. The new Service dog requires input and supervision. You are responsible to give that input and supervision.

Timing the employment of your new assistant is crucial. If you have just started college, recently moved or started a new job it is best to wait before starting active-duty with a Service dog. The first year with a new Service dog is a critical period. It is best if you can give 100% of your time and attention to the new Service dog.



Standing Out In A Crowd

A serious consideration for those living with "invisible disabilities" such as deafness, mental or emotional disabilities or seizures/intermittent medical events is the potential loss of your anonymity, especially in environments where dogs are not commonly seen. Without a Service Dog you blend into society quite well. Once you have a Service



dog with you that invisibility cloak disappears. You will be stopped, questioned, talked about and watched. You may be treated as if you are blind, even if your dog's function is to serve as a Medical Alert animal. I encourage clients to "educate" people about the use of Service Dogs, but of course there will be times when you have no interest in interacting with anyone for any reason. As an ambassador for Service Dog users everywhere, when you are challenged in public you need to try to remain calm, composed and polite. You are within your rights to answer no personal questions despite the ignorance of

people asking them anyway. As a client of **A Better Pet LLC**, you will be supported in all ways including challenges to public access and it will be part of the discussion in the training process.

While for some the idea of socially interacting may feel scary, in fact often those who are on the shy or introverted side find comfort in having a topic to discuss to engage in conversations they may never have had the opportunity

³ Board & Train services can help fine tune specific problem areas and can be discussed if appropriate.

to have. While not all will be warm and fuzzy moments, the opportunity to engage more socially can be of great benefit even if it's not on your current wish list of functions the dog might have for you. If you are unwilling to take on the socialization tasks of a very young puppy, it is strongly recommended you begin with an older dog who has already had the necessary socialization or strongly consider your tendencies with breed selection.

Do You Really Love Dogs?.... REALLY?

Dog hair, dog slobber and drool, feces and urine are all parts of dog ownership. Not to mention fleas and ticks and other seasonal parasites. As a Service Dog owner you are responsible for the care of your dog. This means twice daily feeding of a healthy diet and walking/exercising, grooming, picking up behind him and tolerating dog hair and saliva on your clothing and in your environment. While there are a number of non shedding or lower shedding breeds of dogs to choose from, dogs still account for a certain amount of filth. If you are unable to take care of your own dog's grooming needs, be sure to factor in costs for groomers on a regular basis to keep your dog representing him or herself well in public places.

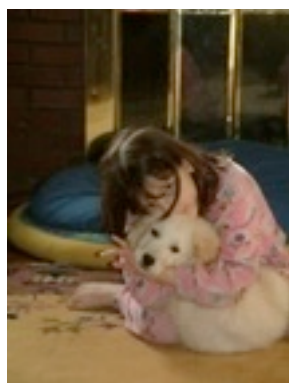
No matter how highly trained you might become as a team with a Service Dog, he or she nevertheless is a dog and will need dog fun time as well. A Service Dog is an educated animal that has been conditioned to live in a human society. If you cannot tolerate the transition to and upkeep of your pet as a public-access Service Dog, we strongly suggest something other than a Service Dog as an intervention for your disability.



This Golden Retriever could find mud in a desert, but a calmer, sweeter, gentler disposition would be hard to find!

How Will Owning a Service Dog Affect Your Family or Very Close Friends?

Certainly, a well behaved dog in the house often has a very positive influence on everyone in the family. Dogs offer their unconditional love freely to just about anyone who will receive it. They have been known to break down



barriers that humans are unable to do. So, your Service Dog may have a wonderfully positive affect on others in your household. However, there are instances where the Service Dog can present issues. Bringing a dog into the family is, in many ways, similar to inviting a new person into your home - permanently. For that reason, it is important that you have a very deep, heart-to-heart conversation with everyone who may be involved in you and your dog on a very regular basis. There may be times when you will have to rely on a family member to care for your dog when you are ill or otherwise unable to do so. The dog, and most probably your relationship with others may suffer if you do not take the time to have these very important conversations.

Expectations of the Dog

Please take a moment to contemplate and to answer this question -- What tasks or skills will a Service dog perform that will provide positive intervention for my disability? How will a Service dog make my life better than it is now? Give these questions a moment's time. Should you choose to move into the next stage in the process, you will no doubt see these questions again.

It's interesting how many people think that they want a Service Dog, but have not considered the very specific details of how the dog will assist them on a daily basis. A Service Dog does not change the physical disabilities that you have. The media often portrays only the very best, most rewarding side of owning a Service Dog, so it is easy to believe that it will change your life completely. A Service Dog can help you adapt to situations in a way that you were once unable to do. But, in order to do that, specific tasks must be identified and then reinforced. You may find that it is far easier to use a walking cane for mobility issues than to have a dog with you at all times. You may find that you are rarely away from someone (even a helpful stranger) who can pick up a fallen object from the floor, on the rare occasion that might happen to you, making a Service Dog truly unnecessary or cumbersome, if that is one of the jobs your hope your dog will provide. Specifically identifying trainable tasks is critical in making the final assessment as to whether a Service Dog is the right option for you.



Ruby, my first service dog trainee, who I raised and trained for nearly 2 years, is shown here working on paw touches and increasing strength in pushing buttons.

Expectations of You as Owner/Trainer

Our **Supervised Owner Trained Therapy/Service Dog Training** hinges on the expectation that you have a realistic awareness of the work involved in training your own dog to mitigate your own disability or work as a team member in your professional capacity. If you wish to begin with a puppy, this includes (but is by no means limited to) extensive efforts at socializing the pup during critical developmental periods as well as understanding the trials and tribulations of the young and adolescent dog whose very essence is to challenge and test limits and for whom much is new and distracting.

Owner/Trainers working under the guidance of A Better Pet LLC are assumed to understand that they are responsible for the actual work of training their dog for function and that it is an ongoing process. The benefits are many but people unwilling or unable to comprehend the rigors of such a task are recommended to apply to organizations that train and place dogs.

The training program is designed for a very select group of individuals who can demonstrate the ability to make the commitment both mentally and physically to follow the instruction and practice the training and trust in the journey.

Direct Service Clientele

These are individuals who live within a 75 mile radius of Cleveland, OH. While direct services begin in the residence of the Owner/Trainer, clients should also be able to travel if required to do so (i.e., training requiring public access work). These individuals will receive direct and indirect contact and each case is individualized based on needs and wants of participants.

Distance Learners

These are individuals who because of distance receive indirect services in the form of phone, email, webcam if available, Instant Messaging, and, if necessary, consult with a hands on dog trainer in the Owner /Trainer's own community. Those who wish may consider travel TO Cleveland to acquire initial direct services and then transition to a more distance approach. All arrangements would be responsibility of client.

Client Responsibility

I cannot emphasize this part enough. Clients need to be committed to listen, learn and assimilate the information received. The development of trust is key as the training and guidance given is based on knowledge, science and experience. It will be the responsibility of Client(s) to use that knowledge and guidance to take on the role of benevolent leader. You must take ownership over your own actions, sometimes in public, with your dog. You must become competent and comfortable owning your actions (*whether they end up to be right or wrong*) and be able to adjust to situations and change course when necessary because you have assimilated the philosophy and skills to address training issues. You must be able to communicate your problems and concerns to your Trainer and others in a way that is beneficial to the learning process. Your inability to take guidance or failure to do so will more than likely result in an untrained dog for which **A Better Pet LLC** can take no responsibility. While both parties reserve the right to terminate services at any time, choosing to just avoid various aspects of training because of frustration or a feeling of being overwhelmed or misunderstood, while common, is counter productive to the task of learning how to train your own working dog under professional guidance.

Burden vs. Benefit

After taking the time to review various aspects to the process that have been proposed here, it all boils down to answering this question, "Do the projected benefits of a Service/Therapy dog outweigh the expected burdens?" If the answer is yes, then you may very well be an excellent candidate for a Professionally Guided - Owner-Trained Assistance Dog. However, if the answer is no, you should consider seeking alternative interventions for your disability. Consider making a chart with Burdens on one side and Benefits on the other. List all the possible pros and cons and then take time to review your list. If you are happy in your decision that you can accept all of the burdens a Service Dog may bring in order to reap the benefits, feel free to produce your detailed wish list.

Email completed wish list to rachel@abetterpet.com or snail mail to

A Better Pet LLC • 2553 Queenston Rd. • Cleveland, OH 44118.

