

## Life Lessons for Dogs and Pet Parents

(Family Features) Leash pulling, potty training issues, pet anxiety – these are just a few everyday challenges that trouble many pet parents. In fact, behavioral problems are cited in the list of top reasons dogs are put in shelters, according to the American Humane Association.



In order to help pets learn appropriate behavior, pet parents need to take an active role in canine education. Some of that learning can be accomplished at home, but many pet parents have found working with a professional dog trainer is much more effective – for them as well as their dogs.

Debbie McKnight, training expert with PetSmart says that professional training is not an alternative to training your dog at home, it complements it. “Pet training works a lot like education for children,” she said. “A teacher provides her students with basic knowledge, and then the student does homework to further learn the materials.”

When you begin a training program, the Association of Pet Dog Trainers recommends you:

- Have your dog wear the type of collar and leash specified by the trainer.
- Use high-quality training treats.
- Make sure your pet relieves itself before class.
- Forgo feeding or only feed a very light meal before training.

“Proper pet training is key to your dog becoming a socially well-adjusted family member,” said McKnight. “Whether you have a new puppy or an adult dog, you and your pet can both learn some new tricks to ensure a happy relationship.”

To learn more about training programs, and to find a program near you, visit [www.petsmart.com/training](http://www.petsmart.com/training).