



Certification Council for
Professional Dog Trainers

CBCC-KA Examination Study Objectives

- The Examination Study Objectives are a detailed expansion of the CBCC-KA Examination Domains. Examination candidates should carefully review the domain structure and emphasis in the Content Outline; more weight is given to some of the domains than others. Candidates are encouraged to develop their own plan for personal study and should include study aids in addition to this document.
- Candidates should download the CBCC-KA Handbook for Candidates from www.ccpdt.org for detailed and complete examination information.
- Neither the CCPDT CBCC-KA Handbook for Candidates, the examination application form, the examination, nor the CBCC-KA credential, constitutes a contract between the candidate or the certificant and the CCPDT. The CCPDT reserves the right to change any of the requirements concerning its CBCC-KA credential, including, but not limited to: the eligibility requirements, examination content, recertification requirements, fees, use of the mark, name of the mark, and the website. Information published in the current version of the Handbook for Candidates on the CCPDT website supersedes all other printed or electronic versions of the Handbook.

Document Links

- CCPDT CBCC-KA Handbook for Candidates including the CBCC-KA Examination Domains (“Content Outline”), Code of Ethics, and References list: www.ccpdt.org
- CCPDT Dog Training and Behavior Intervention Practices: www.ccpdt.org
- CCPDT Position Statement - Application of the Humane Hierarchy: www.ccpdt.org

Content Outline

I. Applied Behavior Analysis (33% of the exam)

A. Learning Theory

- Analyze the principles, processes, and constraints of non-associative learning, associative learning, and social/observational learning
- List the advantages and disadvantages of using positive reinforcement, negative reinforcement, positive punishment, negative punishment, and extinction to modify behavior
- Explain how you might mitigate the disadvantages of using positive reinforcement, negative reinforcement, positive punishment, negative punishment, and extinction

- Identify the conditions under which spontaneous recovery is likely to occur in operant and classical conditioning
- B. Behavior Analysis Terminology
- Define common applied behavior analysis terms and understand how those terms relate to canine behavior assessments/analyses and interventions
- C. Functional Relationship Between Environment and Behavior
1. Identification of antecedents, behaviors, and consequences
 - Describe how you would thoroughly define a problem behavior
 - Provide examples of common discriminative stimuli, setting events, and motivating/establishing operations for a dog's behavior
 - Provide examples of common functions of dog behavior
 - Identify why you might choose to do a functional assessment instead of a functional analysis
 - Define and compare the different types of single case designs
 - Explain how you would select which single case design you would use to determine maintaining stimuli prior to treatment or to evaluate the efficacy of a treatment plan
 - Describe the advantages and disadvantages of continuous and interval recording
 - Discuss the importance of, and how to achieve, experimental control
 2. Equipment/environment use
 - Describe the appropriate and inappropriate uses of different training and environmental equipment (e.g., head halters, baby gates, tethers, drag lines) to modify the antecedents and/or consequences that maintain problem behaviors
 3. Mitigating/eliminating behavior problems through environmental enrichment and management
 - Discuss the challenges that clients face regarding: 1) providing mental and physical stimulation to dogs with behavioral problems and 2) controlling the environmental variables that maintain problem behavior
 - State the recommendations you would make to help your clients overcome the challenges set forth above
- D. Reinforcement Schedules
- Describe the characteristics of fixed and intermittent ratio and interval schedules. Provide an example of each
 - Provide examples of factors you might consider when selecting a reinforcement schedule

- Distinguish between, and explain the appropriate use of, differential reinforcement schedules
- E. Critical Thinking
1. Setting criteria
 - Describe how you would select criteria for a goal behavior
 - Describe how you would determine when to raise criteria
 - Discuss the risks involved in employing flooding or sensitization training
 - Explain how you would proceed during a behavior modification session if a dog displayed stress-related/displacement behaviors
 2. Evaluating effectiveness of intervention strategies (immediate and long-term) and if/when to change intervention strategies
 - Describe the steps you would take to help your client record data accurately
 - Design five frequency graphs – each graph should depict one of the following situations: 1) an intervention in which the client has not been compliant, 2) an intervention wherein antecedent control has been achieved, but consequence(s) have not been controlled, 3) an intervention in which the client has been inconsistent, 4) an intervention wherein the effects of training have not generalized, and 5) an effective intervention
 - For each graph above, discuss how you would proceed with the case
- F. Behavior modification
- Explain the advantages and disadvantages of using operant and classical conditioning in a behavior change plan
 - Describe the challenges you may face when working with a client who has been using positive punishment in an attempt to modify a problematic behavior; discuss how you might overcome those challenges
 - List various “impulse control” exercises that may be useful to the modification of problem behavior
 - Create a systematic desensitization hierarchy for a dog demonstrating discomfort with other dogs
 - Design an errorless discrimination training task
 - Understand how to effectively use prompting, shaping, and chaining techniques to teach humans and dogs
 - Describe how you would determine the reinforcement value of an item or activity to a particular dog
 - Explain how you would motivate a dog with little/no interest in food or toys

- List and explain the steps necessary to obtain stimulus discrimination and stimulus generalization
- Define the parameters of an effective time-out procedure

G. Scientific Method

- Describe how reliability and validity are measured
- Explain why empirical data does not prove causation
- Compare and contrast experimental and anecdotal evidence

II. Anatomy, Physiology and Biology (10% of the exam)

A. Basic Structures and Functions of Body Systems

- Demonstrate basic knowledge of the anatomy and physiology of the dog as it relates to development, normal and abnormal behavior, learning and safety
- Identify the basic mechanisms and constraints of the dog's sensory system including olfaction, vision, hearing, taste, and somatic sensation
- Identify safeguards necessary to reduce the risk of damage to the dog's musculoskeletal system
- Describe the importance of the dog's circulatory and respiratory systems in thermoregulation
- Identify the range of normal resting breathing rates for dogs
- Recognize the normal body temperature range in dogs; identify how that range may be affected by the internal and external environment
- Recognize the basic dietary needs of dogs

B. Physiological Mechanisms of Behavior

- Explain how the sensory system is influenced by the dog's motivations, e.g., desire for food, water, rest, sex, etc.
- Summarize the importance of stimulating the sensory system during critical developmental periods
- Give an overview of how hormones influence behavior
- Describe the potential behavioral effects of spaying/neutering
- Create a labeled diagram showing the interaction between components of the hypothalamic- pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis
- Summarize the physical effects of HPA-axis activation

- Summarize the interaction of structures of the limbic system with other structures of the dog's brain

C. Basic Genetics and Evolutionary Systems

- Summarize the relationship between behavior, genotype, and environment
- Discuss the difficulty of differentiating between the potential genetic and environmental influences on the health and behavior of an adult dog
- Describe the general influence of natural and artificial selection on the development and behavior of the dog

III. Ethology, Body Language, Observational Skills (19% of the exam)

A. Canine Communications

- Describe necessary components for successful communication between dogs
- Identify the three means employed by dogs to communicate. Give specific examples for each
- List and classify distance-increasing and distance-decreasing behaviors
- Explain why dogs might send mixed communication signals
- Give examples of how learning during an individual dog's development might affect his communication/signaling as an adult.
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- Recognize physical characteristics that may limit or inhibit a dog's ability to communicate
- List common human behaviors that may be misinterpreted by dogs

1. Vocal signaling

- Differentiate between social, appeasement and threat vocalizations
- Explain why it is important to recognize the various patterns of vocalizations
- Identify how the context of a vocalization might influence your interpretation
- Describe the role of tone in interspecific and intraspecific vocal communication

2. Body language

- Describe the specific body language you would expect to see when encountering: 1) a relaxed and neutral dog, 2) a dog displaying offensive threat and/or aggressive behavior, and 3) a dog displaying defensive threat and/or aggressive behavior
- Identify specific dog body language related to stress/conflict

3. Stress-related and/or displacement behaviors

- Explain why it is important to recognize stress-related and/or displacement behaviors and why it is necessary to understand the context in which said behaviors occur
- Differentiate between stress and distress
- Summarize the physical manifestations of the "fight-or-flight response". Explain why it is important to recognize the early signs of said response

B. Observation and Interpretation of Behavior

1. Theory and principles

- Differentiate between proximate (immediate trigger) and ultimate (evolutionary) causes of canine behavior
- Compare and contrast reflexive behavior, imprinting, and species-specific motor programs
- Identify differences between an ethological and an ABA (applied behavior analysis) approach to gathering and interpreting data

2. Examples

- Identify similarities and differences in a behavior consultant's approach to observation and interpretation across different contexts such as: group class, behavior evaluation at a shelter, or a private consultation
- Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of observing and interpreting behavior: in real time; via video; assessing via verbal description from client

C. Domestication and effects on interactions

- Summarize the various commonly held theories of how humans and canines interacted with one another during the process of the domestication of the dog.
- Explain the adaptive functions of confidence and fearfulness
- Compare and contrast the following terms: tame, habituated, socialized, domesticated, feral, and stray
- Summarize common and significant differences between domestic dogs and wolves

1. Function / purpose of different breeds and effects on behavior

- Explain the importance of selective pressures and developmental environments to breed-typical behavior
- Identify components necessary for breed-typical task efficiency (e.g., in tasks such as herding, retrieving, livestock guarding, etc.)
- Explain the variability of predatory behavior displayed between different breeds, and individuals within each breed

IV. Health, Development, Life Stages (15% of the exam)

A. Physical and Behavioral Signs Suggesting Veterinary Referral

- List physical signs and behaviors that suggest a dog should be seen by a veterinarian immediately
- List physical signs and behaviors that may suggest a dog should be seen by a veterinarian prior to continuing with behavior modification

1. Pain-induced behaviors, anxiety-related behaviors, aggressive behaviors, sudden onset of behavioral changes

- Compare and contrast affective, nonaffective, and pathophysiological aggression
- Recognize common stereotypical and compulsive behaviors; explain how you might differentiate said behaviors from typical locomotion, ingestive, grooming, vocalization, displacement, and fear behaviors

2. Cognitive changes

- Identify the typical physical and behavioral changes you would expect to see in a dog presenting with health or age-related cognitive changes
- List suggestions that you might give to a client who is caring for a cognitively impaired dog

3. Normal vs. abnormal physical / behavioral development from puppyhood into adulthood

- Describe the potential difficulty in differentiating sudden behavioral changes from developmental behavioral changes
- Explain when you would refer owners to the vet to discuss concerns related to physical and behavioral development, e.g., diet, exercise, teething, spay/neuter, etc.

B. Physical and Behavioral Developmental Stages

- Demonstrate a basic understanding of the development, maintenance, and deterioration of the dog's sensory, motor, and social systems

1. Neonate, puppy, juvenile, adolescent, adult, senior / geriatric

- List the ages and developmental stages that correspond with neonate, puppy, juvenile, adolescent, adult, senior/geriatric
- Explain why developmental changes are often sequential and conditional
- List the advantages and disadvantages of behavioral assessments conducted during puppy, juvenile, adolescent, and adult stages

2. Implications for learning in different stages

- Compare and contrast the potential for, and the constraints of, learning during the dog's life stages
- List the sensitive periods thought to impact development

C. Prevention of Behavior Problems

1. Socialization and developmental periods

- Explain why puppies provided with poor socialization or deprived of environmental exposure often develop lifelong deficits and dysfunctional behaviors
- Describe how exercise and mental stimulation impact the normal and abnormal behavioral developmental of the dog
- Discuss the importance of proper weaning and the factors that should be considered when determining the optimal time to separate a puppy from his/her dam and littermates
- Define the parameters of appropriate and inappropriate play; list the potential consequences of appropriate and inappropriate play for pre-adult dogs

2. Role of training in behavior problem prevention

- Discuss the specific training that could decrease the likelihood of development of serious behavioral problems
- Explain how consistent training contributes to problem prevention

V. Consulting Skills and Best Practices (23% of the exam)

A. History Taking Skill

- Explain why it is important to avoid giving advice before a proper assessment has been completed
- Describe the specific information you must gather in order to provide your client with an accurate contingency statement
- Summarize the factors involved in accurately predicting success of a behavior-change program
- Objectively define five problem behaviors common to dogs

B. Client Coaching and Training Skills

- List various auditory, visual, and kinesthetic aids that can be used to assist learners
- Explain how your preferred learning method(s) may interfere with effective instruction
- Identify specific steps you would take to keep a client motivated throughout the behavior-change process

- Explain why it is important to set clearly stated, measurable goals
- Describe the advantages/disadvantages of having a client keep a behavior/training log: explain how you might help a client overcome the challenges involved.
- Describe the advantage/disadvantages of conducting consultations via telephone: explain how you might overcome the challenges involved.
- Describe the challenges involved in helping a client understand the need for a proper veterinary diagnosis when you notice subtle signs of a potential health-related issue (e.g., reluctant movement, abnormal gait); explain how you might overcome those challenges

C. Humane Hierarchy

- Discuss the difficulty in separating the behavior-change procedures contained in the CCPDT Humane Hierarchy from each other
- Discuss how you would assign quadrants to typical training techniques, e.g., time out, tethering, use of a head halter, body blocking
- Explain the importance of utilizing differential reinforcement

D. Referrals to Other Professionals

- List the factors that you should consider when deciding whether to refer a client to another professional
- List the pros and cons of working with other professionals

E. Client Rights

- Thoroughly define informed consent including all of its necessary components
- Compare and contrast the behavior consultant's rights and responsibilities with those of the client(s)

F. Training and Behavior Equipment

- List the equipment that you should have on hand in order to conduct a safe and productive consultation
- Explain the importance of discussing with clients the pros and cons of any equipment you may recommend.

G. CCPDT Training Policies and Position Statements

- Demonstrate a thorough understanding of the purposes and policies/position of the following CCPDT documents: "Code of Ethics," "Application of the Humane Hierarchy," "Electronic Collars and the Humane Hierarchy", and "Dog Training and Behavior Intervention Practices"

H. Interpersonal Skills

- Describe how a client may feel about the behavioral problems exhibited by his/her dog and what you might do to convey empathy and understanding and earn trust
- Define the parameters of constructive feedback
- Describe how you would identify clients with special needs and how you would determine the appropriate way to address those needs

I. Ethics in Practice

- Demonstrate a thorough understanding of the precautions that you must take in order to provide for the safety of people and dogs
- Define the parameters of proper case management, including, but not limited to, proper termination of the case
- Explain the conflict of interest that exists between a client and his/her dog and the significance of that conflict of interest to a behavior consultant
- Discuss the nature of client confidentiality and the potential consequences of breaking client privacy
- Explain the disadvantages of offering a guarantee regarding a specific training outcome
- Compare and contrast deductive and inductive reasoning; identify various types of logical fallacies
- Discuss the steps a behavior consultant must take in order to set up clear boundaries between the fields of behavior consulting and veterinary medicine
- Recognize the ethical issues that may arise when canine behavior modification protocols are described as "scientifically-based"
- Describe a situation where you may, knowingly or unknowingly, attempt to change a client's behavior without his/her permission