



Certification Council for  
Professional Dog Trainers

## CPDT-KA Examination Study Objectives

- The Examination Study Objectives are a detailed expansion of the CPDT-KA Examination Domains. Examination candidates should carefully review the domain structure and emphasis within the examination; more weight is given to some of the domains than others. Candidates are encouraged to develop their own plan for personal study and may choose to include study aides beyond the scope of this document.
- Candidates should download the Candidate Handbook from [www.ccpdt.org](http://www.ccpdt.org) for detailed and complete examination information.
- The CCPDT Candidate Handbook, the examination application form, the examination, nor the CPDT-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 CPDT-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 Candidate Handbook on the CCPDT website supersedes all other printed or electronic versions of the Handbook.

### Reference Links

- CCPDT Candidate Handbook including CPDT-KA Examination Domains, Code of Ethics and References List: ([www.ccpdt.org](http://www.ccpdt.org), click on “Take the Test” to download the Handbook).
- Training and Behavior Practices Policy and Humane Hierarchy Position Statement: ([www.ccpdt.org](http://www.ccpdt.org), click on “Governing Documents” to download).

### Domain: INSTRUCTION SKILLS (38% of the exam)

1. Interpersonal Skills
  - Recognize appropriate/inappropriate uses of verbal and written interpersonal communication skills
  - Define good listening skills when interacting with individuals or groups
  - Demonstrate knowledge of professional language and presentation when communicating
  - Identify clients with special needs; communicate appropriately to address the needs of the client and the dog
  - Discuss why the use of good interpersonal skills can maintain and increase client compliance
  - Recognize environmental challenges to training and how to communicate solutions to the client
  - Determine appropriate, professional and timely methods for managing difficult individuals within a classroom environment
2. Teaching Skills
  - Recognize differences between auditory, visual or hands-on learning styles of individuals
  - Describe the differences between explaining, demonstrating and assisting clients
  - Discuss the development and design of lesson plans, curriculum, and handouts

- Demonstrate knowledge of available resources to accomplish teaching tasks including CCPDT website resources, other online sources, networking with fellow trainers, educational materials and seminars
  - Understand the variable criteria for selecting an appropriate dog to demonstrate a behavior or training process
3. Managing the Training Environment
    - Recognize potential hazards of indoor and outdoor training environments
    - List appropriate proactive measures to ensure participant safety while training
    - Describe appropriate physical layouts that are conducive to classroom training
    - Explain training distractions/disruptions caused by dogs, client or training environment
    - Discuss methods to manage, reduce or eliminate distractions and disruptions
  4. Business Practices And Ethics
    - Understand the application and organization of the LIMA (Least Intrusive Minimally Aversive) Effective Behavior Intervention policy, which includes the Humane Hierarchy.
    - Describe a hypothetical application of the Humane Hierarchy when given a training scenario
    - List the aversive training practices found in the CCPDT Training and Behavior Practices Policy that are prohibited by a CPDT-KA
    - Describe the nature of client confidentiality and consequences of breaking client privacy
    - Explain the disadvantages of offering a guarantee regarding a specific training outcome
    - Recognize situations or symptoms that indicate a client should meet with another professional before continuing training (i.e. groomer, fellow trainer, behavior consultant, veterinarian or veterinary behaviorist)

**Domain: ANIMAL HUSBANDRY (6% of the exam)**

1. General Health
  - Understand basic grooming requirements necessary for a dogs' health
  - Understand common contagious diseases including: observable symptoms, disease prevention by proactive veterinary care and contagious disease containment procedures
  - Identify common parasites affecting dogs and discuss basic disinfectant/containment procedures
  - Discuss observable symptoms in dogs that should prompt a trainer to suggest the owner seek veterinary counsel
  - List symptoms that would indicate limiting a training plan, including illness, injury, recent surgery, weight issues, etc
  - Understand the effects of proper/poor nutrition on general health and dog behavior
  - Explain the basic procedures of spay/neuter and how they may affect dog health and behavior

**Domain: ETHOLOGY (10% of the exam)**

1. Canine Domestication
  - Understand the timeline of events in the domestication process of dogs
  - Explain common and significant differences between a domesticated dogs and wolves
2. Canine Development
  - Describe the typical physical development of a puppy to adult dog
  - Explain the normal behavioral development process from puppy to adult dog
  - Discuss social relationships and social structures between dogs
  - Determine factors that can influence physical, behavioral and social development
  - Identify factors that may inhibit physical, behavioral and social development

3. Body Language
  - Identify behavior suggesting the desire to increase/ decrease distance from a stimulus
  - Discuss observable behavior signals that may indicate stress in a dog
  - Recognize characteristics that may limit or inhibit a dogs' ability to communicate properly
4. Physical and Sensory Characteristics

**Domain: LEARNING THEORY (38% of the exam)**

1. Operant Conditioning
  - Understand the process of operant conditioning in training a behavior to a dog
  - Describe positive and negative reinforcement as behavior consequences
  - Describe the schedules of reinforcement and how each schedule may affect behavior
  - Define primary reinforcers
  - Define secondary/conditioned reinforcers
  - Define extinction
  - Identify challenges in the application of extinction in problems solving
  - Explain the use of variability in the selection of reinforcers
  - Discuss the individual and environmental factors that should influence the selection of reinforcers
  - Describe positive and negative punishment as behavior consequences
  - Identify items commonly conditioned for use in positive and negative punishment
  - Determine physical or individual factors that should influence the selection of conditioned punishers
  - Compare the advantages/disadvantages between the training techniques of: prompting, luring shaping, targeting, modeling, and capturing.
2. Classical Conditioning
  - Discuss the foundations, principles, and differences of operant and classical conditioning
  - Identify a classically conditioned response from an operant one in a training scenario
  - Describe common classically conditioned stimuli in a typical dog's environment
  - Define and be able to discuss the processes of Habituation, Desensitization, Counter-Conditioning, Extinction, Learned Irrelevance, Learned Helplessness and the Premack Principle
3. Training Problems
  - Define common approaches to training problems including management, desensitization and counter-conditioning
  - Discuss how a trainer measures stimulus control: the use of antecedents, discrimination between cues, generalization of cues and behavior
  - Explain the process by which a trainer should add a cue or change a cue for a given behavior
  - List environmental cues that may trigger behavior
4. Environmental Management
  - Identify dog behavior that may be triggered by environmental factors
  - List appropriate management/training solutions to combat the effects of such factors

**Domain: EQUIPMENT (8% of the exam)**

1. Training Equipment

- Define the common training purposes for ancillary equipment such as: clickers, targets, downs, remote reinforcement dispersers and toys
  - Understand equipment products that can be classified as aversive and their intended use
2. Management Equipment
- Describe the potential training applications of containment systems including: tethers/tie, fencing, baby gates, exercise pens, and crates