



Want to be a dog trainer when you grow up?

We spoke to Christina Young, certified dog trainer and owner of Positive Dog. She told us all about her career helping people teach and communicate with their dogs.

When did you decide you wanted to be a dog trainer?

I've always loved training all sorts of animals, and I love teaching people. But I didn't realize I could combine the two into a career until I was an adult. Once I found out I could have such a fun job, I wanted to do it!

Did you have pets growing up? If so, can you tell us about one memory that sticks out for you?

I had cats, rabbits, hamsters and horses growing up, and adopted my first dog when I was 17. One memory that sticks out for me is when I was 14 and was taking my rabbit Snowflake out for a walk on leash. I trained him to jump into my arms for bits of apple. A man walking by told me that my rabbit was better behaved than his dog!

Can you share with us a little bit about your professional background?

When I was 14, I started volunteering at my school's learning centre. I taught all throughout high school and university. I later got a job teaching adults with special needs. At the same time, I fostered and trained special needs dogs from the SPCA and other organizations. This led me to combine my passion for training with my love of teaching. I then became a professional dog trainer in 2014.

Trainers like Christina know that dogs learn best when they're motivated by treats or praise, not when they're scared of being yelled at or hurt.

▲ Christina is an AnimalKind dog trainer. This means she trains dogs using kind methods approved by the BC SPCA! To learn more, visit animalkind.ca.



What's your favourite part of your job?

I love watching the bond between a dog and person grow as the pair learns to communicate. Many people call me for serious behaviour problems that cause a lot of stress. So after training, it's wonderful to see dog and human start to have fun and enjoy their time together.





Christina helps people understand their dog's body language better.



Christina lives on Vancouver Island with her husband and pets. If your family needs help with training, find her at positive.dog!

Is there one dog you trained who was particularly memorable or challenging?

I once trained a very funny dog named Charlie. I was helping him with barking and lunging behaviour. At first I tried giving Charlie a piece of ham as a high value reward. But he spat it out and just rolled on it. I guess he thought the ham was very stinky! I figured out that he had a dish at home that was always full, so training for food wasn't a good enough reward for him. We made some changes at home and worked on a new training program. In only a few months, Charlie was able to walk past other dogs politely. He was even able to make some new doggy friends!

What's your best tip for someone who wants to begin training their own dog?

Have fun! Training should be enjoyable for both you and your dog. If you find that you or your dog is feeling bored or frustrated,

ask yourself how you can change things so it's fun again. Also, always keep your sessions short and sweet!

What keeps you excited to do your job every day?

I get to play with dogs and puppies every day! It's a dream job! I love seeing how people and dogs progress in their training while having fun together. It's also great to receive emails from past students. They give updates

of all the fun things they've been doing with their dogs since our time together. That is very cool.

What's one piece of advice you would give to kids who want to make a difference for animals?

Be kind and patient to all animals and people. Often, they don't know any other way to behave. If animals are acting up or not behaving the way we would like, take the time to figure out what they are trying to tell us.

Your career path... to becoming a dog trainer

- ✓ Graduate high school
- ✓ Volunteer experience training dogs (at a dog training school, animal shelter, etc.)
- ✓ Volunteer experience teaching people (tutoring, etc.)
- ✓ Complete a well-recognized dog training certification program (usually online)
- ✓ Good communication and organizational skills
- ✓ Lots of patience!

