

dog\*biz

Going To The Dogs?



# So, you want to make a living working with dogs?

## Great idea!

You'd be joining a growing industry. 68% of U.S. households own a pet, and 71% of those 84.6 million homes includes at least one dog. What's more, spending on pets continues to rise, climbing by billions of dollars each year.\*

## But wait a minute.

A love of animals—let's assume you have that in abundance—is not enough to succeed in a market that's becoming more competitive every day.

Have you done your research? Examined your options, financial and personal? Asked yourself the tough questions? Here are **three of the most important ones to answer.**

### **Pet & Dog-Services Industry Trends**

#### ***The pet services sector keeps growing.***

The American Pet Products Association estimates more than \$5.5 billion was spent in 2016 on the manners, exercise regimes, spa visits, play time, and vacation care of the nation's dogs, despite the tough economy. This number is expected to continue to grow in the years ahead.

#### ***More people write online reviews.***

With the integration of review sites like Yelp and Next Door, more people are commenting on service providers through ratings, reviews, likes, follows, etc. And their opinions—favorable or damaging—are accessible to all.

#### ***Pet health-care interest is on the rise.***

We have come to view pets as our furry children, and this attitude translates into greater spending on our pets' health and general wellbeing. Premium foods, alternative health therapies (massage, acupuncture, etc.), and expensive procedures like MRIs and hip replacements are surging.

#### ***Pet-related businesses are getting Internet savvy.***

After years of homemade websites with broken links, barking dogs, and paw-print wallpaper, pet businesses are catching on to the commercial advantages of professional design, content, and usability.

# Question 1

*Job or Self-Employment?*

# Job or self-employment?

## The role of temperament.

Your own personality is a central factor in this decision. Owning a business means wearing several hats, usually all at once. For some, being service provider, customer service rep, salesperson, bookkeeper, marketing director, CFO, and janitor can feel overwhelming. Of course, as you grow you'll hand many of these tasks out. But in the beginning it's a lot to juggle.

Before choosing self-employment, ask yourself if you possess:

Doggedness (no pun intended).

The ability to keep the big picture in mind.

The ability to fight through discouragement.

A level of discipline that allows you to plod forward each day.

## Types of jobs available.

Factor into your decision that most jobs in the dog service industry are entry level—daycare attendant, dog walker, pet sitter, kennel attendant. These positions allow for a lot of dog interaction, but pay is modest to poor. In some areas of the country compensation may not rise above minimum wage. In areas where pay is better it is still far below a professional wage.

Management level jobs exist, but are rare. Some daycares and training facilities employ managers, and occasionally there's an opportunity for a trainer to take a professional position at a prominent shelter, but these are few and far between.

### ADVANTAGES: A JOB

Regular paycheck

Less responsibility

Easier hours

### ADVANTAGES: YOUR OWN BUSINESS

You're in charge

You decide how animals will be treated

You make your own hours

Opportunity to make much more money

### MARKET RESEARCH

**APPA statistics** Industry numbers from the American Pet Product Association

**Pet Business** (retail) Resources for adding retail to your business.

**BizStats** Free statistics and financial ratios for businesses by industry.

**DemographicsNow** Online subscription service for demographic data.

**US Statistical Abstract** The US Census Bureau's most recent numbers.

Your local Chamber of Commerce.

### ONLINE BUSINESS RESOURCES

**Business.gov** Federal, state, and local government information for businesses.

**Entrepreneurship** A library of how-to articles for entrepreneurs.

**US Small Business Administration** Small business resources.

### ONLINE PET FORUMS

**Alltop: Pets** Top pet-related blogs.

**The Pet Connection** Blog Articles from the pet world.

# Question 2

*How Much Money Do I Need?*

# How much money do I need?

## That depends...

Compared to most industries dog service businesses have very low start-up and overhead costs.

Having said that, each business is different and the money needed range widely depending on the type of service and whether or not a facility is involved.

The good news is that roughly 90% of the clients we work with are able open their businesses without having to borrow money.

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## START-UP COSTS TO CONSIDER

### Vehicle (if needed)

### Facility (if using)

- initial lease money down or down payment for purchase
- build-out costs

### Communication

- phone installation and/or cell phone purchase
- initial internet fees—service installation

### Education

- school and seminar fees
- books and DVDs
- business coaching support

### Initial Marketing

- website development
- URL purchase
- logo and identity design
- material design and printing, as needed
- advertising, if doing
- other one-time initial project costs specific to your plans

### Professional Fees & Assistance

- paperwork fees
- contracts
- accountancy support\*
- lawyer, if using (not necessary in most cases)

### Office Supplies

- hardware—computer, printer, etc.
- software—Quickbooks Pro, kennel software if needed, etc.

### Dog Supplies

- trainers—training tools
- walkers—leashes, tags, first aid kit, etc.
- sitters—toys if using
- daycares—beds, dishes, toys, training aids, first aid kit, etc.

# How much money do I need?

“Many dog pros can open businesses without having to borrow money.”

## ONGOING COSTS TO CONSIDER

### Vehicle

- maintenance
- gas

### Facility (if using)

- lease or mortgage
- utilities
- phone
- repair and maintenance
- insurance

### Communication

- cell phone
- internet service

### Marketing

- website maintenance, hosting fees, URL renewal
- ongoing project costs
- replacement printing
- advertising, if doing

### Professional Fees & Assistance

- professional insurance
- accountancy and/or bookkeeping\*

### Professional Development & Continuing Education

- association fees
- seminars (don't forget travel expenses for conferences)
- books & DVDs
- business support services

### Office Supplies

### Dog Supplies

- trainers—treats, tools, etc.
- walkers—treats, replacement leashes, etc.
- sitters—treats and toys if using
- daycares—treats, food (if supplying), replacement beds, toys, etc.

### Employment or Independent Contractor

#### Costs (if using)

- pay
- payroll taxes and fees



\* We recommend Dollars & Scents for all bookkeeping, tax, and general accountancy needs. Run by an experienced CPA who is also a certified dog trainer, Dollars & Scents specializes in working with dog businesses. [dog-pro-cpa.com](http://dog-pro-cpa.com)

# Question 3

*Which School To Choose?*

# Which school to choose?

## Do you want to be a dog trainer?

The schools we list here all teach scientifically sound, ethical, and humane training practices. Each is highly respected within the training industry and offers different strengths, experiences, and skill sets. Trainers often attend more than one school.

Before you choose, take these variables into account: Cost, location, length of time, and the type of experience you're after.



## DOG TRAINER SCHOOLS

**The Academy for Dog Trainers by Jean Donaldson** (e-learning program)

[academyfordogtrainers.com](http://academyfordogtrainers.com)

This self-paced program based on the former San Francisco SPCA Academy for Dog Trainers offers the most comprehensive treatment of dog behavior, learning theory, and training and behavior modification practices available. For beginners and experienced trainers. \$\$\$



**Living & Learning With Animals Professional Course**

[behaviorworks.org](http://behaviorworks.org)

8-week distance learning course focused on behavior analysis and modification. LLA Professional is taught by renowned behavior consultant and educator Dr. Susan Friedman. \$



**Dog Training Internship Academy** (San Francisco, Sacramento, & Brooklyn)

[dtiasf.com](http://dtiasf.com)

This 5-month program based on the former San Francisco SPCA Academy for Dog Trainers admits only 6 students per term for hands-on learning balanced between theory and practice. For beginners and experienced trainers. \$\$\$



**Animal Building Blocks Academy with Grisha Stewart**

[grishastewart.com/abba/](http://grishastewart.com/abba/)

A membership-based education and support program that includes web seminars, office hour Q&A, industry leader guest speakers, a private Facebook discussion group, and more. For beginning and experienced trainers. \$



**CATCH Canine Trainers Academy** (online)

[catchdogtrainers.com](http://catchdogtrainers.com)

Self-paced courses with optional local mentorships. Inexpensive starter program provides a taste of the field, and advanced program offers a more comprehensive education. Stand alone courses also available. For entry level and experienced trainers. \$ to \$\$\$



**Gail Fisher's All Dogs Academy** (Manchester, NH)

[alldogsacademy.com](http://alldogsacademy.com)

Three 5-day workshops covering dog behavior, working with and teaching people, and developing training skills. Entry level. \$



# Which school to choose? *(continued)*

“Trainers often attend more than one school.”

## MORE DOG TRAINER SCHOOLS

**Instructor's Training Course with Pia Silvani**  
(various locations)

[dogsofcourse.com](http://dogsofcourse.com)

Two 5-day workshops are available, one on Teaching & Training, one on Consulting & Problem Solving. Both mix theory and hands-on work in a shelter environment.

\$ to \$\$



**Peaceable Paws Dog Trainer Programs with Pat Miller** (Hagerstown, MD)

[peaceablepaws.com](http://peaceablepaws.com)

Different multi-level programs, ranging from 6-day intensives to 4-month courses meeting once per week. \$ to \$\$\$



**Beginning Dog Trainer's Course (online)**

[raisingcanine.com](http://raisingcanine.com)

Self-paced, online course with regular call-in sessions with instructor. \$



**Karen Pryor Academy** (various locations)

[karenpryoracademy.com](http://karenpryoracademy.com)

Online coursework combined with four 2-day weekend workshops scheduled over a 6-month period. Heavy emphasis on clicker training. \$\$\$



**The Ranch KPA National Training Center with Ken Ramirez**

[theranch.clickertraining.com](http://theranch.clickertraining.com)

Three 5-day programs offer classroom learning around the science and application of animal training, plus hands-on experience with multiple species. Courses for beginners and advanced trainers. \$\$



**Victoria Stilwell Academy**

[vsdogtrainingacademy.com](http://vsdogtrainingacademy.com)

A 6-month online program combined with local mentorship and in-person intensives. \$\$\$



**Coaching People to Train Their Dogs with Terry Ryan** (Sequim, WA)

[legacycanine.com](http://legacycanine.com)

7-day workshop. A mixture of classroom and hands-on work. Covers a wide range of topics ideal for entry into the profession. \$



## UNIVERSITY PROGRAMS

More and more colleges and universities are beginning to offer courses, certificates, and degrees related to animal learning and training. A Google search will reveal any options near you.

# Which school to choose?

## Do you want to be a dog walker or run a dog daycare?

If so, we group you together. Why? The educational needs of dog walkers and daycares are very similar: A strong emphasis on dog-dog behavior, group composition and management, and reading canine body language.

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### WALKERS & DAYCARES: SCHOOLS



#### **dogbiz Dog Walking Academy**

Various US & international locations, or online  
[dogbizsuccess.org](http://dogbizsuccess.org)

A 3-day comprehensive professional program for all dog walkers, beginning to advanced. Also valuable for anyone operation or working in daycare, boarding, and pet sitting businesses. The course covers canine learning theory, walk management, basic training (recall, polite leash walking, focus, etc.), canine body language, aggression, dog fights, screening and group composition, car manners and safety, emergency planning, pet first aid, and best business practices, including start-up requirements, pricing and policies, marketing, and client intake. \$



#### **The Dog Gurus**

(Various Online Daycare Courses)

[thedoggurus.com](http://thedoggurus.com)

Self-paced online courses and educational membership programs for daycare owners and staff. \$

# Which school to choose?

## Do you want to be a pet sitter or run a boarding facility?

Anyone who wants to run a boarding facility will benefit from the seminars in the walking and daycare section as well as those mentioned here. Pet sitters will also benefit from dog walking courses, and all pet care providers should attend a course on pet First Aid as well as on how to set up, run, and market a pet-related business.

### SEMINARS

[National Association of Professional Pet Sitters Annual Conference \(petsitters.org\)](http://petsitters.org)



[Association Of Pet Sitting Excellence \(petsittingexcellence.com\)](http://petsittingexcellence.com)



[Barkleigh Pet Boarding & Daycare Expo \(barkleigh.com\)](http://barkleigh.com)



[International Boarding & Pet Services Association Conference \(ibpsa.com\)](http://ibpsa.com)



[Pet Sitters International Quest Conference \(petsit.com\)](http://petsit.com)



# More resources

## Dog trainers

### Associations

Pet Professional Guild (PPG)

International Association of  
Advanced Behavior Counselors  
(IAABC)

Association of Pet Dog Trainers  
(APDT)

### Certifications

Certification Council of  
Professional Dog Trainers  
(CCPDT)

Pet Professional Guild (PPG)

International Association of  
Advanced Behavior Counselors  
(IAABC)

## Walkers, daycares, pet sitters, boarding facilities

### Associations

International Boarding & Pet  
Services Association (IBPSA)

National Association of  
Professional Pet Sitters (NAPPS)

Pet Sitters International (PSI)

### Certifications

Professional Animal Care  
Certification Council (PACCC)

### Book & DVD sources

Dogwise

Tawzer Dog Videos

## Recommended Reading

### TRAINERS

*How To Run a Dog Business*, Veronica Boutelle

*Minding Your Dog Business*, Veronica Boutelle and Rikke Jorgensen

*Culture Clash*, Jean Donaldson

*Don't Shoot The Dog*, Karen Pryor

*Exel-erated Learning*, Pam Reid

*Canine Body Language: A Photographic Guide*, Brenda Aloff

*The Domestic Dog*, James Scerpell

*Aggressive Behavior in Dogs: A Comprehensive Technical Manual for Professionals*, James O'Heare

*Dog Language: An Encyclopedia of Canine Behavior, 2nd Edition*, Roger Abrantes

*Coaching People to Train Their Dogs*, Terry Ryan

*The Power of Positive Training*, Pat Miller

*The Ethical Dog Trainer*, Jim Barry

### WALKERS, DAYCARES, PET SITTERS, BOARDING FACILITIES

*The Business of Dog Walking: How To Make a Living  
Doing What You Love*, Veronica Boutelle

*How To Run a Dog Business*, Veronica Boutelle

*Minding Your Dog Business*, Veronica Boutelle and  
Rikke Jorgensen

*Off Leash Dog Play: A Complete Guide to Safety and Fun*, Robin Bennet  
and Susan Briggs

*All About Dog Daycare: A Blueprint for Success*, Robin Bennett

*Culture Clash*, Jean Donaldson

*Canine Body Language: A Photographic Guide*, Brenda Aloff

*Dog Language: An Encyclopedia of Canine Behavior, 2nd Edition*, Roger  
Abrantes

*Pet Sitting for Profit*, Patti Moran

# That's it!

Armed with your answers—and hopefully a great underpinning of education to keep building on—it's time to get started. If there's anything else we can do to help you succeed, you know where to find us.

*Go forth and prosper*