Study Guide

PPAB offers the only psychometrically developed certification for Behavior Professionals who believe there is no place for shock, choke, prong, fear or intimidation in canine training and behavior practices.

Welcome to the Pet Professional Accreditation Board’s Study Guide. The PPAB program is independent of any industry trade school, college or credentialing body. Applicants are not required to be members of the Pet Professional Guild but they must meet and maintain all the eligibility criteria. (see the PPAB website for more details).

This guide has been prepared to help you determine your eligibility and prepare for the Pet Professional Accreditation exam. This will also serve as a syllabus to assist you working towards eligibility and to help you understand the breadth and depth of knowledge you will be expected to possess, fundamentals you should be familiar with, skills you need to be competent in an scenarios you must be able to address in order successfully pass the Pet Professional accreditation exam.

The Pet Professional Accreditation Board (PPAB) is operated by the Pet Professional Guild, the international organization for force-free animal training and behavior consultants. Applicants who pass the requirements earn specific titles which may be used after their names. This study guide is for the accredited canine behavior consultants. The program has a rigorous path to completion.
1. All applicants must agree to the Pet Professional Accreditation Board Guiding Principles and operating policies. A violation in these code of ethics will result in an immediate removal of any licensing credentials.

2. Applicants must be over the age of 21

3. All Applicants must be able to demonstrate 300 hours experience of group training classes and/or 150 hours of private training consultations to be eligible to apply for the license. One training hour unit is defined as 1 x 60 minutes of private training or 1 x 60 minutes of one group class.

4. Applicants must have completed 30 continuing education credit hours at professional seminars, workshops and/or webinars during the previous three years or less.

5. Applicants can be either full-time or part-time professionals; eligibility is determined by the number of hours of experience.

6. Applicants must provide proof of business insurance (North America, Australia and any other countries that provide professional insurance.)

7. Applicants must have a professional and up-to-date website or a professional Facebook Business Page reflecting their complete business details, address, contact information, training philosophy and services offered. The website must include information that is required to ensure consumer transparency.

8. Applicants must provide two written references from fellow professionals confirming their date of entry into the industry and confirming their logged hours of training. References must be provided to PPAB on the official PPAB template.

9. Renewal eligibility occurs every 24 months. Licenses must provide proof of 20 CEU's and pay a renewal fee.

10. A government issued photo ID is required for the proctored examination.
Applicants who pass the accreditation requirements will earn specific titles Professional Canine Behavior Consultant (Accredited) (PCBC-A) which may be used after their names.
Section One—Learning & Behavior

1. Have a clear understanding of the four quadrants of operant conditioning.
2. Understand the potential strengths and weaknesses of each operant conditioning quadrant on behavior change procedures.
3. Be able to explain in theory and show in application how extinction works and its place and role in both operant and respondent conditioning.
4. Explain and describe the difference between counterconditioning and desensitization.
5. Explain what high order conditioning is and how it occurs.
6. Have a strong understanding of non-associative learning, associative learning and social/observational learning and be able to contrast and compare the behavioral perspective on behavior with the ethological and medical mode orientation.
7. Understand canine social heritage and the adaptive significance of complex behavior patterns in applied behavior analysis (ABA) language.
8. Have an applied knowledge of behavior measurement systems including baseline, goal and behavior dimensions.
9. Have a comprehensive understanding of all components of the antecedent package from the three-term A-B-C contingency, including direct and distant antecedents - discriminative stimuli, setting events and motivating operations.
10. Be proficient in understanding all actions and mannerisms of the dog and what he aims to seek access to or remove from its environment as a result of specific behaviors.
11. When conducting a functional assessment that comprises an informant interview, direct observation and functional analysis, explain when and why, given the risks, you would embark on the third component, the functional analysis.
12. Understand the main schedule of reinforcement and its applications in training and behavior (i.e. fixed and variable ratio, fixed and variable interval).
14. Know when to apply and use the various types of differential reinforcement available and their appropriate place in changing behavior (i.e. DRI, DRO and DRA).

15. Understand when changing behavior when it is applicable to use respondent conditioning protocols and/or operant conditioning protocols.

16. Know the best approaches to managing client interactions with their pets to mitigate any previously used aversives and to prevent for further application in the future.

17. Be familiar with training protocols that help dogs resist their immediate desires and, instead, comply with our cues demonstrating a high level of impulse control and delayed gratification.

18. Identify the differences between a systematic desensitization hierarchy, a relaxation protocol and a counterconditioning program and their individual and collective uses in behavior change programs.

19. Understand how to apply errorless learning to a training situation using the positive stimulus as a discriminative stimulus and the negative stimulus as the stimulus delta.

20. Understand both in theory and in application all the postcedent and antecedent operant training protocols such as luring, prompting, shaping, capturing and targeting.

21. Differentiate between primary and secondary reinforcement and what is the ideal process for determining the most appropriate reinforcement for each dog.

22. Understand the theory and practical application of motivation when a dog appears to be uninterested in play or food.

23. Understand how to place behaviors under stimulus control, transfer stimulus control and maintain stimulus control.

24. Understand negative punishment and its application in utilizing time-outs.

25. Understand how to functionally analyze behavior and the complete training pro-
cess for all the key pet dog obedience skills, including acquisition, fluency, maintenance and generalization.

26. Understand the roles of reflexes, unconditioned and conditioned stimuli and the conditioning process in respondent conditioning.

27. Understand what aversives are and their potential to create unwanted fallout behaviors.

28. Define and differentiate between antecedent training protocols and postcedent training protocols and their effect on behavior.

29. Understand and be able to explain setting events, motivating operations and their impact on behavior.

30. Have a sound grasp and knowledge of key ABA terms and their descriptions.

31. Understand how to develop and implement a behavior change plan that accounts for the problematic stimulus, the reinforcement strategy and includes a counterconditioning plan, a desensitization hierarchy and relaxation protocols.

32. Have the knowledge and be able to implement basic counterconditioning procedures to develop positive conditioned emotional responses for key training tools and equipment, and behavioral problems.
1. Understand how the nervous system works closely with the endocrine system, and how hormones affect behavior.

2. Be able to describe basic canine anatomy and how the physiology of canines affects individual behavior in different breeds.

3. Understand the different components of the two basic divisions in the central nervous system.

4. Understand the role of neurons and their responsibilities in sending and receiving messages through the nervous system.

5. Understand the function of the limbic system.

6. Understand the physiology of the canine sensory systems.

7. Describe how the canine sensory systems are affected by breed development and individual breed function.

8. Understand how during critical development stages the growth of synapses is affected by sensory exposures.

9. Demonstrate an understanding of how genetics can affect behavior.

10. Be able to describe how the endocrine system controls specific functions of the body, which hormones are produced and the function of these hormones.

11. Identify the common canine behaviors that are influenced directly by the limbic system through experience of emotions and memory.

12. Understand how the limbic system has an inverse relationship with the cerebral cortex.

13. Understand the internal learning process of habituation and sensitization.

14. Identify the differences between neurotransmitters and hormones and where they each originate from.

15. Understand the roles of the key neurotransmitters Dopamine, Serotonin, Glutamate and GABA and know which incite, modulate or inhibit the activity of neurons.
16. Understand the impact that protein, carbohydrates, fats and key vitamins and supplements have on a dog’s health and well-being.

17. Know the normal heart rate of dogs from puppies to seniors.

18. Understand why a dog’s heart rate can be different from a puppy to a senior and across structural sizes.

19. Understand the functions of reflexes and their primary and secondary effect on behavior.

20. Understand what thermoregulation is and how this functions in a dog.

21. Know how to identify a canine’s respiratory rate and what is considered normal.

22. Know how to identify a canine’s body temperature and what is considered normal.

23. Understand how levels of activity, surfaces and environmental factors can influence a dog’s body temperature.

24. Understand a canine’s physiological responses to heat and how homeostasis is regulated through the respiratory, cardiovascular, endocrine, nervous, urinary and integumentary systems.

25. Understand the role that the environment and an individual canine’s genotype have on his behavior both independently and collectively.

26. Understand the nature versus nurture propositions and how both factors influence not only an individual animal but also the welfare of the species.

27. Describe the differences between natural selection and artificial selection recognizing that they are different forms of the same process.

28. Understand through illness prevention, environmental management and training the best ways to prevent injury to the physiology and anatomy of a dog.
Section Three—Ethology and Social Behavior

1. Define and understand the theory and practical application of canine communication and social behavior.

2. Understand how canine communication serves to regulate social behavior and recognize species typical behaviors and communication rituals.

3. Recognize and be able to describe affiliate signals and agonistic intentions.

4. Explain and be able to describe in ABA terms why canines might send mixed communication signals.

5. Understand the two most fundamental topographic categories of communication.

6. Understand and recognize when training tools, management activities or fear may limit a canine’s ability to communicate effectively in order to regulate social behavior.

7. Be able to explain superstitious behavior and how it is conditioned.

8. Know and recognize canine vocalizations and the different types of vocalization that can be used to convey a canine’s emotional state.

9. Specifically recognize the difference between communication topography both vocally and physically when a dog is communicating appeasement and aggression.

10. Understand the role of ritualized play and aggression in forging canine communication.

11. Understand the role that context, external factors and stress play in canine communication.

12. Understand and describe the function and appearance of affiliative communication including play indicators and the context of these behaviors.

13. Understand and describe the function and appearance of agonistic communication signals, including both active and passive appeasement, and the context of these behaviors.
14. Understand and describe ambivalent appeasement and aggressive canine communication signals, including motivationally conflicted signals, and the context of these behaviors.

15. Understand and be able to describe the differences between stress and distress and be able to articulate how stress transitions to distress and the dependent factors involved.

16. Understand the physiological changes that occur when the fight or flight response is activated in order to prepare the body for action.

17. Understand the causation, development, evolution and function of key canine behaviors.

18. Understand different elements of behavior including innate behavior, motor action patterns and learned behavior.

19. Understand how stimuli elicit or evoke behavior dependent on whether it is being conditioned via respondent or operant conditioning.

20. Understand who, and what they have contributed, to the science of learning including Pavlov, Skinner, Thorndike and Watson.

21. Explain the process of biological evolution and outline the primary hypotheses regarding the speciation of the domestic dog.

22. Explain how fear in canines is conditioned and the process of this conditioning.

23. Understand the differences between feral, tame and stray dogs and how these statuses may affect a canine’s behavior.

24. Understand the physical and behavioral differences between dogs and wolves and the evolution of the wolf.

25. Understand the notion of breed differences and be able to describe typical behavior characteristics of the key breeds.

26. Explain why making breed group generalizations can lead to ‘hasty generalization fallacy,’ an unwarranted generalization, and how different breeds display through selection different components of motor action patterns.

27.
1. Give some examples of physical and behavioral signs that may be indicative/suggest that a veterinary referral is required.

2. Be proficient in recognizing behavioral and physical indicators that deem it necessary for a dog to be referred to a veterinarian.

3. Be able to outline your role and those of the veterinarian and client as a cooperative relationship established to achieve the behavioral objectives.

4. Understand and recognize when a behavioral problem may already be or may become pathological and/or is rooted in anxiety, as well as the neurochemical response to that anxiety.

5. Understand the differences between non-affective and affective aggression in canines or operant versus respondent aggression.

6. Understand and recognize abnormal canine behavior with or without aggression and the role of a veterinary behaviorist in diagnostics criteria and description.

7. Recognize and be able to describe the prodrome, ictal and postictal stages of a canine seizure.

8. Describe common cognitive dysfunctional behavior in canines and be able to recognize nonspecific signs that are extremely variable.

9. Describe household management changes that will be helpful to supporting a veterinary behaviorist’s treatment plan.

10. Recognize the difficulty in guiding pet owners on the subtle changes in canine behavior that may be developmental versus behavioral.

11. Explain the process for remaining in your field of expertise and knowing when not to dispense advice across lines of competence, such as nutrition, medical procedures and pharmacological intervention.

12. Discuss the sensitive periods of development of the dog, including discussion of the process of socialization and its importance on canine development.
13. Understand and be able to explain the development of a dog’s sensory and motor systems.

14. Understand the history and development of canine temperament tests and the propositions for and against them regarding the welfare of dogs.

15. Understand and be able to compare the learning ability of canines at different stages of their lives.

16. Understand at what time and for how long puppies experience a sensitive period in their development.

17. Explain how a lack of critical and timely exposure and socialization impacts a canine’s neurological development and the resulting impact on healthy mental development.

18. Understand how appropriate amounts of physical activity and mental enrichment programs can contribute towards the normal development of canines.

19. Understand what factors should be taken into consideration when working with a breeder to ensure that a puppy is provided adequate and sufficient exercise, enrichment and handling.

20. Understand the role of play in canine behavior and its place in behavior change programs given that it is mutually incompatible with stress or fear. Identify the different types of play and how these can play into a canine’s natural drives and sensory/motor systems.

21. Discuss the specific positive reinforcement training procedures and protocols that can be implemented to decrease the likelihood that a dog will inflict physical damage on another dog or person.

22. Explain how training contributes to the feeling of empowerment for a canine and how this impacts problem solving and reduces the propensity for problematic behaviors.

23. Be familiar with and be able to describe the key diseases a domesticated dog is at risk of contracting throughout his life cycle.
24. Have a comprehensive understanding of all the necessary puppy development skills and key behaviors required to provide for a mentally and physically well-developed dog acclimated to sharing a home with his human family.
1. Explain the liability risks open to guardians and professionals in the pet industry and how this liability can be mitigated by conducting sound consultations and refraining from dispensing advice in the absence of the necessary and relevant information.

2. Describe the intended final product of the functional assessment and how a contingency statement is developed.

3. In each behavior change program be able to accurately define the components you will use to determine gauge the success of the plan.

4. Be familiar with the procedures for developing a behavior change program to address the key and most prevalent problematic behaviors experienced by professional dog trainers and behavior consultants.

5. Understand the different learning models for people and which supportive tools can enhance learning with this model.

6. Understand how an individual’s learning style may impact your ability to teach an individual or a group, and how you can best manage this interaction to ensure a win-win output.

7. Demonstrate an understanding of the humane hierarchy and discuss the system’s limitations.

8. Be able to recognize training equipment and management aids that work through the application of aversives and be able to discuss the merits of different equipment that, if conditioned correctly, can be used safely and without discomfort to the dog.

9. Explain why differential reinforcement is an acceptable replacement for punishment and how its protocols work without using escape or avoidance contingencies.

10. Understand why engaging a dog’s mind in active enjoyment is beneficial to his well-being.
11. Thoroughly define the ethics of topics such as competence, confidentiality, informed consent, ethics of assessment and diagnosis.

12. Compare and contrast the individual roles of each person involved in a behavior change program and the individual responsibilities for liability, informed consent and confidentiality.

13. Understand the appropriateness and application of different training protocols.


15. Recognize that behavior consulting takes place in an emotionally charged situation and show that you can make recommendations for dealing with argumentative, contrarian and challenging clients so you can be an effective consultant.

16. Explain how you ‘negotiate’ realistic goals and a means of achieving them in a manner that empowers the client and promotes success of your recommended programs.

17. Recognize as a best-practice when to train individual behaviors versus the appropriate use of chaining and sequencing.

18. Practice competent implementation of desensitization programs for client application.

19. Know when to use cold trials as a best practice in behavior change programs.

20. When developing behavior change programs as a best practice, utilize the development of contingency statements and behavior analysis.

21. Explain and discuss the merits of the different models of ethical decision making and how you will provide a safe working environment for both people and their dogs.

22. Recognize when to make use of postcedent protocols given the behavior reinforcement history.

23. Be competent in the training mechanics of bridges, placement of reinforcement and latency of reinforcement.
24. Understand the appropriateness of using demonstration dogs in class and which dogs are most suitable.

25. Explain using ABA terms and the science of behavior why it is considered unethical to make specific guarantees on your training and behavior consulting services.

26. Explain the concept of critical thinking and the various types of logical fallacies.

27. Define methods of moral reasoning and ethical challenges versus dilemmas.

28. Be proficient in making recommendations to clients on how they can practice their mechanical skills.

29. Act professionally and diligently when functionally analyzing behavior, taking into consideration all aspects of safety, ethics and informed consent.

30. Understand as a best practice the practical applications and necessity of use of a functional analysis.

31. Recognize and be able to implement good client coaching tactics to ensure the necessary transfer of knowledge.
Section Six — Scientific & Practical Method

1. Demonstrate an understanding of scientific method when creating a protocol for behavior modification.
2. Explain how reliability and validity are measured when working with continuous and discrete data.
3. Compare and contrast experimental and anecdotal evidence, from where these types of data are gathered and how they are best used by the trainer or consultant.
4. Explain why empirical data does not prove causation, and the limitations of using empirical data when developing a contingency statement.
5. Understand the relationship and difference between a dependent and independent variable when measuring and interpreting data.
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