For students in the online Professional Dog Trainer Program (APC-PDT), it is important that you have a dog that is **friendly and untrained**. Students with dogs who do not possess the right qualities will struggle to graduate on time. On the flip side, students who have a dog that is already well behaved and well trained may have an easier time, but those students will not learn the necessary qualities to succeed as a professional dog trainer.

With a goal of helping students succeed and getting the most out of their education, we recommend the following guidelines for choosing the right dog for your program. Your dog may not possess all of these qualities, but the more they do, the better off you will be.

RECOMMENDED QUALITIES

- **Dog does not know more than a couple basic obedience skills**. Most dogs pick up on skills like Sit and Down pretty quickly so it's okay if they have a few skills. We want to avoid a dog that has already attended an obedience program and knows half a dozen or more skills. This will make training them seem simple but in reality, you aren't learning to deal with the common troubleshooting that happens when you train a new dog.
- **Dog is between 6 months and 8 years**. This is not a hard rule and may vary based on breed, but you want a dog that is in good health and is not a puppy. Puppies are cute and fun to train, but they lack the ability to work for more than a few minutes at a time and typically deal with distracting behaviors such as puppy biting and soiling in the house. You will have an easier time working with a more mature dog.
- **Dog is highly motivated by treats and/or toys**. Most dogs will be trained using treats and the more your dog gets excited about food, the faster and easier they will learn. Some dogs may not work for treats, but a toy or ball works just as well. This adds a bit of complexity to the training but is totally doable.
- **Dog gives good attention**. If your dog looks to you for direction, that is a good sign that you have already built a connection and they will be more willing to work with you. A dog who ignores you and seems generally uninterested in you will be much harder to work with. To test this, walk around your dog and talk to them and see what level of engagement they give.
- **Dog is comfortable in different environments**. Throughout your program, you will do most of your training at home but there are a few skills that may require more space. You may decide to work in your back yard or go to the park. In this case, the dog should enjoy the adventure and not be nervous about the new environment.
- **Dog doesn't shown aggression towards dogs or people.** Although this program is online and the chances of interacting with other people or animals is slim, a dog that has aggressive or reactive tendencies has underlying issues of fear, anxiety, or stress. These dogs can be great one moment but in a different environment shut down and stop working. To help set yourself up for success, you should work with a dog that is generally confident and friendly with strangers.
- **Dog is in good health and likes to be active.** You should avoid using a dog that has mobility issues or problems with energy. You will benefit from working with a dog that enjoys being active and is wanting to engage, versus a dog that is in pain and would prefer to rest.