

Many different career paths exist for people who want to work with dogs. Popular jobs include: dog trainer, dog groomer, veterinarian, breeder, K-9 police officer, kennel manager, pet sitter, dog walker, dog show judge, and many more. If you love dogs, are willing to physically exert yourself in their care, and enjoy the outdoors, this career path might be perfect for you.

## What Skills Do You Need for Dog Jobs?

Several key skills all dog industry professionals should possess include the ability to handle and train dogs, the ability to interact with the animal to recognize behavioral signals and needs, and have knowledge of the animal's grooming and healthcare needs.

Additionally, jobs working with dogs require you to have certain personality traits including patience, thoughtfulness, conscientiousness, and the ability to interact and communicate professionally with other dog industry professionals and dog owners. You need to have an interest in ongoing education to understand the characteristics and needs of the various dog breeds.

In some dog jobs, you need to pursue special certifications and advanced education about dogs and their care. In all jobs working with dogs, you need to stay up-to-date on industry knowledge and standards, healthcare advances, and have advanced knowledge about breakthroughs in dog training and care.

## Specific Skills Necessary to Work With Dogs

These are the most critical skills and abilities for people who hope to work with dogs professionally.

### Basic Dog Handling and Training Skills

All canine professionals should be comfortable working with dogs in a hands-on capacity. Their skill set should include the following.

- Basic Obedience
- Positive Reinforcement Techniques
- Reward Systems
- Operant Conditioning Training Techniques

- Handling Dogs With Clicker Training
- Voice Commands
- Maintains High Expectations
- Ability to Recognize Behavioral Signals
- Persuasiveness
- Handle Stressful Situations Well

## Ability to Recognize Behavioral Signals

The body language of a dog can help a handler anticipate changes in its behavior. Canine handlers must pay careful attention to a dog's ears, teeth, posture, and general expression. The dog's behavior can indicate signs of aggression, fear, distraction, or happiness.

- Non-Verbal Communication Skills
- Understanding Body Language
- Ability to Observe a Dog's Behavior and Understand Signs
- Careful Attention to Detail
- Nurturing

## Knowledge of Proper Grooming Techniques

Grooming can be a critical part of canine care, particularly for long-haired breeds. All dog handlers should be able to handle the basics such as removing mats, brushing out long hair, trimming nails, and cleaning ears. The ability to use clippers and style dogs into breed-specific cuts is a plus for those in the dog show industry, and it is mandatory for those working within the grooming industry.

Proper grooming is essential to maintain canine health, and the close observation of the dog during the grooming process can help the handler detect developing health issues at an early stage.

- Removing Mats
- Brushing Out Long Hair
- Trimming Nails
- Cleaning Ears
- Use Clippers and Style Dogs Into Breed-Specific Cuts
- Spot Developing Health Issues

## Ability to Recognize Common Health Problems

## Knowledge of Canine Anatomy and Breed Standards

Canine professionals should have a basic knowledge of canine anatomy as well as a general understanding of the qualities that are valued in each breed with which they work. This is particularly important for dog show judges, dog show handlers, breeders, and trainers.

- Basic Knowledge of the Anatomy of Dogs
- Fundamental Understanding of the Qualities Desired in Each Breed

## Communicating With Animal Professionals and Owners

All canine handlers should have the ability to communicate clearly with other animal professionals that they may work with (such as veterinarians, groomers, trainers, and breeders) to ensure that the needs of the dogs are met at all times.

- Clear Verbal Communication Skills
- Non-Verbal Communication Skills
- Body Language Skills
- Ability to Listen Carefully and Understand
- Leadership Skills
- Team Player

## The Desire to Pursue Relevant Certifications

Several canine related professions offer certification programs that can greatly enhance a candidate's skill set and knowledge. If these certifications are relevant and appropriate to a specific career path, they should always be considered.

There are many such certification programs for dog groomers, dog trainers, behaviorists, canine massage therapists, and various pet caregiver career paths. Achievement of these certifications can enhance a candidate's professional credentials and can also increase their earning potential.

- Openness to Learn and Pursue Professional Growth
- Obtain Relevant Certifications to Work in Jobs With Dogs
- Certifications Enhance Professional Reputation

- Certifications Ensure the Confidence of Owners and Industry Professionals

## Practice Patience and Exhibit Desirable Personality Traits

Patience is perhaps the most important quality for someone who wants to work with dogs professionally. Most canine careers require a great deal of patience, as it can take a significant amount of time to get a dog to exhibit the behaviors that the handler desires. (Of course, patience is an asset for those working with animals in any capacity, not just those working in jobs with dogs).

- A Passion for Dogs and Respect for Animals
- Ability to Practice Patience
- Ability to Demonstrate Consistency
- Ability to Show Persistence
- Ability to Demonstrate Commitment
- Ability to Demonstrate Empathy
- Ability to Demonstrate Confidence to Attract Clientele

### **How to Make Your Skills Stand Out**

Dog industry professionals must be able to handle and train dogs, interact with the animals and their owners, and attend to their needs.

When looking for a job, add some of the skills listed above to your resume, refer to them with specific examples in your cover letter, and explain how you used these skills in a job interview.