



**Atlas Assistance Dogs®**  
**Atlas Trainer Academy Course Syllabi**  
**Service Dog Foundations**

Last updated May 24, 2022

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## **D8 – Training Methods: Creating & Implementing a Training Plan**

### **Course Description**

This course is text and video based. It covers training methods, advanced training concepts, management and methods for behavior adjustment, exercises to build engagement between the client and dog and exercises to build confidence, attention and focus in the dog. It also presents information, suggestions and example plans, regarding the planning of private and group lessons specific to service dog clients.

### **Course Objectives**

This course will:

- Teach about the different markers
- Teach how to refine mechanical skills
- Teach principles of rate of reinforcement
- Teach different training methods
- Teach how to use the different training methods to train basic obedience and advanced behaviors
- Teach proofing and fluency
- Teach skills and principles to help a dog gain confidence
- Teach best practices for successful lessons with clients
- Teach best practices for setting up successful training plans

### **Learning Outcomes**

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Describe examples of good mechanics
- Identify rates of reinforcement and how they are used
- Describe how to refine a behavior with proofing and fluency
- Identify and describe different training approaches
- Identify methods to help build confidence in both clients and dogs
- Create training plans which can be adjusted to a client's and dog's changing needs
- Identify how to effectively teach group and private lessons



## Outline

- Markers, Mechanics, and Reinforcement
  - Markers
  - No Reward Marker
  - Mechanics
  - Reinforcement
  - Setting and raising criteria
- About Cues
  - Command vs Cue
  - Verbal Cue
  - Visual Cue
  - Physical Cue
  - Environmental Cue
  - Transferring Cues
  - Poisoned Cue
- Different Training Methods
  - Loopy Training
  - Luring
  - Targeting
  - Capturing
  - Modeling
  - Shaping
  - Free shaping
  - Chaining behaviors
- Proofing and Fluency
  - Proofing and fluency



- Precision
- Latency
- Speed
- Distraction, Duration, Distance, Delivery
- Stimulus control
- Advanced Training Methods
  - Premack Principle
  - Mimicry and social facilitation
  - Concept training
- Behavior Management
  - Behavior management approaches
  - Counter conditioning and desensitization
  - Systematic desensitization and counter conditioning
  - +CER
  - Look At That
  - BAT 2.0
  - Trigger stacking
- Just for the Dogs
  - Building foundation
  - Games to build focus, attention, and engagement
  - Building confidence
- Creating and Implementing a Training Plan
  - How to help clients be more successful
  - Training plans and sessions
  - Break it down
  - Training plan documents and examples
  - Group settings



## **Course Expectations:**

Please allow multiple sessions of a couple of hours at a time to go through the course and review the references that will be provided. There are many details in the course materials so please take time to digest them. If the topic is less familiar to you, you may need more time to view references or research the area in further depth.

For all trainers and Team Facilitators you will have one assignment that requires you to submit a video showing you working with a dog using the different training methods to teach a skill. All trainers will have two additional assignments, one that shows a finished behavior chain and one that shows you creating and implementing a training plan for a specific scenario. More details are provided in the course.

At the end of this course all will be asked to complete a survey and an assessment. A grade of 80% or above is required to pass the test. Students have the opportunity to discuss their answers with Atlas faculty as well as retake tests as needed.



## S4A – Disability Skills (Part 1) – Foundational Skills

### Course Description

This course is text and video based. It covers detailed information on concepts that are critical building blocks for successful service dog training. It goes into detail regarding a variety of cues which are used as a foundation/building block skill for disability tasks. The course is accompanied by our Disability Skills Manual-Foundation which provides details on how to introduce and refine each skill as well as tips, tricks, and important notes.

In some cases, concepts stand on their own, which in other cases, they encompass skills that help the dog and person understand the concept. We also provide details on a number of skills that are foundational and taught independent of the concepts. In all cases, we present each skill with a definition, purpose, prerequisite. It is then followed by a video demonstration of use and/or teaching of skills. We follow it up with a discussion of possible use with clients.

### Course Objectives

This course will:

- Teach the foundation concepts and skills assistance dogs need to mitigate a wide range of disabilities
- Help trainers understand that many skills are interconnected and can be used in different ways depending on the client's needs
- Teach trainers how to train assistance dogs for common foundation concepts and skills
- Teach trainers how to help clients train their assistance dogs for common foundation concepts and skills

### Learning Outcomes

- Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:
- Identify, describe, and demonstrate how to train the foundation concepts and skills needed for training an assistance dog
- Describe applications for the foundation skills needed for disability tasks
- Describe and demonstrate how to support and instruct clients in training their dogs for specific disability tasks

### Outline

- Concepts for:
  - Targets



- Husbandry
- Retrieval
- Recall
- Walking
- Impulse Control
- Body Awareness
- Foundational skills used to mitigate multiple disability types:
  - Explanation and demonstration
  - Potential applications

## **Course Expectations**

Please allow multiple sessions of a couple of hours at a time to go through the course and review the references that will be provided. There are many details in the course materials and the accompanying manual, so please take time to digest them. If the topic is less familiar to you, you may need more time to view references or research the area in further depth.

Assessments exist throughout the course for you to test your understanding. They are a mix of multiple choice, fill in the blanks, true false, and long answer questions.

Video assignments also exist throughout the course to help you gain feedback and ensure you understand how to implement what you have learned in this course.

Students have the opportunity to discuss their answers with Atlas faculty as well as retake tests as well as resubmit assignments as needed.



## Optional Add-on Courses

Atlas offers additional disability skills training courses focusing on how to work with people with specific types of disabilities.



## **S4B – Disability Skills Training (Part 2) – Balance and Mobility**

### **Course Description**

This course is text and video based. It covers detailed information regarding a variety of cues which are used to mitigate disabilities or symptoms related to mobility and balance. Example of such tasks are mobility retrievals, balance assistance, bracing, and many more.

The course is accompanied by our Specialized Mobility Disability Skills Manual which provides details on how to introduce and refine each skill as well as tips, tricks, and important notes.

We present each skill with a definition, purpose, prerequisite. It is then followed by a video demonstration of use and/or teaching of skills. We follow it up with a discussion of possible use with clients.

### **Course Objectives**

- Cover the common range of skills dogs are taught to mitigate disabilities pertaining to Mobility/balance
- Give trainers the tools to work with dogs and clients on these skills and to expand from this foundation

### **Learning Outcomes**

Upon successful completion of this course, students will:

- Have a solid understanding of many of mobility tasks and their use for various conditions
- Know how to train skills typical of mobility related disability tasks such as: Hold, Tug, Pull, Push/Close it, Brace, Steps, Dress, Undress, Light, Switch, Fix, Laser, Complex/Combination Retrieval Tasks.

### **Outline**

- Skills used to mitigate mobility and balance related symptoms or disabilities
- Explanation and demonstration
- Potential applications

### **Course Expectations**

Please allow multiple sessions of a couple of hours at a time to go through the course and review the references that will be provided. There are many details in the course materials and the accompanying manual, so please take time to digest them. If the topic is less familiar to you, you may need more time to view references or research the area in further depth.



You will be asked to complete a very brief survey after you complete the course to give us your feedback.

This course includes two video/written assignments. In each, the videos should show you working with a client to teach them two of the behaviors covered in this course, so as you are going through the course be thinking about which skills you might want to teach.

For the first assignment you may choose from: Light or Switch, Tug, Pull, Push/Close It

For the second you may choose from: Brace, Step, Mobility Retrieval Multi-part Skill, Laser Retrieval

Along with the videos, a detailed training plan is required. The training plans should cover the refining stages for each behavior. The videos should be approximately two to four minutes in length. It will likely take you one or more sessions with a client to achieve the desired results in the video. More detailed guidelines for the assignment can be found at the end of this course.

Assessments exist throughout the course for you to test your understanding. They are a mix of multiple choice, fill in the blanks, true false, and long answer questions. A grade of 80% or above is required to pass the test. Students have the opportunity to discuss their answers with Atlas faculty as well as retake tests as needed.



## S4C – Disability Skills Training (Part 3) – Medical

### Course Description

This course is text and video based. It covers detailed information regarding a variety of cues which are used to mitigate disabilities or symptoms related to various medical conditions.

The course is accompanied by our Medical Disability Skills Manual which provides details on how to introduce and refine each skill as well as tips, tricks, and important notes. **Please download this manual and read it as you go through the course. The manual will stand on its own as a helpful reference and is intended to be read in parallel as you go through the course.**

We present each skill with a definition, purpose, prerequisite, and applications/possible uses with clients. It is then followed by a video demonstration of use and/or teaching of skills.

**Please note:** The words “trainer,” “handler,” and “client” are generally used interchangeably. This is the person who is giving the dog the cue. There are cases where the handler is someone other than the client, and when that is relevant it is called out.

### Course Objectives

This course will:

- Introduce a range of common skills and tasks that service dogs are taught to mitigate disabilities
- Discuss and demonstrate how these skills and tasks are applied for different medical conditions
- Teach trainers how to train assistance dogs for these common skills and tasks
- Teach trainers how to help clients train their assistance dogs for these skills and tasks

### Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Identify and explain the common assistance dog skills and tasks used to mitigate various medical conditions
- Introduce, practice, and refine tasks aimed to mitigate medical disabilities. Such tasks include: **Visit, Lap, Prop, Toes, Go To [Person], Go Alert [Person], Get Help, Go Home, Hearing Alerts, Time of Day/Medicine Alerts, Body State Alerts, Medical Response, and Seizure Response**
- Describe and demonstrate how to support and instruct clients as they train their dogs for medical tasks



## Outline

- Skills used to mitigate medical-related symptoms or disabilities
- Explanation and possible applications
- Demonstration through instructional videos

## Course Expectations

Please allow multiple sessions of a couple of hours at a time to go through the course and review the references that will be provided. There are many details in the course materials and the accompanying manual, so please take time to digest them. If the topic is less familiar to you, you may need more time to view references or research the area in further depth.

You will be asked to complete a very brief survey after you complete the course to give us your feedback.

This course includes two video/written assignments. In each, the videos should show you working with a client to teach them two of the behaviors covered in this course, so as you are going through the course be thinking about which skills you might want to teach.

For the first assignment you may choose from: Light or Switch, Tug, Pull, Push/Close It

For the second you may choose from: Brace, Step, Mobility Retrieval Multi-part Skill, Laser Retrieval

Along with the videos, a detailed training plan is required. The training plans should cover the refining stages for each behavior. The videos should be approximately two to four minutes in length. It will likely take you one or more sessions with a client to achieve the desired results in the video. More detailed guidelines for the assignment can be found at the end of this course.

Assessments exist throughout the course for you to test your understanding. They are a mix of mix of multiple choice, fill in the blanks, true false, and long answer questions. A grade of 80% or above is required to pass the test. Students have the opportunity to discuss their answers with Atlas faculty as well as retake tests as needed.



## S4D – Disability Skills Training (Part 4) – Psychiatric & Cognitive

### Course Description

This course is text and video based. It covers detailed information regarding a variety of tasks which are used to mitigate disabilities or symptoms related to various psychiatric and cognitive conditions.

The course is accompanied by our **Specialized Psychiatric & Cognitive Disability Skills Manual** which provides details on how to introduce and refine each skill as well as tips, tricks, and important notes. **Please download this manual. The manual will stand on its own as a helpful reference and is intended to be read in parallel as you go through the course.**

We present each skill with a definition, purpose, and prerequisite as well as applications and possible uses with clients. It is then followed by a video demonstration of how to use and/or teach the skill.

#### **Please note:**

The words “trainer,” “handler,” and “client” are generally used interchangeably. This is the person who is giving the dog the cue. There are cases where the handler is someone other than the client, and when that is relevant it is called out.

### Course Objectives

- Cover the common range of skills that dogs are taught to mitigate different psychiatric and cognitive disabilities
- Teach trainers how to train assistance dogs for common psychiatric and cognitive disability tasks
- Teach trainers how to help clients train their assistance dogs for common psychiatric and cognitive disability tasks

### Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students will:

- Have a solid understanding of many of psychiatric and cognitive tasks and their use for various conditions
- Know how to train skills typical of psychiatric and cognitive disability tasks, including: General Psychiatric Skills (wake from nightmare, pay attention, graceful exit, circle, block); Grounding Behaviors (anchor, lean, cover/deep pressure therapy, feet, hug, cuddle), and Interruption Behaviors (interrupt repetitive behavior, turtle, kiss).



## Outline

- Considerations and clarifications
  - Understanding alerts and responses
  - Repetitive and non-suicidal self-harm behavior
- General Skills
- Grounding behaviors
- Interruption Behaviors

## Course Expectations

Please allow multiple sessions of a couple of hours at a time to go through the course and follow along with the accompanying manual. There are many details in the course materials and the manual, so please take time to digest them. If the topic is less familiar to you, you may need more time to research the area in further depth.

You will be asked to complete a very brief survey after you complete the course to give us your feedback.

This course includes two video/written assignments. In each, the videos should show you working with a client to teach them two of the behaviors covered in this course, so as you are going through the course be thinking about which skills you might want to teach.

For the first assignment you may choose from: Graceful Exit, Anchor, Lean, Cover, Feet, Hug, Cuddle

For the second you may choose from: Wake from Nightmare, Pay Attention, Circle, Block, Turtle

Along with the videos, a detailed training plan is required. The training plans should cover the refining stages for each behavior. The videos should be approximately two to four minutes in length. It will likely take you one or more sessions with a client to achieve the desired results in the video. More detailed guidelines for the assignment can be found at the end of this course.

Assessments exist throughout the course for you to test your understanding. They are a mix of multiple choice, fill in the blanks, true false, and long answer questions. A grade of 80% or above is required to pass the test. Students have the opportunity to discuss their answers with Atlas faculty as well as retake tests as needed.