Atlas Assistance Dogs®
Atlas Trainer Academy Course Syllabi
Trainer Courses

Last updated July 26, 2022

Introductory Courses

I1 – Introduction to Atlas Assistance Dogs

Course Description

This course is text based. It covers information regarding who we are as an organization, what we stand for, and what we do.

Anyone involved with Atlas must take this course in order to have a working knowledge of service dogs.

Course Objectives

This course will:

- Ensure anyone involved with Atlas understands our mission, vision, and our work

Learning Outcomes

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

- Have a clear understanding of Atlas as an organization and the role they might play in it

Outline

- Mission and vision
- About us
- What to expect
- Vocabulary
- Our Programs
- Where we are going

Course Expectations

Please allow at least 15 minutes to go through this course. You will be asked to complete a very brief assessment after you complete the course.

I2 – History and Types of Service Dogs

Course Description

This course is text-based and covers information regarding the history and types of assistance dogs around the world. Did you know that the earliest record of a seeing-eye dog dates to the first century AD?

Anyone involved with Atlas must take this course in order to have a working knowledge of service dogs.

Course Objectives

This course will:

- Introduce how dogs have been used to help people throughout history
- Introduce the different types of assistance dogs and give an overview of their jobs and who they can benefit

Learning Outcomes

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

- Identify the different types of assistance dogs
- Identify how a dog can help someone with a disability
- Describe the background around service dogs in a historical and global context

Outline

- Historical use
- Present use
- Types of dogs trained
- Highlights of laws around the world

Course Expectations

Please allow at least 30 minutes to go through this course. You will be asked to complete a very brief assessment after you complete the course.

I3 – Why Positive Methods

Course Description

This course is text-based and covers the basics of positive reinforcement as it pertains to dog training. Atlas strongly values ethical treatment of dogs as well as people. This course goes over the basics and background of positive training methods and demonstrates why they are so much more successful than aversive training methods.

Course Objectives

This course will:

- Introduce the history of training methods
- Help students become more effective, humane, and ethical by ensuring they understand how dogs and people learn
- Emphasize the importance of positive training methods
- Debunk some of the common myths about aversive training methods
- Reflect on common misconceptions about training methods and tools and know how to address them

Learning Outcomes

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

- Describe common positive training terminology
- Identify positive versus aversive training from the dog's perspective
- Explain why the use of positive training methods is far more successful for the dog and person
- Advocate for the use of positive training methods

Outline

- History of training methods
- Terminology
- Debunking myths

Course Expectations

Please allow at least one hour to go through the course and review the references that will be provided. 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 brief assessment after you complete the course.

People-Related Courses

P1 – Common Learning Styles and Teaching Skills

Course Description

This course is text based and focuses on concepts and skills that will increase the trainer's ability to understand and teach their clients based on their individual learning styles and abilities. You may find that some of your clients with disabilities need different tools to learn and understand new concepts. This course gives you some insight into how to approach these cases.

Course Objectives

This course will:

- Introduce common learning styles based on the VARK Model (visual, auditory, reading/writing, kinesthetic)
- Provide tools and skills that will help the trainer work successfully with different kinds of people
- Discuss approaches to instruction depending on whether the client or caretaking adult will be the primary handler
- Introduce the concept of TagTeach and the Premack Principle
- Introduce the concept of stress signals in people
- Provide insights and resources to help trainers and clients succeed

Learning Outcomes

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

- Describe the common learning styles
- Adapt to their clients' individual needs as learners
- Build upon their current teaching skills to provide better learning opportunities for their clients

Outline

- Learning Styles and the VARK Model
- Determining Learning Styles
- Being Flexible
- Teaching Tools/TagTeach

- When and When Not to Demonstrate a Skill

- Working with the Client's Caretaker/Parents when Handling the Client's Dog

- Helping Clients Stay Motivated

- Planning Training lessons

- Homework, Schedules, Breaking Down Tasks

- Mistakes to Avoid

- Remember Your Network

Course Expectations

Please allow at least one to two hours to go through the course and review the references that will be provided. 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.

If you are in our Certified Trainer program, at the end of this course you will be also asked to complete a test with 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.

P2 – Ethical Principles and Behaviors When Training

Course Description

This course is text based and focuses on ethics in training. Topics discussed include our code of ethics as well as those from CCPDT, and the importance of integrity and empathy in service dog training towards both the dog and the client.

Course Objectives

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

- Identify the importance of ethical principles and behaviors as it relates to their role as an Atlas trainer
- Discuss the need for empathy as it relates to their role as an Atlas trainer
- Identify the importance of integrity as an Atlas trainer
- Describe the characteristics of an effective and humane trainer
- Identify Atlas Assistance Dogs' guidelines for ethical training techniques

Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students will:

- Understand Atlas' expectations of their trainers when it comes to ethical treatment of dog and client
- Have concrete skills to apply when training with your clients

Outline

- The Need for Ethics
- Certification Council for Professional Dog Trainers (CCPDT) Code of Ethics
- Atlas Assistance Dogs Policies on Ethics
- Empathy
- Integrity
- Be Honest with Yourself and the Client

Course Expectations

Please allow at least one to two hours to go through the course and review the references that will be provided. 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.

If you are in our Certified Trainer program, at the end of this course you will be also asked to complete a test with 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.

P3 – Communication, Listening, Interpersonal Skills

Course Description

This course is text based and covers information about communication skills specific to clients with disabilities. The material goes over basic types of communication but also some more complex ways that clients may be communicating with their trainers and exhibiting stress non-verbally.

Course Objectives

- Understand the five different communication types
- Discuss the importance of listening
- Learn how to use interpersonal skills
- Understand non-verbal communication and stress signals in people

Learning Outcomes

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

- Describe common communication types and reflect on their own communication style
- Use their communication skills to strengthen the bonds and trust with their clients

Outline

- Why Communication Is Important
- Active Listening
- Different Types of Communication
- Body Language and Non-verbal Communication
- Stress Signals in People
- Communicating with Clients
- Interpersonal Skills
- Knowing Your Boundaries

Course Expectations

Please allow at least one to two hours to go through the course and review the references that will be provided. If the topic is less familiar to you, you may need more time to view references or research the area in further depth.

At the end of this course, you will be asked to complete a test with 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.

P4 – Planning and Setting Up Training Sessions

Course Description

This course is text based and covers information regarding the planning, management, and expectations of your training lessons with service dog clients. Service dog training is not without its challenges and these specific clients may encounter difficulties with training in ways pet dog clients may not. The course discusses strategies for success, specific to clients with disabilities, their families, and for yourself.

Course Objectives

- Realize the various environments service dog training may occur in and their potential challenges.

- Explore methods for working with a client's emotional, physical, or mental mindset.

- Learn how to manage private lessons.

- Look at approaches for working with clients who are struggling or non-compliant.

- Discuss handling the session (as well as the program) as a whole; beginning, middle, and end; as it pertains to making the client successful.

- Recognize the special situations when the client is not the primary handler.

- Understand how to find alternatives when the client's challenges may be impacting their ability to progress.

Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students will:

- Have a better understanding of the unique challenges that may arise when working with service dog clients

- Have tools and skills to navigate these challenges and set their clients up for success

Outline

- Context of Service Dog Training

- Pace of Service Dog Training

- A Warning on Pacing

- When to Slow or Stop Training

- Understanding the "State of Mind"

- Management of the Environment, the Lesson, and Expectations

- Working with the Client's Caretaker or Parents

- Supporting the Client, the Dog, and Yourself.

Course Expectations

Please allow at least one to two hours to go through the course and review the references that will be provided. 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.

If you are in our Certified Trainer program, at the end of this course you will be also asked to complete a test with 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.

P5 – Confidentiality and Professionalism

Course Description

This course is text based and covers information relating to staying professional and keeping up with a standard of confidentiality necessary when working with clients.

Course Objectives

This course will:

- Cover some basics of professionalism when working with clients
- Discuss how to handle challenging situations regarding confidentiality and professionalism protocols

Learning Outcomes

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

- Understand what is and isn't appropriate information to share about their clients based on CCPDT's and Atlas' standards
- Apply professionalism within the context of their business

Outline

- Importance of Confidentiality
- Maintaining Confidentiality
- Professionalism
- Importance of Professionalism
- How to become a professional

Course Expectations

Please allow at least one to two hours to go through the course and review the references that will be provided. If the topic is less familiar to you, you may need more time to view references or research the area in further depth.

At the end of this course, you will be asked to complete a test with 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.

Dog-Related Courses

D1 – Animal Learning Theory

Course Description

This course is text based and covers the basics of learning theory as it pertains to dog training. Atlas strongly values ethical treatment of dogs (as well as people). This course goes over the four quadrants of learning (training), the importance of positive training methods and demonstrates why they are so much more successful.

Course Objectives

- Introduce the main principles of animal learning theory, and make these principles immediately relevant to the training of working dogs

- Help trainers become more effective, humane, and ethical by ensuring they understand how dogs (and often people) learn

- Emphasize the importance of positive training methods

- Help trainers learn how to explain and demonstrate these concepts to clients in order to facilitate progress in training

Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students will:

- Have a good understanding of learning theory concepts and how they apply to dog training

- Understand why the use of positive training methods is far more successful for the dog and person

- Have tools to understand and solve some basic problem behaviors in dogs

Outline

- Habituation

- Classical conditioning

- Operant conditioning

- Reinforcers and Punishers

- Positive Learning Theory

- Debunking Dominance Theory

- Classical and Operant conditioning go together

- Functional Analysis

Course Expectations

Please allow at least one to two hours to go through the course and review the references that will be provided. 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.

If you are in our Certified Trainer program, at the end of this course you will be also asked to complete a test with 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.

D3 – Puppy Socialization and Rearing

Course Description

This course is text- and video-based and covers information for setting a puppy up for success as they enter the new home. It will go over various phases of puppyhood and how to navigate them in a positive and manageable way.

Course Objectives

This course will:

- Review the aspects of what should be included in a socialization program for puppies and stress its importance in healthy development

- Stress the importance of mental, emotional, and physical stimulation

- Cover puppy rearing concepts such as potty training, bite inhibition, setting the pup up for success in the home, manners, boundary setting, and expectations

- Teach games to build focus and attention

- Touch on the question of nature vs. nurture

- Touch on how to introduce an adult dog into a home and apply similar approaches as one would to a pup

- Discuss appropriate places to take the puppy to build public access skills

Learning Outcomes

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

- Identify the developmental stages of a puppy

- Describe how to prepare a safe environment for the new puppy that is mentally, emotionally and physically stimulating

- Describe the importance of positive early socialization and exposure and how to introduce puppies to new experiences

- Describe how to deal with puppy behavioral issues

- Identify games to build focus and attention

- Identify public access places which are appropriate for puppies

Outline

- Getting Ready for the Puppy

  - Setting up a schedule and management
  - Puppy proofing
  - Feeding
  - Supervision
  - Where can I take my puppy
  - House training
  - Exercise
  - Attention and enrichment
  - Introducing the collar and leash

- Puppy Developmental Stages

  - Physical development
  - Cognitive development

- Puppies being Puppies

  - Play biting and mouthing
  - Jumping
  - Barking
  - Play etiquette
  - Avoiding resource guarding

- Socialization and Building Confidence

  - Importance of socialization
  - Why confidence matters
  - How to build confidence
  - Snuffle mats
  - New surfaces
  - New noises
  - Motion
  - Handling and cooperative care

- Games to Build Focus and Attention

  - How to build focus
  - Build it and they will come
  - Attention Game
  - Name Game

- Outings

  - Public Access
    - Outdoor pet friendly places
    - Indoor pet friendly places
    - Places only service dogs can go
    - Places only service dogs can go where you can't leave

Course Expectations

Please allow multiple sessions of at least one to two hours to go through the course and review the references that will be provided. 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.

At the end of several of the modules in this course, you will be also asked to complete a test with 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.

D4 – Dog Body Language and Communication

Course Description

This course is text and video based. It covers important information about reading and interpreting dog body language. This is an important skill for any dog trainer but even more important for those training service dogs. These dogs are exposed to many different potentially stressful environments, and it is our job as trainers and handlers to advocate for them and make sure they are well-suited for service work. Service dog trainers also need to know how to relay this information to their clients so that they can ensure their dog remains comfortable and happy in the job they are doing.

*Note, we also offer this course to our clients to best educate them on how to read and communicate with their dog.

Course Objectives

This course will:

- Enhance the student's knowledge of how dogs communicate through their body language and vocal communication

- Describe and demonstrate the different levels of stress signals observed in dogs

- Go over what are appropriate levels of stress for a service dog

Learning Outcomes

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

- Observe and interpret dog body language

- Identify what a dog is communicating

- Describe what type of stress signs a dog is displaying

- Identify whether or not a dog may be suitable as a service dog based on their stress levels

Outline

- Body language observations
    - Face
    - Tail
    - Posture
- Interpreting body language
- Vocal communication

- Building confidence and trust

- Progressive stress signs

- Stress behaviors

- Observations while training

Course Expectations

Please allow at least one hour to go through the course and review the references that will be provided. 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 and quiz after you complete the course to give us your feedback.

A grade of 80% or above is required to pass the quiz. Students have the opportunity to discuss their answers with Atlas faculty as well as retake tests as needed.

D6 – Dog Health, Maintenance, and Basic Preventative Care

Course Description

This course is text based. It covers information regarding dog health and care and discusses the importance of up keeping proper mental and physical health protocols in service dogs.

*Note, we also offer this course to our clients to give them the best information and resources on how to keep their service dog happy and healthy throughout their life.

Course Objectives

- Explain how a dog's health, nutrition, and weight can tie strongly into their behavior.

- Cover fundamentals of a good preventative and maintenance health care plan.

- Stress the important of focusing on the dog's emotional and mental health as well as physical .

- Stress the importance of "dog" time or down time for service dogs.

- Help clients be aware as dogs age, face illness, or change that service work may no longer be appropriate or fair for them.

Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students will:

- Have knowledge and resources concerning feeding, grooming, dental and nail care, basic medical care, and mental and physical exercise.

- Understand the importance of emotional health for service dogs.

- Know how to keep their dog happy and healthy.

Outline

- Importance

- Physical Health

- Mental and Emotional Health

- Maintenance and Preventive Care

- Dog Breeds and Issues

- Being Honest about Health Issues or Decline

Course Expectations

Please allow at least one to two hours to go through the course and review the references that will be provided. 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.

If you are in our Certified Trainer program, at the end of this course you will be also asked to complete a test with 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.

D7 – Use of Training Equipment

Course Description

This course is text based. It covers information regarding training tools, equipment, and a review of Atlas' policies on ethical and positive training methods. The course discusses safety, necessity, usefulness, and methods for using various training tools specific to service dog training

Course Objectives

- Cover the many training tools available for positive dog training and appropriate uses
- Emphasize Atlas' policy on ethical use of training tools
- Emphasize preferred training equipment and considerations when choosing equipment
- Ensure trainers understand which tools are just for training and should be phased out during refinement
- Cover important considerations for service dog training such as the client's ability to use certain tools or tools specific to a dog's disability tasks

Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students will:

- Thoroughly understand Atlas' training methods
- Know how different training tools can be used in different contexts
- Understand the need to adapt training tools based on a client's disability

Outline

- Importance of using the right tools
- Atlas Assistance Dogs Policy on training tools
- Basic training tools
- Collars, harnesses, and leashes
- Crates, gates, pens
- Targets, target sticks, training aids
- Remote training aids
- Food puzzles and games
- Medical or personal devices and items specific to the client
- Safety items

Course Expectations

Please allow at least one to two hours to go through the course and review the references that will be provided. 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.

At the end of this course, you will be asked to complete a test with 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.

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.

Service Work Courses

S1 – Selecting an Appropriate Dog for Service Work

Course Description

This course is text and video based. It covers the physical, psychological, and emotional requirements of service dogs. It evaluates various sources for finding a suitable service dog. It discusses temperament, health, and red flags to look for during an evaluation. It explains breeds and sizes and how they impact the dog's ability to perform specific tasks. It offers example assessment tests and videos.

This course is primarily targeted toward trainers who are helping their client select a dog. It is equally applicable for an owner-trainer to use in choosing a dog for themselves as well as an individual looking for a family pet.

In all cases, the individual assessing a dog should put their safety and the dog's comfort and safety first. If in doubt STOP the assessment. This course gives you tools to use to assess a dog's potential suitability for service work but does not cover everything you need to know to understand the many nuances of dog behavior. All who take this course and use the assessments within it assume all liability and responsibility for themselves and other dogs and humans involved.

Course Objectives

This course will:

- Teach participants guidelines to evaluate a dog's health, age, confidence, trainability, temperament, sociability, motivation, capability, and willingness to comply
- Identify places to obtain a prospective service dog candidate
- Teach participants about different dog breeds and what they were bred to do
- Teach participants how to evaluate a dog with a specific task in mind
- Teach participants how to evaluate a puppy
- Teach participants how to identify quality shelter and rescue facilities

Learning Outcomes

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

- Select an appropriate dog for their needs
- Evaluate an adult dog

- Evaluate a puppy

- Evaluate a rescue

- Describe which breeds are more suited to perform specifics tasks

Outline

- Service dog selection & evaluation guidelines

- Task evaluation

- Assessment tests

- Dog breeds and where to find dog candidates

- References

- Test your knowledge

Course Expectations

Please allow multiple sessions of at least one to two hours to go through the course and review the references that will be provided. 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 a video assignment. It requires you to do a video and write up of you doing an assessment on a puppy or dog to determine its suitability as a future service dog. You will need to work with a dog who is not familiar with you. Videos will typically be about 15-30 minutes long. More detailed guidelines for the assignment can be found at the end of this course.

You will also be asked to complete a short quiz. A grade of 80% or above is required to pass the quiz. Students have the opportunity to discuss their answers with Atlas faculty as well as retake the quiz if necessary.

S2 – The Americans with Disabilities Act and Relevant Laws

Course Description

This course is text-based. It covers the basics of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Fair Housing Act (FHA), and the Air Carrier Access Act (ACAA), and how they apply to service dogs and their handlers.

This course is meant for trainers and Team Facilitators, as well as for Atlas clients. The information will help all be better informed and understand how to navigate certain tricky situations and become great advocates for people with disabilities and service dog handlers.

Course Objectives

This course will:

- Introduce the Americans with Disabilities Act and laws relevant to people with disabilities and service dog handlers
- Give an overview of the public access rights of service dog handlers in various common settings
- Help service dog handlers gain skills and confidence as they navigate public settings
- Enhance trainers' and facilitators' skills on how to coach their clients

Learning Outcomes

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

- Explain the common access rights of service dog handlers
- Identify the basics of the ADA, FHA, and ACAA
- Answer basic questions regarding service dog team rights
- Help their clients build confidence and skill in advocating for their rights (*trainer and facilitator specific*)

Outline

- Learn about the Americans with Disabilities Act
  - Introduction to the ADA
  - History of the ADA
  - Definitions
- Access Rights
  - General ADA information
  - Food Establishments

- Hotels/Airbnb
- Cabs/Lyfts/Ubers
- Public Transportation
- Hospitals and Medical Facilities
- Gyms and Public Pools
- National and State Parks

- Additional Laws

  - The Fair Housing Act
  - The Air Carrier Access Act

- Education and Work

  - K-12 – Children and Adolescents with Service Dogs
  - Higher Ed – Service Dogs in College, Universities, etc.
  - The Workplace – Applying for Work and Working with a Service Dog

- Preparing for Public Access

  - Becoming a Great Self-Advocate
  - Role Playing
  - Access Issues
  - Coaching Your Client

Course Expectations

Please allow at least one to two hours to go through the course and review the references that will be provided. 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 assessment after you complete the course.

If you are in our Certified Trainer program, at the end of this course you will be also asked to submit a video assignment demonstrating how you might coach a client. 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.

S3A – Understanding Disabilities

Course Description

This course is text based (with many video resources) and covers information on a wide range of disabilities. As a service dog trainer, understanding your clients' experiences is crucial. You are training (or helping them train) their dog to help mitigate their disabilities, so comprehending their needs is a fundamental step in the process. It also helps you understand your clients' challenges on a deeper level and what might be barriers in their training. This will allow you to think critically and problem solve in an innovative way when those challenges occur.

Course Objectives

This course will:

- Teach trainers and facilitators about specific disabilities/medical conditions that might affect the people they will be working with.

- Demonstrate the importance of understanding their clients' disabilities prior to and throughout their work with their client.

- Encourage trainers and facilitators to further their research and comprehension of not just the disability but how living with the disability might affect their clients.

Learning Outcomes

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

- Identify various disabilities and medical conditions that they may encounter through their work as service dog trainers

- Explain some basics about the disabilities and medical conditions presented in the course

- Adapt their training and teaching methods based on their clients' abilities and challenges

Outline

- Mobility disabilities

- Traumatic Brain Injuries

- Seizure Disorders

- Diabetes

- Psychiatric Disabilities

- Autism Spectrum Disorder

- Deaf/Hard of hearing

Course Expectations:

Please allow at least a couple of sessions of one to two hours each to go through the course and review the references that will be provided. 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.

If you are in our Certified Trainer program, at the end of this course you will be also asked to complete a test with 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.

S3B – How to be a Successful Trainer When Working with Clients with Disabilities

Course Description

This course is text based. It covers information involving the experiences of people with different disabilities and gives insight as to how service dog trainers can successfully communicate and work with their clients. Service dog trainers must try their best to understand and empathize with their clients in order to help them meet their training goals.

Course Objectives

This course will:

- Give trainers tools and training techniques needed when working with clients and their immediate support systems (service dog, family, caregiver, loved one).

- Teach trainers how to adapt training to the specific psychological, physical, cognitive, or medical conditions of the client.

- Define and implement training which will meet the service requirements expected of their service dog.

Learning Outcomes

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

- Reflect on how someone might be affected by their disability in a variety of ways on a daily and long-term basis

- Problem solve and work with clients successfully while navigating difficult or unique situations based on that individual's disability

Outline

- Working with people with disabilities
- Public access challenges
- Brain Fog
- Physical and mobility challenges
- Seizure disorders
- Diabetes
- Psychiatric disorders
- Autism spectrum disorder

- Hearing loss/speech impediments

Course Expectations

Please allow a couple of sessions of at least one to two hours to go through the course and review the references that will be provided. If the topic is less familiar to you, you may need more time to view references or research the area in further depth.

At the end of this course, you will be asked to complete a test with 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.

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 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.

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

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 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 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.

S6 – Sweet Snoopers® Scent Detection for Diabetes and Medical Alert Dogs

Course Description

Atlas is pleased to partner with Debby Kay to offer her Sweet Snoopers course. This course is designed to teach Debby's world-renowned training methodology. Debby's program is recognized as one of the most reliable scent detection programs available for teaching diabetes alerts. These methodologies are applicable to many scent-based medical alerts.

Atlas has also included training methods from Steve White and a section for allergen alerts. At the bottom is a section from our Selecting an Appropriate Dog for Service Work Course, including traits to look for when choosing a scent detection dog.

This course is text and video based. It presents a step-by-step approach to applying conditioning principles to train a dog to consistently and reliably detect a specific scent and alert their handler to the presence of the target sense.

Course Objectives

- Teach trainers how to use classical conditioning to train dogs to consistently and reliably alert to the presence of a particular scent

- Teach trainers how to train dogs to develop the alert method best for the dog and the handler

- Teach how to expand the dog's ability to alert in any location; any time of day; on buses, trains, planes, or in cars; inside and outside

- Teach how to train the dog to:
    - Wake the client at night when the target scent is present
    - Wake from a sleep to alert the handler when the target scent is detected

- Teach how to train the dog to alert while walking

- Teach other skills essential for scent detection and service work in general
    - Patience
    - Impulse control
    - Working with distractions
    - Keeping the dog engaged

- Teach how to obtain and store scent samples

- Teach how to build and use a scent wheel for training

Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students will:

- Be able to describe how to collect and store scent samples

- Be able to demonstrate how to train a dog to check for the presence scent by pattern searching

- Be able to demonstrate how to teach a dog to alert when the target scent is detected

- Be able to describe how to proof the dog's alerts any time of the day or night and in any location

- Be able to list methods to teach a dog to have the patience and alertness for scent work

Outline

- Downloads

- Choosing an alert

- Changing the level of an alert

- Working with small dogs

- Keeping the dog motivated

- Sniff the Tin – Foundation – Introduction to the tins used in training

- How to train the dog to find and alert on the tin in random locations

- Simplicity of Patterns – simple, methodical patterns to search for tins

- Training in a variety of locations throughout the house

- Finding non-visual/hidden scent sources

- Crate training for impulse control

- Searching when the person is lying down

- Scent wheel

- Alerting:
  - At any time of day
  - While walking
  - When the dog is asleep
  - When the person is asleep
  - In public, including all the places the person regularly goes
  - On a train, bus, car, or plane

- In the presence of another dog
- Self Control
- Crate Work
- Kuranda Work
- Collecting scent samples
- Allergen alerts
- Service Dog Selection

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 assignments, each requires you to submit a video showing you working with a dog while training one of the behaviors covered in the course. The first video is required after you've learned the foundations of the material and can demonstrate the basic technique to teach the dog to sniff and follow the sniffer tins. The second video is required later in the course. For the second video, you have the option to demonstrate either the dog doing the body search pattern or the dog working a scent wheel. Videos are typically 5 minutes long for these assignments. It will likely take you several sessions with your dog to achieve the desired results in the video. More details are provided later in the course.

During the course, there will be quizzes as you complete sub modules. A grade of 80% or above is required to pass each quiz. Students have the opportunity to discuss their answers with Atlas faculty as well as retake tests as needed.

S7 – Developing Your Service Dog Program

Course Description

This course is text based. It covers a wide variety of information regarding the development and implementation of a successful service dog training business. At the end of this course, you will get one-on-one advice and support, review, and input regarding your own business/program to help further your business.

Course Objectives

This course will:

- Help trainers determine if working with owners to train their service dogs is the right path for them

- Help trainers successfully set up the business side of their company

- Help trainers meet the standards and qualifications consistent with organizations such as Atlas assistance Dogs, Assistance Dogs International, and meeting ADA standards

- Ensure trainers understand Atlas' service dog team certification program

- Give feedback to trainers on their program and/or facility design

- Teach trainers the tools to make their service dog business ethical and successful

Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students will:

- Be able to identify and/or design a business model that meets the needs of their client, is ethical and demonstrates high standards consistent with organizations such as Atlas Assistance Dogs, ADI, and ADA

- Be able to explain laws relevant to setting up a dog training business

- Be able to identify and/or design pricing models, insurance options and company policies that need to be considered when setting up a dog training business

- Be able to explain the importance of confidentiality in their business practices

- Be able to identify ways to promote and grow their dog training business

Outline

- Are You Ready to Be a Service Dog Trainer?

- The Client and Training

- Maintaining Service Dog Standards

- Pricing Model

- Service Dog Program for Success

- Your Business

- Insurance

- Know the Laws

- Paperwork

    - Records

    - Contracts

    - Logs

- Confidentiality

- Tips on Growing Your Business

- Program Self-assessment

- Facility Self-assessment

- Atlas Certification and Support

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.

This course includes up to two assignments, one that reviews your training program and one that reviews your training facility, if applicable. Each requires you to complete a written Program Review Form that reviews your program (and your facility if applicable) in detail. We then schedule a zoom call to discuss. If you do not yet have a program, this is an opportunity to work with us to develop best practices and review your plans. Expect to spend several hours completing this document. The more you put into this, the more you will get out of it. Options for people who do not plan to build a training program or facility are provided in the Assignment details.

At the end of this course, you will be asked to complete a brief survey.

S8 – Atlas' Public Access Test

Course Description

This course is text and video based. It goes over Atlas' entire Public Access Test (PAT), including what to expect during the test and explains the overall importance of the PAT

This course has been developed for our clients, Team Facilitators, and trainers as it will help everyone stay on the same page and ensure that all are fully prepared.

Course Objectives

This course will:

- Explain the purpose of the PAT

- Describe all the elements of the PAT and provide the actual test document as a reference

- Give clear instructions on what to expect from the PAT

- Provide detailed videos (where necessary) to demonstrate PAT items

Learning Outcomes – Clients

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

- Describe what expected of a dog that is well-trained and ready for public access

- Identify those areas they need to work on so that they are fully prepared for the PAT

- Describe what it looks like when a handler and dog are working together as a cohesive team

- Identify the critical test items that impact the dog, client, or public safety and would result in ending the testing or require later retesting

Learning Outcomes – Trainers

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

- Describe the importance of certification and why we do a PAT annually

- Describe what is expected of the client/dog teams they are working with, so that they may properly preparing them for the PAT

- List key safety concerns for the clients, dogs, and the general public

Learning Outcomes – Team Facilitators

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

- Describe what is expected of the client/dog teams they are working with, so that they may properly preparing them for the PAT

- Describe the importance of certification and why we do a PAT annually

- List key safety concerns for the clients, dogs, and the general public

- Describe the stress clients and their dogs may be under during the test and they may work with them compassionately and ethically while still maintaining necessary standards

Outline

- Vocabulary

- PAT overview

- Temperament test

- Care and maintenance

- Approaching buildings, vehicle protocols, distractions, recalls

- Stores, restaurants, food avoidance

- Elevators, stairs

- Disability skills, team relationship

Course Expectations

Please allow at least one to two hours to go through the course and review the references that will be provided. If the topic is less familiar to you, you may need more time to view references or research the area in further depth.

At the end of this course, you will be asked to complete a test with a mix of multiple choice, fill in the blanks, and true false 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.