

In recognition of Patricia Gallinger-Giao, Pet Trainer, her contribution to the #Life At PetSmart Blog, and her positive impact on the lives of local dog owners

TRAINING IS YOUR BACKUP LEASH



www.patriciagallinger-giao.ca
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Patricia Gallinger-Giao has logged over 4,000 training hours to date, working with pet parents to achieve their goals. If you would like to know more about her classes, please call **PetSmart at (905) 331-5454, opt. 4, for more information. Free 20-minute consults are available to determine the right curriculum for you and your dog.**

Meet Sky, my smart, funny, irrepressible Parson Russell Terrier who recently celebrated her eighteenth birthday. And though we had many happy memories to celebrate, there was one that can only be described as a cautionary tale. That event is the primary reason I became a dog trainer...

I never thought much about training when Sky first came home with my family, just a three-pound puppy with all the speed and bounce of a cottontail rabbit. To be honest, as with so many new dog owners, I never really thought much about the tough questions of dog ownership at all.

My daughter wanted a dog. Sound familiar? And so, responding to an ad posted on the grocery store bulletin board, I phoned to ask if there were any puppies left. The breeder said, yes, and later that day, she handed over a contract, our chosen puppy, and made recommendations for dog school though it would be months before I got around to enrolling. Eventually, attending those classes fell by the wayside as things do when you've got work and kids and a house to attend to, not to mention other bills to pay.

My entire perspective on the importance of training shifted one spring morning of 2007, in downtown Burlington, along the Brant Street promenade. I was with my daughter and Sky and we'd just passed an outdoor café when a large group of dog walkers, four-legged clients in tow, turned onto Brant Street, from the side street ahead of us. As they approached, Sky panicked. She dove beneath a table, backing out of her harness as her leash tangled in the chair legs. Her next move was to launch headfirst into traffic. At that moment, I could only do what we'd been trained to do, despite my sporadic attention to homework, cues, and repetitions.

"DOWN!" I shouted, pointing to the sidewalk. It was an instinctive response, more like muscle memory than anything else, but miraculously... down she went. Sky responded in the only way she knew, what she'd been trained to do in our training classes, dropping right into the down position, right there on the edge of the curb. Right on the very edge of oblivion—just long enough for my daughter to get her harness back on. Ironically, several other dogs also dropped into the down position which I can laugh about now but couldn't fully appreciate at the time.

It was then that I realized just how important her training at PetSmart had been, and how every penny spent on those classes was an investment in our years together. Not long after that fateful morning, I signed her up for another training package, and I was a lot more diligent about homework.



Do you think you will always be in full control just because your dog is on a leash? Dogs can pull a leash from your hands. Dogs can slip out of a harness in seconds. **Invest in some training with your new pup because one day, it could save their life.**