



BOARD OF CANINE BEHAVIORISTS



CANDIDATE HANDBOOK

Canine Behavior Associate (CBA) Certification

Foundation Certification — Board Certification Pathway

Version 1.0

www.caninebehaviorists.org

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Welcome

Congratulations on taking the first step toward earning the Canine Behavior Associate (CBA) credential.

The Board of Canine Behaviorists (BCB) was established to advance professionalism, ethical practice, and evidence-informed canine behavior through internationally recognized certification programs. The CBA certification represents the first step in the Board's professional certification pathway and is designed to recognize individuals who have demonstrated a foundational understanding of canine behavior, learning theory, welfare, and responsible professional practice.

This Candidate Handbook has been developed to guide you through every stage of the certification process. It explains the requirements for certification, the application and examination process, Board policies, candidate responsibilities, and what you can expect before, during, and after your certification journey.

The Candidate Handbook is not intended to serve as a textbook. Rather, it is the official guide governing the Canine Behavior Associate certification program. Candidates are responsible for reading and understanding the contents of this handbook before submitting an application or scheduling a certification examination.

On behalf of the Board, we thank you for your interest in becoming a Board-certified professional. We wish you every success in your certification journey and look forward to welcoming you into the growing community of canine behavior professionals dedicated to science, ethics, and compassion.

Board of Canine Behaviorists

Scientia. Ethica. Compassio.

Section 1 About the Board of Canine Behaviorists

The Board of Canine Behaviorists was established to bring structure, consistency, and credibility to a profession that had long lacked a unified standard. As demand grew for qualified canine behavior professionals, so did the need for an independent body capable of setting benchmarks that the public, veterinary community, and profession itself could trust.

Our Mission

The Board's mission is to advance the canine behavior profession by establishing internationally recognized certifications that reflect scientific knowledge, ethical practice, and professional excellence.

Our Vision

The Board envisions a global profession in which every certified individual, regardless of geography or specialty, is held to the same rigorous, evidence-informed, and welfare-centered standard — and in which certification is a meaningful signal of competence to clients, employers, and veterinary partners alike.

An Independent Certification Body

The Board of Canine Behaviorists is an independent professional certification body. It is not affiliated with, nor does it endorse, any single training school, methodology, product line, or commercial organization. Certification decisions are made solely on the basis of published eligibility requirements and examination performance.

Science, Ethics, and Compassion

Every standard the Board sets is built on three pillars: scientific rigor, ethical accountability, and compassion for the animals and people that certified professionals serve. This commitment is reflected in the Board's motto, *Scientia. Ethica. Compassio.*, and is woven throughout the certification requirements, examination content, and Code of Ethics.

Evidence-Informed Practice

The Board's certification standards are grounded in contemporary behavioral science and are reviewed periodically to ensure they remain aligned with current research and professional best practice. Candidates are expected to demonstrate an understanding of evidence-informed principles rather than any single training philosophy.

Why Certification Matters

Professional certification provides a consistent, independently verified benchmark of knowledge and ethical commitment. For candidates, it offers a structured path toward professional growth. For the public, employers, and veterinary professionals, it provides confidence that a certified individual has met defined standards. For the profession as a whole, certification strengthens public trust and helps raise the standard of care provided to dogs and their families.

Methodological Neutrality

The Board does not endorse a single training methodology, tool, or equipment philosophy. Certification standards instead focus on the underlying science of how dogs learn, communicate, and respond to their environment, and on the humane, welfare-focused application of that knowledge in professional practice.

The Certification Pathway

The Board offers four progressive certification levels, allowing professionals to grow and formally recognize their expertise as their careers advance:

- Canine Behavior Associate (CBA) — the foundation credential for those beginning their professional journey.
- Canine Behavior Consultant (CBC) — for professionals working independently and applying evidence-based practices.
- Senior Canine Behavior Consultant (SCBC) — recognizing experienced professionals with advanced knowledge and proven results.
- Board Certified Canine Behaviorist (B.C.C.B.) — the Board's highest credential, recognizing exceptional knowledge, ethics, leadership, and experience.

This handbook addresses the Canine Behavior Associate (CBA) certification specifically. Requirements for the CBC, SCBC, and B.C.C.B. credentials are described in their respective candidate handbooks.

Section 2 About the Canine Behavior Associate (CBA)

The Canine Behavior Associate (CBA) certification is the foundation credential within the Board's certification pathway. It recognizes individuals who have demonstrated a foundational understanding of canine behavior, learning theory, welfare, and ethical professional practice.

Purpose of the Certification

The CBA exists to establish a recognized, entry-level standard of competency for individuals working with dogs in a training, support, or client-facing capacity. It provides a structured, accessible starting point for professional development while upholding the same commitment to science, ethics, and compassion that defines every Board credential.

Who This Certification Is For

The CBA is designed for a broad range of individuals beginning or expanding a career involving canine behavior, including:

- Dog trainers beginning their careers who wish to build a strong foundation in behavior, learning theory, and ethical practice.
- Animal shelter and rescue staff supporting behavioral assessment, enrichment, and welfare-focused care.
- Students and aspiring professionals preparing for careers in canine behavior, training, rehabilitation, or animal welfare.

- Veterinary nurses and assistants seeking a deeper understanding of canine behavior to enhance patient care and client education.

An Entry-Level, General Training Focus

The CBA is an entry-level professional credential centered on general dog training and foundational behavior knowledge. It is intended to certify readiness to support basic obedience, puppy training, and client education — not to certify competence in the assessment or treatment of complex behavioral disorders.

What the Certification Represents

Successful CBA certification represents a demonstrated, foundational understanding of how dogs learn, communicate, and develop, along with the ability to apply humane, welfare-focused training principles and communicate professionally with clients and colleagues.

What the Certification Does Not Represent

CBA certification does not represent advanced clinical competency. It does not qualify a certified individual to independently assess or treat complex behavioral conditions such as aggression, severe anxiety, or suspected medical or neurological causes of behavior. These situations fall within the scope of the Board's higher-level certifications or require veterinary referral, as described in Section 13 (Scope of Practice).

Relationship to Higher Board Certifications

The CBA is the first step in the Board's four-level certification pathway. It establishes the foundational knowledge upon which the Canine Behavior Consultant (CBC), Senior Canine Behavior Consultant (SCBC), and Board Certified Canine Behaviorist (B.C.C.B.) credentials build. Certified CBAs are encouraged to pursue continued education and progression toward these higher credentials as their experience grows.

Professional Expectations of a CBA

Individuals holding CBA certification are expected to practice within the defined scope of the credential, uphold the Board's Code of Ethics, represent their qualifications honestly, and refer clients to more advanced professionals or veterinary care when a case falls outside their competency.

Section 3 Eligibility Requirements

The CBA certification is intentionally accessible to individuals at the start of their professional journey. Eligibility is based on age, integrity, and a commitment to ethical practice rather than prior formal education or professional experience.

To be eligible to apply for CBA certification, applicants must meet the following requirements:

- Be at least 18 years of age at the time of application.
- No formal education is required to apply.
- No prior professional experience is required to apply.
- Agree to abide by the Board's Code of Ethics throughout the duration of certification.

- Provide accurate and truthful information on all application materials.

The Board may request additional information or documentation from an applicant where necessary to verify eligibility. Eligibility requirements are established by the Board and are subject to change; the version published on the Board's website at the time of application shall govern.

Section 4 The Certification Process

Certification is earned through a straightforward, two-step process: submitting an application, and, once approved, completing payment to schedule the certification examination.

Step 1 — Submit Your Application

Applicants begin by submitting the online application together with the non-refundable application fee. The Board's team reviews each application against the eligibility requirements described in Section 3.

- The application fee is \$100 USD and is non-refundable.
- If approved, the application fee is credited toward the total certification fee.
- Application review is generally completed within 72 business hours.
- Applicants are notified of approval or denial by email.

Step 2 — Schedule Your Examination

Approved applicants receive payment instructions for the remaining examination fee. Once payment is received, the candidate is granted access to the Official CBA Study Guide and Candidate Handbook, along with instructions for scheduling the examination.

- The examination fee is \$295 USD.
- The examination fee, combined with the application fee, brings the total certification cost to \$395 USD.
- The Official CBA textbook becomes available for download once the examination fee has been paid.
- Upon payment, the candidate receives a scheduling code to book the remote certification examination.

Item	Amount	Notes
Application Fee	\$100 USD	Non-refundable; paid at Step 1
Examination Fee	\$295 USD	Paid at Step 2, following approval
Total Certification Cost	\$395 USD	Application fee credited toward total

The examination must be scheduled within six months of payment. Extension requests are considered by the Board on a case-by-case basis; see Section 7 for full scheduling policy. Successful completion of the certification examination results in the award of CBA certification.

Section 5 The Certification Examination

The certification examination provides an independent, standardized assessment of a candidate's competency against the Board's published examination blueprint. It exists to verify — objectively and consistently — that every certified individual has met the same foundational standard, regardless of their prior training background.

Key examination details:

- The examination is closed-book.
- It consists of 200 multiple-choice questions.
- Candidates are given a three-hour time limit to complete the examination.
- A passing score of 80% is required to earn certification.
- Each examination fee payment covers one examination attempt.
- Examination content is based on the Board's published examination blueprint (see Section 10).

The Board reserves the right to revise examination content, format, and procedures over time to ensure the examination continues to reflect current knowledge and professional practice. The version of the examination blueprint in effect at the time of scheduling shall govern.

Section 6 Remote Examination & Proctoring

The CBA certification examination is completed remotely under live proctoring. This allows candidates to test from a location of their choosing while preserving the integrity and consistency of the examination process.

Technical Requirements

- A functioning webcam is required for the duration of the examination.
- A functioning microphone is required for the duration of the examination.
- A stable, reliable internet connection is required.
- The candidate's camera must remain on and visible to the proctor throughout the entire examination.

Before the Examination Begins

- Candidates will be asked to complete a workspace scan showing the full testing area.
- Candidates must present valid, government-issued photo identification for verification.

During the Examination

- No notes, books, phones, or other unauthorized materials are permitted in the testing area.
- Recording, photographing, or sharing examination content in any form is strictly prohibited.

Examination Integrity

- Cheating, attempted cheating, or examination misconduct of any kind may result in immediate termination of the examination, forfeiture of the examination fee, denial or revocation of certification, and permanent disqualification from future Board programs.

Section 7 Scheduling, Rescheduling & Retesting

Scheduling

Candidates must schedule their certification examination within six months of examination fee payment. If the examination is not scheduled within this window, the examination fee is forfeited unless an extension has been approved by the Board in advance. Extension requests are considered on a case-by-case basis.

Technical Issues

If a candidate experiences a verified technical issue that prevents completion of the examination, the matter will be reviewed by the Board. Where the Board determines that a technical failure was outside the candidate's control, the candidate may be offered the opportunity to reschedule at no additional cost.

Retesting

Candidates who do not achieve a passing score may retake the examination subject to the following conditions:

- A two-week waiting period is required before a retest may be scheduled.
- A retake fee of \$75 USD applies.
- The retake examination must be completed within two months of the original attempt.

Missed Examinations

Candidates who fail to attend a scheduled examination without prior notice to the Board will be treated as having used their examination attempt, subject to the retesting policy above.

Candidate Responsibilities Before Examination Day

Candidates are responsible for confirming their technical setup, reviewing proctoring requirements, and ensuring valid identification is available well in advance of their scheduled examination time.

Section 8 Preparing for the Examination

The purpose of examination preparation is to ensure candidates enter the certification examination with a solid, working understanding of the knowledge areas defined in the examination blueprint — not to memorize isolated facts.

The Official CBA textbook is included with the examination fee and becomes available for download once the examination fee has been paid. Candidates are encouraged to supplement the official textbook with

additional educational resources, such as those listed in Section 9, to deepen their understanding of core concepts.

The certification examination is designed to evaluate a candidate's understanding and practical application of core concepts, rather than rote memorization. Candidates should focus their study on understanding why behavioral principles work as they do, and how to apply them in realistic scenarios.

Suggested Study Planning

Candidates are encouraged to begin studying as soon as the Official CBA textbook is available, allocate consistent study time across each examination domain in proportion to its weighting (see Section 10), and use practice questions or self-assessment where available to identify areas needing further review.

As noted in the introduction to this handbook, the Candidate Handbook itself is not intended to serve as study material. It governs the certification process; the Official CBA textbook and recommended reading are the appropriate resources for examination preparation.

Section 9 Recommended Reading

The following resources are recommended to supplement the Official CBA textbook. Recommended reading is intended to deepen understanding and is not mandatory unless otherwise specified by the Board. Candidates may use equivalent educational resources at their discretion.

- Official Canine Behavior Associate (CBA) Textbook (provided upon examination payment).
- Don't Shoot the Dog! — Karen Pryor.
- The Culture Clash — Jean Donaldson.
- The Other End of the Leash — Patricia B. McConnell.
- A is for Aggression — Benjamin McGill.
- Handbook of Applied Dog Behavior and Training — Steven R. Lindsay.

Section 10 Examination Content Outline

The certification examination is built from the following blueprint. Each domain is weighted according to its relative importance to competent, entry-level professional practice.

Examination Domain	Weight	What It Covers
Learning Theory	25%	Classical and operant conditioning, reinforcement and punishment, motivation, and how dogs acquire and generalize behavior.
Canine Communication & Body Language	20%	Reading canine body language, recognizing emotional states, and identifying signs of stress, fear, and conflict.

Puppy Development & Life Stages	10%	Developmental stages, critical socialization periods, and age-appropriate training expectations.
Welfare & Humane Training	10%	Welfare-focused, humane training principles and their application in day-to-day practice.
Basic Behaviour Problems	10%	Recognition of common, non-complex behavior concerns encountered in general training and client work.
Equipment & Handling	8%	Appropriate selection, fit, and humane use of common training and handling equipment.
Professional Ethics	7%	Application of the Board's Code of Ethics to everyday professional situations.
Working with Clients	5%	Clear, professional, and effective communication with clients and colleagues.
Scope of Practice & Referral	5%	Recognizing the boundaries of the CBA credential and referring appropriately to more advanced professionals or veterinary care.

Section 11 Certification After Passing

Candidates who achieve a passing score receive the following upon certification:

- A printable digital certificate.
- An official certification number.
- A digital certification badge for professional use.
- The official CBA certification seal.
- A listing in the Board's public certification directory.

Certification materials remain available for download for the duration of the certification period, up to renewal. Newly certified professionals should review Section 12 (Certification Marks) of the Board's Terms & Conditions for guidance on the appropriate use of Board certification marks, logos, and titles.

Certification carries ongoing professional responsibilities, including adherence to the Board's Code of Ethics, accurate representation of the credential, and practice within the defined scope described in Section 13.

Section 12 Renewal

CBA certification is valid for three years from the date of issue.

- Renewal requires payment of a \$100 USD renewal fee.
- Renewal completed prior to expiration does not require re-examination.
- Renewal requires agreement to abide by the Board's current Code of Ethics.
- Renewal requires confirmation of current contact information on file with the Board.

Lapsed Certification

Certification not renewed prior to its expiration date is considered lapsed. Individuals with lapsed certification may not represent themselves as Board Certified until certification has been reinstated or re-earned in accordance with Board policy.

Retesting After Expiration

Depending on the length of time a certification has lapsed, the Board may require the candidate to retake the certification examination in order to reinstate certification. The Board reserves the right to revise renewal requirements over time; the requirements published at the time of renewal shall govern.

Section 13 Scope of Practice

The CBA is an entry-level professional certification. Recognizing the boundaries of this credential — and referring appropriately when a case falls outside them — is one of the most important professional responsibilities of a certified CBA.

Within Scope

A certified CBA is prepared to work within the following areas:

- General obedience training.
- Puppy training.
- Basic manners training.
- Client education grounded in canine behavior principles.
- Application of core learning theory and behavior principles in everyday training contexts.
- Recognition of the limits of one's own knowledge and competency.

Outside Scope — Referral Required

The following situations fall outside the scope of CBA certification. Certified CBAs should refer these cases to a Canine Behavior Consultant (CBC), Senior Canine Behavior Consultant (SCBC), Board Certified Canine Behaviorist (B.C.C.B.), or a licensed veterinarian, as appropriate:

- Human-directed aggression.
- Severe fear and anxiety.
- Separation anxiety.
- Resource guarding.
- Suspected medical or neurological causes of behavior.
- Complex behavioral disorders.

A Note on Referral

- Referring a case outside one's scope of practice is not a professional shortcoming — it is a core ethical obligation. The Board's Code of Ethics requires certified professionals to practice only within the

limits of their competence and to refer clients to appropriately qualified professionals when a case exceeds that competence.

Section 14 Candidate Responsibilities

Every candidate is responsible for upholding the standards of the certification process, both during the application and examination process and afterward, as a certified professional. Candidates and certified professionals agree to:

- Conduct themselves professionally throughout every stage of the certification process.
- Submit honest, accurate applications.
- Provide accurate information to the Board at all times.
- Maintain the confidentiality of examination materials.
- Comply with all published Board policies.
- Communicate respectfully with Board staff, proctors, and fellow candidates.
- Follow all examination instructions in full.
- Report ethical concerns to the Board where appropriate.

Section 15 Appeals

Candidates who believe an error occurred during the application or examination process may submit an appeal to the Board within 30 days of the relevant decision or event.

Appeals are accepted only for the following:

- Administrative errors.
- Technical issues affecting the examination.
- Examination procedure irregularities.

Appeals are not accepted on the basis of disagreement with individual examination questions, answer keys, scoring methodology, or the perceived difficulty of the examination.

All appeals are reviewed by the Board. The Board's determination following this review is final.

Section 16 Contacting the Board

The Board is available to assist candidates with questions at every stage of the certification process. To ensure the fastest response, please direct your enquiry to the appropriate contact below.

- General enquiries: info@caninebehaviorists.org
- Certification enquiries: certification@caninebehaviorists.org
- Technical support: support@caninebehaviorists.org

- Appeals: appeals@caninebehaviorists.org
- Website: www.caninebehaviorists.org

The Board aims to respond to all enquiries within two to three business days. As a global certification body, the Board does not maintain fixed office hours; enquiries are processed by staff across multiple time zones on an ongoing basis.

Appendix A Board Code of Ethics

All CBA candidates and certified professionals agree to uphold the Board's Code of Ethics, which governs animal welfare, professional competence, scientific integrity, honesty, respect for clients, professional responsibility, collaboration with other professionals, conflicts of interest, continuing professional development, and public trust.

The complete Code of Ethics is published as a standalone Board document and is available on the Board's website and upon request. Agreement to the Code of Ethics is a condition of both initial certification and every subsequent renewal.

Appendix B Candidate Agreement

By submitting an application for CBA certification, the candidate acknowledges and agrees to the following:

- I have read and understood the contents of this Candidate Handbook.
- All information provided in my application is accurate and truthful to the best of my knowledge.
- I agree to abide by the Board's Code of Ethics throughout the duration of my certification.
- I understand that application, examination, certification, and membership fees are non-refundable except as described in this handbook or as required by applicable law.
- I understand that certification is awarded solely at the discretion of the Board in accordance with its published policies and procedures.
- I agree to maintain the confidentiality of all examination materials and to refrain from any form of examination misconduct.
- I understand that providing false information or engaging in examination misconduct may result in application denial, examination failure, permanent disqualification, or revocation of certification.

Appendix C Board Certification Pathway

The Board's certification pathway is designed to support professional growth over the course of a career. Candidates may progress through the following levels as their experience and expertise develop:

Canine Behavior Associate (CBA)

The foundational credential for those beginning their journey in canine behavior. Addressed in full by this handbook.

Canine Behavior Consultant (CBC)

For professionals working independently and applying evidence-based practices to a broader range of behavioral concerns.

Senior Canine Behavior Consultant (SCBC)

Recognizes experienced professionals with advanced knowledge and a proven record of professional results.

Board Certified Canine Behaviorist (B.C.C.B.)

The Board's highest credential, recognizing exceptional knowledge, ethics, leadership, and experience within the profession.

Requirements, fees, and examination details for the CBC, SCBC, and B.C.C.B. credentials are described in their respective candidate handbooks, available on the Board's website.

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