

What is clicker training?

Clicker training means using a sound (a click) to communicate with your dog. Clickers have been in use for more than forty years. The method is best known from the world of marine animal training where people need a way to communicate with animals like dolphins and orcas that can't be controlled physically.

A marker word, such as "Good" or "Yes" can be used in place of the clicker. Keep in mind, the word *must* be followed by a reward. The marker word is different than general praise, such as "good girl".

How does it work?

It is fabulously simple. First we teach the dog that the click means he has won a treat. Then we use the click to tell the dog when he has done something we like.

Essentially: When your dog does what you want him to do—like a sit or a down—you click and give him a treat. This gives your dog *instant, specific* feedback.

You can tell a child you will take him out for ice cream tomorrow because he earned good grades today. A dog, on the other hand, needs immediate pointers to help him understand what behavior he is being rewarded for. A clicker is the perfect tool for this.

Charging the clicker. (Or teaching that click means treat.)

- Grab a handful of really yummy treats cut into small pieces.
- Every time you click, give your dog a treat (be careful not to click and treat at the same time; the treat must follow the click, not precede or coincide with it).
- Do this standing up, sitting down, while moving about, indoors, outdoors. Basically, make sure your dog understands that the click means treat in all situations.
- Do the exercise a few times a day for a few minutes at a time until, when you click, you notice that your dog is eagerly anticipating the treat.

Don't give away that a treat is coming except with the click. For example, be careful not to reach for a treat, point the clicker toward the dog, or reach toward him with the treat before you click. Train yourself to insert a count or a word before you hand over the treat: Click. One one thousand. Treat.

Clicker rules.

- Click only once.
- If you click you *must* treat.
- The clicker is not a remote control. Don't use it to call your dog to you.

Training Tip: Some dogs are startled by the sound of the clicker. If your dog shows any signs of discomfort (shies away, leaves the room) wrap the clicker in a towel or a sock to muffle the noise. Or use a ballpoint pen that makes a quieter "click" sound. Try again, and when your dog clearly shows he enjoys the exercise, unwrap the clicker a little at a time.