



CLICKER TRAINING

What we are going to teach:

Correct Behaviour = * Click * = Reward

1. Loading the Clicker

The first thing we need to teach is the clicker association. That the sound of the *click* means food will follow. Grab your dog's meal (breakfast, lunch or dinner), sit or stand in front of them with the clicker in one hand, have their food bowl on a counter, click and give them a kibble. Allow them to chew and then click and give them another kibble, repeat this 5-10 times then I prefer to take a short lap around the house or throw a few kibbles on the floor to allow their brain a bit of a reset. Begin the process again repeating this 3 more cycles. While doing this entire exercise your dog should be in a fairly relaxed state. No jumping while you are clicking, just sitting or standing.

You can repeat this stage for a few meals, 1-2 days should be enough. If you feel your dog needs more time with this please feel free to stick with it.

Exit Test: When your dog is not paying attention, grab your clicker and a reward. Click the clicker a few feet away from them, they should spin around knowing that they receive a reward for the noise. If they don't, spend more time at this stage and increase your food value.

2. Command with Click

It's now time to pair the click to a command. We are going to teach our dog that they will hear a click when they do a correct behaviour. You want your click to be as exact as possible, think of your clicker as a camera. You will be taking a picture of the behaviour (command/trick etc) that you are trying to teach. If you click too early you are telling the dog that you are rewarding an improper behaviour and if you click too late you are not telling the dog exactly what they are being rewarded for. Mistakes are bound to happen, brush it off and continue to do your best.

Grab your dogs kibble and your clicker, ask them to do a basic command like Sit, wait for their bum to touch the ground, Click, Reward. Repeat this with other very simple behaviour that they know how to do.

What if my dog doesn't do a command? If your dog doesn't do a command properly, follow through like you normally would and then click when they are in position and reward like normally.

What if I accidentally click? That's ok, that's human error not dog error! But guess who still gets a treat? That's right! Your dog still gets a treat even if you accidentally click the clicker at any time! Even if you were rummaging through a drawer and you accidentally click it and your dog hears it, they get a treat!

3. Shaping (optional)



Shaping allows your dog to spontaneously offer a behaviour and be rewarded for it. In the beginning it will be small steps and sometimes hardly close to the end result but the process and journey that you and your dog go through to get there builds confidence, team work, communication and intelligence.

You can choose to teach your dog a command, trick or behaviour like pick up an object, step up on a stool, to not jump on people or you can choose to simply shape a random behaviour and see what happens! If you have a timid, shy or low confident dog I recommend shaping a random behaviour to allow your dog to let them do what comes naturally to them.

Grab your dog's meal, put it up on a counter and grab your clicker! Grab any props you might need and before grabbing your dog think about what you might want your dog to do with the object. Now remember Rome wasn't built in a day! Don't for a second think your dog will be doing a circus act in one session! Shaping means that we are going to reward our dogs **for small progressions to the final goal**. You might only get a little tiny nose touch in one session or your dog moving their leg in a direction in one session. **Lastly before you begin, this involves no talking!**

Set any objects out and grab your dog. Click and reward any movement toward the object or in the direction you want your dog to move. Continue to click for more and more of the behaviour that you want to see. As they get better in one session or in a few days begin to increase your expectations and not reward the initial small progressions that we were previously rewarding. This is called, increasing our expectations.

Here is an example of my dog doing a shaping session. My end goal is for him to carry the broom.

Pawed broom, click

Touched broom with nose, click

Touched broom with nose, click

Pawed broom---ignored, NO click. I want him to go back to using his nose

Touched broom with nose, click *gave extra treats to reinforce this

Some teeth on broom, click

Opened mouth on broom, click

Grabbed broom with mouth, click

Pulled back on broom, click

End of session