



Clicker Training for Dogs

A training method for all animals that is fun and force free.

What does it do?

The click acts as a reward marker to tell the dog that what he just did was the correct response. The click is always followed by a reward (which can be a tasty treat, a toy, or anything the animal enjoys).

Clicker training takes a little practice for both us and our dogs. For us, the timing of our click is important so you will need to practice and for our dogs, they need to learn the significance of the click. Once you both know the game, there's so many ways you can use a clicker in your training.

The benefit of using clicker training is that it is a great way to teach our dogs to think and problem solve. It reduces our reliance on talking and using too many words which can confuse our dogs and the click is a great way to clearly communicate to our dogs exactly what they just did that earned the treat.



Getting started

First, practice clicking the clicker so you are making a consistent sound, then grab a handful of treats and your dog and simply click and then give your dog a treat, click and treat. Repeat a few times. This is what we call 'charging the clicker', which simply means, we are giving the click sound meaning to our dogs by pairing the click with a tasty treat. In no time at all, our dogs will have formed a positive association with the click sound so that the click now predicts a treat is coming. Once that association has formed, you are ready to start training.

Training with a clicker

So just what can be trained using the clicker? Well the only real limit is your imagination. The clicker can be used to teach basic skills like sit, drop, stay, come, leave, give or more complex behaviours such as loose lead walking, trick training or agility. Furthermore, any animal can be trained this way – including your pet bird, cat or horse.

When learning clicker training, you can start off with a simple behaviour like teaching your dog to touch their nose to your hand, this simple targeting exercise is great to help you with your timing of the click and is a great way to teach your dog how to think and problem solve. To teach the nose touch, simply hold your hand up with your palm facing your dog, if your dog goes to sniff your hand, click and treat.

Repeat several times, aiming for your dog to touch your hand with their nose. If your dog looks blankly at you, make your hand smell good by wiping a yummy treat on your palm and then present your hand to your dog again – click and treat when your dog sniffs your hand and build up to a nose touch. There, you trained a simple behaviour. Talk to your positive reinforcement trainer about more ways you can use the clicker.

Where to go learn more about clicker training

Search for a trainer in your area that uses force free training methods and uses clickers in their training classes.

Teach yourself – There are a number of great books and on-line courses, or learn from good examples of YouTube video clips. Also check out Karen Pryor's website www.clickertraining.com and range of books/DVDs on the subject.

More information and resources at www.apdt.org.au