

Using a Clicker

The click marks the behaviour that you want your dog to take notice of, remember, and learn to repeat. This can be any behaviour from paying attention, responding to your call, sit for greeting visitors, shaking a paw etc.

Some rules:

- Make a promise that for every click there will be a reward, within 4 secs
- Avoid the dog's ears, the click is audible at quite some distance, which makes it very uncomfortable and painful when held to the ear.
- Treat it with value and do not 'click away', it is a precious sound your dog will want to hear as it means that goodies are on the way!
- Make it heard but not seen, do not click at the dog, they learn better if they are listening.

How to charge the clicker

1. Shut yourself and your dog in a quiet room alone together. Make sure you have somewhere to sit and a table on which to put a small container of treats. Keep the clicker in your hand.
2. Press the click and immediately throw the dog a treat. Wait until he has lost interest and repeat.
3. C&T (click and treat) randomly for several minutes. Each time you repeat the C&T make sure the dog is doing something different from the last time. You do not want him to associate the C&T with any of his actions, or with any specific pattern in time, at this stage. You are focusing on the link between the click and the treat.
4. C&T at least 20 times and then put the clicker and treats away.

Complete several sessions until the dog is clearly expecting a treat immediately he hears the click and no matter what else he is doing.

Your clicker is now charged. Every time you press the clicker the dog will 'feel good', and he will now expect a treat to follow. Don't disappoint him, though you can allow the gap between click and treat to stretch out by a second or two if necessary. It won't lose its power provided the gaps do not become too long. The fact that the dog 'feels good' about the click, makes it an effective way of marking behaviours you want him to repeat.

All About Treats

As with all training treats should be varied and some treats work better for different situations and different techniques, if you are throwing the treat to the floor then ham or chicken will stick to your figures, where as biscuit will not. Ensure you have plenty of treats all ready to go and in a tub as it is easier especially as you are also handling a clicker.

Formula of a Behaviour



Therefore the order for a new, old or free behaviour is:

1. Handsignal/verbal cue or lure
2. 'Click' when performing desired behaviour
3. Reward with treat

Don't worry if the dog has changed position or moved to retrieve treat, as long as you have clicked the behaviour you want the dog will soon get it and repeat the desired behaviour. In fact by moving out of position it makes it easier for your dog to learn what the desired behaviour is.

Changing Old cue for New Cue

To rename a cue for instance 'sit' to 'hello' (this is very useful if you want your dog to be well mannered and sit for guests) then the above formula is used the difference being you say the new cue e.g. 'Hello' in first then say the old cue 'sit' and then click and treat, gradually you take the old cue out reward for the behaviour when performed for the new cue.