



What is Clicker Training?

Clicker Training Basics

Clicker training is the same as positive reinforcement training, with the added benefit of a clicker. A clicker is simply a small mechanical noisemaker. The techniques are based on the science of animal learning, which says that behaviors that are rewarded are more likely to be repeated in the future. Rather than focusing on what your dog is doing wrong, and taking good behavior for granted, clicker training concentrates on what your dog is doing right. By telling your dog what to do, instead of what not to do, you can have an incredible effect on how your dog chooses to behave.

What is a Clicker?

A clicker is a small noisemaker that makes the sound of a “click.” The clicker itself has no meaning to the dog but paired with a reward it becomes a powerful training tool. Clickers are inexpensive and can be purchased at most pet stores and online.

How Do You Use Clicker Training?

To use a clicker or other marker, you'll first need to teach the dog what the marker means. Sometimes called “loading the clicker,” you pair your chosen marker with a reward. So, click, then immediately treat. After about 10–20 repetitions, your dog will understand that the marker predicts a coming reward. Now you're ready to put the clicker into practice.

The clicker is a great way to capture good behavior. If you see your dog lying quietly on a mat instead of begging at the table, click then reward that behavior. Or if your dog has all four paws on the floor when the doorbell rings, click that moment before your dog has a chance to jump on guests. Eventually, when your dog has learned a new behavior, you won't need the marker anymore, it's simply a teaching tool. But whenever you want to lure, shape, or capture a behavior, the clicker or other marker will help you communicate clearly with your dog so the behavior you want is the behavior you'll get.

Why can't I just say “good dog” when my dog does something right?

As an event marker, the clicker becomes uniquely attached to your dog's successful performance. Since it is used as a training tool, it allows the handler to mark a behavior with greater precision and more consistency than we can do with our voice.

What do I need to start?

- A buckle or martingale collar
- A 5 to 6 ft. training leash
- A clicker
- Many small treats that your dog really loves
- A pouch or bait bag to hold your treats
- A mat or bed that your dog can lie on
- A chew toy, rawhide, bully stick or stuffed Kong toy (with peanut butter or wet dog food) to work with relaxation on a mat or bed