



Potter League
Enriching Lives

Dog Clicker Training

Conditioning your dog to the clicker:

Work with your dog in several short sessions over the course of about two days.

Click and give your dog a treat. Repeat 10 to 12 times. Make sure you vary the amount of time between clicks and that both you and your dog are in several different positions as you click and treat (sometimes your dog may be sitting, standing, in front of you, or behind you). Make sure to click first and then get the treat immediately to your dog's mouth (within 1 to 3 seconds).

This is a great opportunity to test out a number of different kinds of treats to see which ones your dog prefers. If your dog isn't particularly interested in the treats, try a different type of treat. Start with a soft, smelly treat, like cheese or hot dogs (cut up, either right out of the package or microwaved with garlic powder sprinkled on top). Other treats you might try include mini marshmallows, Cheerios, cut up carrots, or a soft commercial treat. The pieces should be very small – no bigger than the size of your little fingernail, and even smaller than that for tiny dogs.

To see if your dog is conditioned to the click, try the following:

Click when your dog is looking away from you. If he immediately turns to you, looking for the treat when he hears the click, he's got it!

Using the clicker to reinforce acceptable behaviors:

Choose one spontaneous behavior or something your dog does that you like. Some examples: sitting, looking at you, chewing on a toy, or lying on his bed. Each time you see your dog doing this behavior, click and treat. You need to be observant and have your clicker and treats handy at all times. When you catch your dog doing something right, let him know.

Caution:

Once you start clicking and treating your dog for a behavior, be prepared to see the behavior often. Don't choose a behavior that will become obnoxious when performed frequently.

Try not to punish or correct your dog for inappropriate behavior. If you catch your dog doing something you don't like, interrupt him and redirect him to a behavior you like. Click and treat if he performs the alternate behavior. For example, if you catch him chewing a shoe, interrupt him with a sudden noise, then remove the shoe and replace it with a chew toy. Click and treat your dog if he puts his mouth on the chew toy.



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Trick of the Week: Checking in

Once your dog is conditioned to the clicker, click and treat whenever your dog looks at you without prompting. You may be watching TV, reading a book, or working in the garden. Don't say a word to your dog. If he looks at you, click and treat. You'll find he quickly learns to pay attention to you – this is a great beginning to learning!