



CLICKER TRAINING:

(Taken from 'Go Click' by Elizabeth Kershaw)

WHAT IS CLICKER TRAINING?

Clicker training is the art and science of using a 'conditioned reinforcer' (CR) to train your dog, cat etc... A CR is an initially meaningless sound, word or signal which becomes significant to your dog because you teach him to associate it with something rewarding.

WHAT IS A CLICKER?

A clicker is a small rectangle, plastic box that has a metal tongue fitted inside it which is fixed at one end. When the free end of this tongue is quickly depressed and released it makes a sharp and distinctive double click. Test your dog's reactions to the clicker by depressing the clicker in your pocket to muffle the sound. Different clickers make different sounds, in extreme circumstances, you may have to find one that suits your dog's hearing.

WHAT MAKES A GOOD REWARD (primary reinforcer)

The reward (reinforcer) can be anything that motivates your dog and for which he is prepared to work. Typical examples are food and toys but as you progress through training you will learn that other things can be equally effective. Approximately 95%-98% of dogs respond to food positively.

HOW DO YOU USE THE CLICKER

You use the clicker to communicate three important pieces of information to your dog, cat etc...

- It pin points (marks) the aspect of a behaviour that you wish to reinforce by using the sound of the clicker as an 'event marker'
- It communicates to your dog, cat etc... that "what you have just done is right and will be rewarded". In other words it predicts the availability of a food reward for that behaviour.
- The click marks the end of the behaviour. Following a click and a treat, you start again.

OTHER ADVANTAGES

The clicker is a teaching tool it is not a 'forever' tool. Once your dog understands the task you are teaching, it can be faded out or a quiet verbal conditioned reinforcer introduced. The clicker is faster and thus potentially more accurate as a reinforcer than the spoken word. It is useful for marking behaviour that your dog offers at a distance away from you. It can isolate a particular point in a sequence of behaviour. It eliminates the problem of your dog having to pick out essential information from a plethora of words. It is unemotional and the mentally sensitive dog will do best with this system as there is not association with human emotions, tone of voice and body language. For more information and an introduction to Clicker Training, "Go Click" by Elizabeth Kershaw is available in the BACC shop along with a selection of clickers.



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