

Clicker Training Tips For Success

1. Always, Click once, then treat

2. Make the reinforcement immediate and certain (click and treat). Using a clicker allows you to mark the behaviour just as it happens. The more closely that reinforcement follows the target behaviour the more likely it is to be effective if you are teaching your dog to jump, for example, click when the dog is in mid-flight (criteria for height) and for the long jump at the end of the behaviour, just as the dog lands.

3. Never show the dog the rewards (primary reinforcers); let him learn that it is his behaviour that causes the click, which produces the food.

4. Always END practice sessions BEFORE your dog loses interest, so practice sessions should be "short and sweet" of 3-4 minutes, 5 to 6 times per day, in different locations around the house are better than 2 half hour sessions.

5. Observing the results is an essential part of the training process. Learning to perceive the difference that makes the difference. Learning to observe your dog, when to reinforce or not, and when to raise your criteria will become easier with time and experience. As will, most importantly, having the patience to allow your dog to work through these procedures so that it will heighten your dog's performance and improve his creativity for learning. Learning to perceive the difference that makes the difference is known as the "art of reinforcement" and the only way of achieving fast, reliable results is to go out and do it, as reading about it doesn't give you the practice that you require.

6. Watch your dog and capture its natural behaviour; sit, down, stand, come follow me, sniff the ground, head turn, paw lifting, yawn, stretch, shake, play bow, rollover and many more; keep looking, keep clicking!

7. Visualise the whole behaviour and click and treat any small movements in the right direction. If you want the dog to "sit", and it starts to crouch its backend, click.

8. Dogs learn in fits and starts, so go at a pace you both can cope with and remember to start each session with a review of the previous session's behaviour.

9. Good TIMING is everything-if things are not working out you are probably clicking too late, get a training "buddy" to help!

10. Teach in a quiet environment and gradually add distractions: your movements, a friend visiting and then your friend with a friendly dog.

11. What's your dog MOTIVATION: Use the Canine Reinforcement Analysis. (READY, STEADY, CLICK!)

12. Expect errors, yours and the dog's, behaviour is variable so you will have a second chance to capture your target behaviour.

13. When using the lead, it is there for safety's sake, not as a training tool.

14. Do not rush to add cues/commands until the dog has learned the behaviour. First the dog will learn to sit for a click and treat, Then the dog learns that sitting only gets a click and treat when you say "sit". So that word (cue) becomes a signal that reinforcement is now available for that particular behaviour.

15. When giving a cue/command only give it once and wait until the dog performs the behaviour, then click and treat.

16. Be patient and have fun-if you or your dog are not "up for it", stop, have a cup of coffee and try again later.

17. Mend unwanted behaviour by clicking GOOD behaviour. Click and treat the dog for toileting in the right place. Click for paws on the ground, not on guests.

18. Use the right size of food or treat for your dog. Start your training program before you have fed the dog.

19. Most behaviour can be shaped up by using continuous reinforcement; there may be no need to use Variable Ratio reinforcement.

20. Above all let your dog see you as a source of all things good, including information about what's safe to do and what's not safe to do, with our clickers. Be creative, have patience and above all have fun.

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