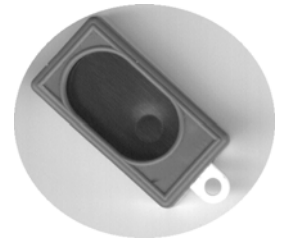


Clicker training – it's one big tick ✓



By Karen de Wit

Clicker training can help you communicate with your pet. You can clicker train any kind of dog, of any age. Puppies love it. Old dogs learn new tricks. You can clicker-train cats, birds, and other pets as well.

Start with some good things you want your pet to learn to do. Keep notes. You will be surprised at the speed of your progress! Reward YOURSELF for your pet's improvements. Here are some simple tips to get you started.

1. Push and release the springy end of the clicker, making a two-toned metallic click. Then give your pet something it really likes (Keep the treats small. Use a delicious treat at first).
2. Click while your pet is DOING the desired behaviour, (not AFTER it is finished). The **timing** of the click is crucial. Don't be dismayed if your pet stops the behaviour when it hears the click. The click ends the behaviour. Give the treat after that - the timing of the treat is not as important as the timing of the click!
3. Click when your pet does something you LIKE. Choose something easy at first, that the dog is likely to do on its own. (Ideas: sit; come toward you; touch your hand with its nose; raise a paw; go through a door; walk next to you.)
4. Click just ONCE (in-out.) If your pet does something really great and you want to express special enthusiasm, praise with your voice, or give a handful of treats, not just one.
5. KEEP PRACTICE SESSIONS SHORT. Three sessions of five minutes each are better than an hour – your dog will get bored.
6. TRAINING is a SERIES of STEPS. Click and treat for small movements in the right direction. Don't wait for the "whole picture" or the perfect behaviour. Eg. You want it to come when called, and it takes a few steps your way : click.
7. LURING. You can coax your pet to do a behaviour eg. To teach your dog to sit, hold a piece of food just above its nose and move it slowly back towards its tail. You don't need to push, pull or hold it.
8. RAISING YOUR GOAL. As soon as you have a good response start asking for more. Eg. Count to five, until the dog stays down a little longer, comes a little further, sits a little faster. Then click. This is called "shaping" a behaviour.
9. WORD or HAND SIGNALS. When the dog has learned to do something for clicks, it will begin showing you the behaviour spontaneously, trying to get you to click. Begin using a word or hand signal. Click for that behaviour if it happens during or after the word/hand signal. Ignore behaviour that happens when the signal wasn't given. *If your dog does not respond to a signal, it is not "disobeying;" it just hasn't learned the signal completely. Practice some more!*
10. TRICKS. Carry a clicker and "catch" cute behaviours like cocking the head, chasing the tail, or holding up one paw. You can click for many different behaviours, whenever you happen to notice them, without confusing your dog.
11. DON'T GET MAD. If you feel mad, put the clicker away. Don't mix scolding, leash-jerking, and correction training with clicker training; you will lose the dog's confidence in the clicker and perhaps in you.
12. TIMING is EVERYTHING. If you are not making progress with a particular behaviour, you are probably clicking too late. Accurate timing is important. Get someone else to watch you, and perhaps to click for you, a few times.

Have fun. Clicker-training will enrich your relationship with your pet.