

BASIC CLICKER TRAINING METHODS.

The easiest action to train first is the SIT. There are two methods of doing this. The first is to use **SHAPING**. This is where you wait for your pooch to sit down by himself and then immediately **CLICK/TREAT**. (Here after abbreviated as C/T) You watch him and every time he sits, you C/T. This requires a lot of time and patience but it does work eventually!

The second method is to use the **LURE** method. This requires you to lure Fido into the desired position with the use of food. From a standing position place a treat just over your dog's nose then raise it upwards and backwards over its head until their rump hits the floor. Click/Treat. Repeat this a few times until Fido sits without much luring. Eventually take a piece of food and wait. It should not take long for Fido to realise that to get the treat he should sit. Now is the time to start to fade the lure. Do not hurry this action, it is better to go back a stage until your dog makes the connection by thinking for himself.

Whatever method you chose, once Fido is reliably sitting then it is time to start adding the **CUE WORD** - Sit!

Now a brief word about jackpots! These are to be used when your dog finally has a breakthrough in training and does it right after lots of attempts. Give him a whole handful of treats as a **MEGA REWARD**. I should mention that if Fido does the action wrong, **do not use the word NO** in this connection, just say "wrong" "that's not it" or "try again" and then do nothing. Keep trying. When things are going well you can go on to slowly phasing out the clicker and treats. Start off by intermittently treating after a click. Say good dog instead. Fido will be puzzled at first but will try even harder the next time to get the reward. Next time C/T. Keep changing the pattern to say something like this:-

Say sit, dog sits, you C/T.

Say sit, dog sits, say good dog and give a big pat.

Say sit, dog sits, you C/T.

Say sit, dog sits, say good dog and give a big pat.

Say sit, dog sits, say good dog and give a big pat.

Next three repetitions C/T every time.

You are strengthening the behaviour by randomly rewarding. Also you can now begin to reward only the very best, fastest and most accurate responses.

From this basic exercise you can train all the other desired actions!

The **DOWN** can be difficult to train. Either use the **SHAPING** method and wait for your dog to go down on his own and C/T or **LURE** him by placing a treat on his nose, slower lower it to the floor between his front paws and then slowly move it backwards towards his body. Any movement to bend should be rewarded. If after many attempts Fido does not get the hang of it try using your legs as an arch. Sit on the floor with your legs bent and try and lure him under. If it is a very big dog then use a chair. Your pooch really has to duck under your legs to get the treat and when he is finally down on the floor C/T. As I have said previously, **BE PATIENT, PERSEVERE, YOUR DOG CAN DO IT (EVENTUALLY)**. This is when a jackpot comes into its own! Go on, after all that effort doesn't he deserve it!

Go on and train the **STAND**. Wait for that action and C/T or lure into position and C/T. This should be an easy one. Eventually add the Cue word.

HAND IN COLLAR is a good behaviour to learn. This will mean to can get control of Fido without hassle. Useful for attaching lead easily, grooming and when at the Vet's Surgery etc. Start off by putting your hand into your dog's collar for a second releasing and then immediately Click and Treating. Puppies may struggle at first and even try and bite. Have none of it, it is essential you hang

on! When Fido realises you mean business and gives in Click and Treat straight away. Gradually lengthen the time you hold on to their collar before you Click and Treat. Eventually your dog will calmly accept this and a very useful lesson will have been learnt!

Next try the dreaded **RECALL**. The bane of most dogowners life. Try on the lead at first. Call Fido's name for this one and you can also say **COME**. I know this is contradictory after saying wait until the behaviour is learned but this is the exception because I have found by experience that this works the best. When they arrive in front of you C/T. Get a friend to hold your pet and go a little distance away and repeat the process. Do this everywhere! Especially in the park, but until the behaviour is extremely reliable, do it on lead. When Fido comes happily to you also briefly put your hand in his collar before you C/T. He is learning coming back to you is the best thing since sliced bread! Tell him what a great dog he is. Make it fun!

Even after all these years I always carry treats in my pocket and when I get good recalls from my three dogs when outdoors I still reward them. It works! **WALKING ON A LOOSE LEAD**. This can be hard for some canines, especially large and powerful dogs. You cannot have too many hard and fast rules for this because they all respond very differently so here are a few suggestions. Start off having a fairly short lead. You have to be in control for this one so long leads are out! Start walking and when Fido pulls stop still, do not move and wait. When your dog turns and looks at you or lets the lead go slack immediately C/T. Continue walking, you will not get very far the first few times but you can slowly build up the distance before being pulled and Fido will hopefully realise that not pulling is what you want. Encourage your dog back to the heel position by your left side and start again.

Sometimes this takes so long to work that extra measures are needed. Try this exercise, when Fido pulls, turn and walk smartly away in another direction. If he is not pulling C/T. If he pulls again, walk backwards. Be unpredictable! Confuse Fido! When he twigs he is not going to get anywhere fast and starts to walk nicely C/T. Phew!!! This may seem like walking in ever decreasing circles and people in the park may think you have a screw loose but this method will work if you keep at it.

If you find it difficult holding the dog on the lead, the clicker and the treats, then try tying his lead around your waist to leave your hands free, this will also Give you more stability. By this stage of training you will probably need to keep your treats in a baitbag or in a convenient pocket anyway. Whilst you are training loose lead walking always reward nice calm trotting beside you with Clicks and Treats. Do not be stingy!!!!

STAYS. This one is not too difficult because you have achieved half the required element anyway. From the sit or the down before clicking and treating your pooch wait for a couple of seconds. Start to stretch the time before clicking and treating and when you can get Fido to wait for his reward for more than five seconds add the cue word **STAY**. Try this exercise on lead to begin with. When you are having success gently lower the lead to the ground, take one step away from your dog, wait for a few seconds, return to Fido and C/T keeping him in the sit or down whichever he started in. Do not reward him if he gets up, just start over again. Gradually take more steps away from Fido each time and by this method you can slowly build up the distance between you and your pet whilst he remains in a stay.

JUMPING UP. This is not too difficult, just takes patience. When your dog jumps up on you turn and walk away. Do nothing, just ignore him. You may find yourself coming and going for some time! Watch your dog. When he eventually contains himself and does not jump up when you approach immediately click and treat for having all four paws on the ground. Get friends to approach and do the same thing. This will take some time to achieve but practice makes perfect!

Remember keep all training sessions short and always end on a successful note. Never get cross and if you find yourself getting frustrated stop, try again later. Training must be fun for you and your dog. In conclusion by now you must have realised that the principle of clicker training is just to reward actions you want and to ignore the ones you do not. Simple isn't it? In time you phase the clicker and treat out but as I have stated on my home page rewards given randomly throughout a dog's life will pay dividends!

HOUSETRAINING USING THE CLICKER.

Having recently acquired a new little dog that needed housetraining I was in a great position to put the clicker method to the test. Your dog has to be clicker 'aware' in the first instance for it to work. Therefore you should start training your puppy immediately starting with the sit, down and recall. You can then include housetraining.

I took Twiggy out into the garden every couple of hours and also after feeding and sleeping to give her an opportunity to relieve herself. Some dogs circle before they need to go which can also be a signal. Hard work I know but if you are consistent good results can be achieved in a couple of weeks only.

When she did a 'wee' I clicked halfway through it, praised her and called her to me to get her treat. You do not have to be too near the dog to do this and I stood at the door although I only have a small garden. That is the beauty of using the clicker as a signal to your dog that they are doing the right behaviour - you can be at a distance. It is vital however that you click when they are actually relieving themselves, you have to catch them in the act so to speak. The click marks and finishes the behaviour. The timing of the treat is not so important as long as it is forthcoming! After a few days I started to add the 'cue' word as she was performing her toilet. I always use 'busy' and my older dogs also know this command. Within two weeks we had 'cracked' it! Eventually you can get your dog to relieve itself on command by saying 'go do a busy!' As with all clicker training the cue word finally replaces the clicker. For those who do not have a garden and have to use paper you can still use this method initially so that an association is formed with the command busy and doing their 'thing' and when exercising you ask them to 'do a busy' and start to click and treat them for getting it right. It will take longer but you will get there in the end.

Obviously for 'poos' you use the same method. You will have to give a different cue word. I always used 'good boys' but not much use when I have a bitch now! 'Good girls' has not got the same ring!!!!!! You can use whatever you feel appropriate but should be in good taste so to speak! Our doggies have their dignity too!!!!!!

I always recommend crate training puppies so that you can help them get clean and dry overnight. When they are tiny you cannot expect them to hold themselves for long periods so by putting their bed into a crate with paper at one end you solve the problem of mess anywhere else. First thing in the morning though you should take the pup out and give them the chance to go in the garden. Eventually the paper will be clean and dry and you will know that they are capable of holding themselves until you are able to take them outside for their calls of nature!

I must stress that ON NO ACCOUNT should you punish a dog for having accidents. It is not their fault. It is YOUR fault! If they understand what is required of them and you take the time to train them you can get good results. Some folk expect them to know what to do without showing them. Some do not have patience and take the time needed. I am appalled when I hear people say you should rub their noses in it!!!! It is barbaric and non productive. What on earth do they expect to achieve!

Finally your dog does not mess in the house to get back at you! Yes some do it when they are left alone in the home but this can be caused by separation anxiety or not allowing them to relieve themselves before you go out! Dogs do not like to soil their dens, and your home is their den!

Older dogs too can learn by this method even if they have problems and have not been trained correctly. However, PATIENCE is the order of the day!

As a last word SCOOP THAT POOP! As responsible dog owners we should know that cleaning up after our animals is essential. Unfortunately there are lots of humans out there who don't!! Please do not be one of them! **WORKING WITH TOUCHSTICKS IN CLICKER TRAINING**

The use of a touchstick in clicker training has many uses and once your dog is clicker 'aware' you can start this method of training. First you must acquire a suitable touchstick. I recommend a wooden dowel approximately one and a half cms (half an inch) in circumference and thirty cms (twelve inches) in length. You can get these from timber merchants or D.I.Y. stores.

The idea is that you want your dog to touch the dowel with his nose when it is presented to him. Any part of the dowel to start with, the end or the middle. Hold it in front of his nose and wait for him to investigate it by sniffing and when he does this click and treat immediately. Repeat this action as many times as it takes for your pooch to reliably touch the dowel every time it is presented to him. Then add the cue word TOUCH. If your pet tries to take the dowel into his mouth just say try again, do not click and treat and repeat the exercise.

When you think you have 'cracked' it start to move the dowel around so that the dog has to move to touch it. Hold it on the ground so that he has to bend to touch it, hold it up high so that he has to jump up to touch it. Hold it against a wall so that he has to move to that location and touch. Move the dowel around so that your pooch follows the dowel in order to touch it! Be inventive! Always remembering to click and treat every effort.

Now start to use other objects for him to touch. Use your hand, a favourite toy or a ball large enough for him not to be able to take it into his mouth. Get a target and pin to the end of the dowel. I use the plastic lids made to go on opened tins of dogfood. Pin one of these to the end of the dowel or just use the lid on its own. Ask Fido to touch. Start moving it around all over. When you get good results take the target plastic lid and pin it to the front of a cupboard which is not too heavy. Open it slightly and ask Fido to touch the target. When he does just that click and treat or even give a MEGA reward! Now go on to click and treat stronger and stronger pushes with the nose until eventually you have a very neat trick of Fido closing your cupboard doors for you! Larger dogs can even close your lounge or kitchen doors for you!

The dowel can also be used when getting your dog to do other tricks like spins and crawls. You do not have to use food as a lure in the first instance as mentioned in the basic trick training information. Only for successfully touching the dowel. Also you can use this method for close heel work, finishes and getting to know right and left turns.

In agility you can use this for teaching jumps and weaving poles.

Another fun trick to teach your dog is to play ball with you. Using the same method present a large ball to your dog to touch with his nose. It should be large enough so that Fido cannot take it into his mouth. Click and treat for every good attempt. When the results are reliable get your pooch in the down position. Place the ball in between his front paws and say the cue word TOUCH. Reward harder and harder pushes and eventually the ball will start rolling towards you. Hey presto! You and your dog can now have a game of ball!!!!!! As before once you get consistently high results with the dowel you can phase out the use of it. In time you also phase out the clicker and treat in the usual

way although I recommend that a really fine effort from your faithful friend is always worth a reward and a kind word from you!