**CLICKER TRAINING - What is it?**

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| ***What is a clicker?***  A clicker is simply a small plastic device that makes a distinctive ëclickí sound when pressed.The clicker has no value or meaning of its own but can quickly be conditioned to represent access to ëgood things to your dog.  ***How Does it work?***  By clicking once then immediately treating with a small titbit, your doglearns the association that ëclickí means ìgood job ­ youíve earned a reward! You'll be training your dog to do the behaviours you want while Fido thinks hes training *you*to click! Dogs enjoy the mental challenge of the clicker training game as they grow to realise that their behaviour determines the rewards.  ***Why not say good dog?***  A clicker is more effective than simply saying ìgood dog for two main reasons.One is that, it is a very distinctive sound completely unlike human speech.Dogs quickly learn that each and every click has a significance for them (leads to rewards).On the other hand, by necessity dogs learn to tune out most human words because the majority of words dont have any significance for them. Secondly, the clicker is much quicker than spoken words. To be a effective reward should be delivered within one second ofthe behaviour you wish to reinforce. In practice, this can be very difficult. In thefew extra seconds, a dog can do lots of different things - how does the dog know which one earned the treat? Was it the sit or jumping up and licking your face? Theclicker pin points exactly which behaviour it is that you liked and bridges the time between the behaviour and the reward. Dolphin trainers have been using this type of training for years using a whistle instead of a clicker. When the dolphin jumps , the trainer blows a whistle to let the dolphins know "Yes ­ I liked that ­ come and get a fish." The clicker tells your dog "I liked that ­ youve earned a reward."  ***Getting started with a clicker.***  You can start clicker training your dog or puppy from the first day you bring it home. Click and reward for all the behaviours you like ­ sitting, lying quietly, even toileting in the right spot. You dont have to use the clicker for just one behaviour at a time - click and reward all the behaviours you would like to see become part of your pets usual repertoire. This is called opportunity training or free shaping and means you simply watch, click and reward. The behaviours you click will increase in frequency while the behaviours that have not been clicked will begin to extinguish.  Puppies are a special delight to clicker train, as they grasp the training game very quickly, however clicker training can be just as effective on dogs of all ages and personalities.  Dogs who may have had a bad association with previous training methods or who are very timid, blossom under this no pressure no threat system of training. Amazingly it works equally well with pushy dogs who learn that to gain rewards they have to stop being a bully and THINK what it is that will make their owner CLICK!  ***Advantages of Using a Clicker***  It is a short, sharp, clear sound very different to the human voice. Dogs, by necessity tune out to most of what we say as it does not apply to them . They soon learn the clicker is their special sound. Clicker training will help you to say less to your dog & observe more. Dogs communicate mainly by body language. It is only fair that we learn a bit about their language instead of expecting them to only learn our verbal one. Understanding your dogs movements will maketraining easier. Clicking requires a more conscious effort than speaking does for most people making you more aware of your timing of rewards.  Once your dog understands click means treat, you dont need to have food in sight to reward your dog. You can keep treats hidden in your pocket or on the table. Click & treat training automatically teaches your dog to pay attention to you - without force. It opens the channels of communication between you and your dog . You'll think you're training it and your dog will think its training YOU to click! Training time will become the best time you spend with your dog. The training game itself becomes rewarding to the dog.  ***SOME IMPORTANT POINTS ABOUT CLICKERS***  Think of your clicker as a battery operated camera.You're going to use your clicker to take snapshots of all the things you like your dog to do (sitting, lying down, keeping four feet on the ground when visitors arrive etc.). To keep the battery in your camera charged, you have to follow each click with a treat.If you click without treating, the clicker like the camera would cease to work.  The clicker is just a training tool that helps you communicate with your dog. Once your dog fully understands a new behaviour you don't need to use the clicker any more ­ the information it provided has been assimilated. The clicker ends a behaviour - it doesn't matter what the dog does after the click (the photo is already taken remember) he has earned his reward.  When you want to extend the time your dog sits or downs, simply delay the click. Start with just a few seconds, then build slowly.The click will end the exercise, releasing your dog from position.  Clickers and Bait bags are available through:-  Get S.M.A.R.T Dogs Telephone (02) 9499-2119  Further information is available on the Internet at these sites:  www.pryork@karenpryor.com/  [www.clickandtreat.com](http://www.dalmatiansofnsw.org.au/www.clickandtreat.com) |