

# DogSchool.co.uk

## An Introduction to Clicker Training

*This EBook is designed to give you a basic introduction to the world of "Clicker" training.*



**You may Freely distribute this book in any form; online, printed, disk etc. Without restriction, except it must be **FREE** & remain complete.**

This book is copyright © [www.DogSchool.co.uk](http://www.DogSchool.co.uk) 2003

# INTRODUCTION

Training dogs has changed significantly over the past few decades, from "Dog Breaking" to "Training" and now "Conditioning". Conditioning is a scientifically proven method of achieving goals in dog training which is kind, fast and very effective. As a part of conditioning we have available an extremely enjoyable and effective system known as "Clicker Training". Without doubt this "Tool" is a must have in any trainers, instructors or individual's box of skills.

Clicker training is not a **Black Art** that is restricted to a select few, it is a technique that needs understanding and practicing **BUT** is available to **ALL**.

It is cheap to get in to, a "Clicker" is not expensive at all.

Information is available from a variety of sources including this EBook, Internet, Books, Videos, Workshops, Magazines, Clubs and more.

Because "Clicker" Training is scientifically based it can be daunting listening to a lot of the buzz words; Classical and Operant Conditioning; Negative, Positive Re-enforcement; Conditioned or Unconditioned Stimuli and LOTS more. Do not let this put you off, there is no reason to understand the science behind the system to start enjoying it.

What ever your reason behind trying "Clicker" training you will find that the excitement, fun and enjoyment will be its own natural stimulant to learn more. Of course some people will be happy to use the system to cure a problem or teach a behaviour to their pet, some will move onto using it to advance their dogs abilities, others will decide that they wish to become instructors. Each level will require a more advanced understanding of the science behind the system but never get scared to "give it a go".

I teach that the primary principal of training a dog is COMMUNICATION, not only in the way you interact with your dog but also in setting up the training session and then rewarding the correct behaviour. As long as you reward the behaviour you want the dog to repeat then it will understand what to do to receive more rewards. That's Conditioning!

What did I do to earn that reward?

What can I do to get another one?

The dog is in control of its learning BUT you control what it learns.

# WHAT IS CLICKER TRAINING?



A "Clicker" is a small plastic box which has a metal plate inside it, when pressed and released the Clicker produces a *Click-Click* sound.



There are models available in the shape of small bugs.



The Clicker itself comes in a variety of colours and designs, they can even be personalised with logo's and text printed on them.



The Clicker can come with a tab fitted to allow finger chains, lanyards or retractable coils to be attached.



Whilst the "Clicker" is sold as a dog training aid it is not compulsory to use one. A pen, glass jar with metal lid that clicks, or anything that makes a distinct sound can be used, some trainers utilise a whistle.

Remember before you imprint the dog with the sound it means nothing to it. So whatever method of delivering the sound you use, as long as its consistent, it doesn't matter.

## WHAT REWARD SHOULD I USE?

So how do you choose a reward to use with the "Clicker"? The most popular and easy to use reward is titbits of food. The choice of food is really dictated by what the dog likes, its pointless using cheese if your dog hates it. Suggestions include sausage, cheese, chicken or the recipe below:

### INGREDIENTS



1 lb. Liver  
1 lb. Flour  
2 eggs  
2 Cloves of garlic



### METHOD

1. The ingredients need to be well blended together, if available use an electric blender. The mixture should resemble a pate consistency.
  2. Grease a microwave proof dish and place in the mixture ensure that the dish is big enough to allow a couple of inches expansion.
  3. Microwave on full power for 15 minutes.
- WARNING** it is best done in the garage, outhouse, or garden; the smell is not pleasant!
4. Allow to cool completely, then remove from dish and cut into small cubes, size depends on your dog. For a medium-large size dog I use approximately 1cm squares.

The treat will keep for several days in the fridge in an airtight container or as I tend to make a bulk amount I divide into smaller bags and freeze until required.

The titbits should be cut into approximately 1cm size cubes and held in a bowl, cup or belt pouch. The main principles with the food reward is that it should be highly palatable but easily digested. Do not use titbits which require a lot of chewing as the dog will spend more time eating the reward than working for it.

**NOTE:**

**You must adjust your dogs daily feed intake to take into account the amount of titbits you are using. i.e. Reduce the amount you normally place in the dogs bowl by the amount you use in training**

## **HOW DO I USE THE CLICKER?**

The "Clicker" will not train your dog for you, its as simple as that. You will need to apply the system to train your dog. The click sound is a bridge between the dogs behaviour and receiving a reward. The idea is to get the dog to repeat a behaviour you desire to get a reward. The first phase of the training is to get the dog to associate the sound of the click with receiving a reward.

Sit in a quiet location where you will not be disturbed. Initially I like to have the dog on a lead which is under the chair leg, just a loose lead, but this allows me to keep the dog close without restraining it myself.

Have a supply of selected treats close to hand and commence training. There is no need to talk to the dog, the aim is to introduce the click sound and what it means.

Hold the "Clicker" in your hand with treat in the opposite hand then:

*Click & treat*

*Click & treat*

*Click & treat*

*Click & treat*

Repeat this several times in succession until the dog starts to anticipate that the click means a reward will be offered. Then stop and wait till the dog looks away and immediately:

*Click & treat*

Repeat this till the dog turns its head to you as soon as it hears the click, there is no hard and fast rule as to the time this takes, some dogs may understand the concept in 10 minutes, some may take 10 training sessions.

Stick with it as no two dogs are the same, remember:

**"Do Not Give Up!"**

That's it, your dog and you are on the route to training success! Once the dog has been conditioned that the click means reward this phase will not need repeated. From now on you should only click when the dog does something you want it to repeat.

# A BASIC EXERCISE

Lets start with a basic exercise to teach first.

## **SIT**

- ?? Show your dog that you are holding a piece of treat in your hand.
- ?? Hold the treat close to the dogs nose until he shows interest in it.
- ?? Move your hand up and back in a slow sweeping motion. The aim is to make your dog lift his head following your hand; that way his bottom will go down.
- ?? As soon as the dog reaches the sit position "click & treat"



- ?? Repeat this exercise until the dog moves into the sit as soon as you start to move your hand.
- ?? It is now time to introduce a verbal request, as you start to move your hand say "**Sit**". When the dog's bottom touches the ground "click & treat".
- ?? Continue to repeat this exercise a few times.
- ?? Now repeat the exercise without the treat in your hand, use the "**sit**" request as before. As soon as the dogs bottom touches the floor "click & treat".
- ?? Once again repeat the exercise until the dog is sitting on request.
- ?? Now you can stop using the Clicker for the sit exercise, just request your dog sits before it receives anything it enjoys; feed, going into garden, going for a walk.

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

*Will I have to continue to use the Clicker for ever?*

No not at all. Once the behaviour has been achieved then the Clicker can be phased out of the training. Start by asking for two behaviours for one Clicker and piece of food. Then three behaviours and start to phase the Clicker out altogether for that behaviour.

*Can I use the system to train a deaf dog?*

Yes, clearly a Clicker would not be used as a training aid, in this case a torch could be used in exactly the same way.

*What if I lose my Clicker, will training have to stop?*

No, you can use a variety of items that give a distinctive sound; jam jar lids, pen, even tongue. It will not take long for your dog to convert from one sound to another. They are very adaptable and able to work out what sound means a reward is coming.

*Can I use a Clicker in a training class when others are using them?*

Yes, dogs work out that *your* hand and *your* Clicker is the method to get reward. Keeping the dogs attention and focused on you will help greatly BUT it certainly is no reason not to train.

## SOME BASIC RULES

- ?? Do not point the Clicker at the dogs face when using it. Keep the Clicker out of sight, remember its the sound that's the key not the instrument for making the sound.
- ?? Use a palatable reward that the dog really likes.
- ?? Always stop the training session just before the dog starts to lose attention, this takes a bit of judgment but you should be able to see when the dog is tiring after completing a couple of sessions. It is better to complete three short training sessions (10 mins per time) a day rather than one long session.
- ?? Do not try a training session straight after the dog has been fed.
- ?? Only click once! If you want to show the dog that you are really pleased with a behaviour then increase the amount of reward, not the number of clicks.
- ?? Click good behaviour and ignore bad; if the puppy toilets outside "Click & Treat" and give large reward, avoid shouting and physical punishment for toileting inside.
- ?? If you need lure, coax or bribe the dog in to completing a required behaviour rather than push, pull or hold.
- ?? Do not expect a perfect response instantly, "Click & Treat" for movements in the right direction; when teaching the "Sit" reward the dog initially for crouching on its rear end THEN extend the requirement for a more perfect "Sit"
- ?? Always ask the dog to do more each session as soon as it understands what is required, if it "Sit's" for 10 seconds then next time expect 15 seconds, then 20 and so on. Also expect it to "Sit" quicker before it gets its reward. This is often known as "Shaping".
- ?? Never lose your temper during training, especially if things are not going exactly as you expected. Stop training and take a break if you feel yourself getting annoyed.

If a dog does not do what you want, it is because **YOU** have not communicated your requirements clearly.

**But the most important rule for Clicker training is to enjoy it and have fun!**

## **ABOUT**



For more information on "Clicker" training log on to

**[www.DogSchool.co.uk](http://www.DogSchool.co.uk)**

A site for Trainers, Instructors and Interested Individuals offering

**FREE**

articles, downloads, E-Group and lots more!

**You may Freely distribute this book in any form; online, printed, disk etc. Without restriction, except it must be **FREE** & remain complete.**

This book is copyright ©[www.DogSchool.co.uk](http://www.DogSchool.co.uk) 2003