



CLICKER TRAINING FOR DOG LOVERS



ClickerPlus.com

CLICKER TRAINING FOR DOG LOVERS

By Josh Pitts

Sharing of this eBook is highly encouraged

Enjoy! 😊

COPYRIGHT

© 2015 Dog Guy Josh and Clicker Plus

All Rights Reserved

First Edition eBook

Free Version

DEDICATIONS

This eBook is dedicated to everyone who has supported Clicker Ring through their encouragement, sharing and pre-order contributions. Without you, none of this would have been possible.

I'm grateful for all you have allowed me to do and will enable me to create for the future of dog parenting and positive training culture.

Thank you for believing in me.

To Nan Arthur of Whole Dog Training in San Diego, CA:
Thank you for being my first customer!

To Nicole, thank you for introducing me to clicker training.

To Dr. Ian Dunbar, thank you taking the time to share your wisdom and encouragement to instill the confidence I needed early in my career.

To Fidela, thank you for all you have sacrificed in service to our country.

Thank you to all of the men and women that serve to keep our country safe.

PREFACE

I made this free eBook for dog lovers. More specifically, people who want to learn more about how dogs think, learn and communicate, but may not be able to afford hiring a professional.

It simplifies the process of how to start clicker training your dog and covers everything that you need to begin, plus some free extras to continue expanding your knowledge and understanding.

I wrote this with the purpose of creating a shareable, educational resource that is capable of empowering dog parents with an easy, fun and practical skill that can be used to facilitate and improve interspecies communication (have a better bond and enjoy your dog!).

Table of Contents

Click any link below to jump to that section. When browsing a section, you may click on the section title to return.

[FAQ: Doubters Start Here](#)

[Getting Started](#)

[Motivation & Rewards](#)

[3 Ways Clickers Are Used](#)

[Practicing Without Your Dog](#)

[STEP 0: Charging the Clicker](#)

[STEP 1: Behavior Fluency](#)

[STEP 2: Adding a Verbal Cue](#)

[STEP 3: Practice!](#)

[Two Important Beginners Cues](#)

[The Three D's](#)

[STEP 4: Weaning Off Food](#)

[Free Extras](#)

[Acknowledgements](#)

[About the Author](#)

FAQ – Doubters Start Here

What is clicker training?

A click is a sound used to mark an event. It's like saying "Good" only it is more audibly discrete and consistent, making it easily recognizable to your dog.

When you have a clicker in hand, you are more mindful of the precise behavior you're looking for. When only your voice is used, it can be difficult to get in the habit of saying "Good".

A clicker also helps you to be more patient and less frustrated because it changes the way you think about dogs. By providing alternative, more desirable behaviors and rewarding, you learn to ignore the bad and reward the good.

In this book, I'll tell you everything you need to know clicker training to get started. Plus, I've even included some freebies for you.

What's involved?

Putting a behavior on cue is easy and can be achieved in as little one to three sessions of no more than five minutes in length over the course of a few days.

Maintaining cues for behaviors can be achieved through praise and life rewards.

Will it work for my dog?

Yes, absolutely! In some way, shape or form, there is a practical application of clicker training that you and your dog can benefit from.

Have you ever wondered how stunt dogs perform those amazing tricks? Or how animals perform in Hollywood movies? How about service dog tasks or detecting cancer?

Clicker training can be used for training cats, horses, rabbits, birds, farm animals, marine wildlife, rodents, zoo animals and a variety of other creatures.

What are the benefits?

The purpose of clicker training is really to get you doing more with your dog and thinking differently about your daily interactions.

You will gain a variety of tools that enable you to analyze your dog's behavior, modify existing routines and implement new policies or procedures.

Clicker training is a skill and developing it will open your mind to a new realm of possibility and understanding, not only with your dog but also with human behavior.

There are potentially limitless benefits, as you will discover the more that you become familiar with how dogs think, learn and communicate.

How effective is clicker training?

Clicker training is the most effective, fast, fun and humane animal training method. But, like anything in life, you get out of it what you put into it. It's definitely more fun and safe than using punishment, both for you and your dog.

Why should I start or switch to clicker training?

Why shouldn't you?! It will life easier for both you and your dog so that you can actually enjoy your bonding together and spend less time stressing out over the small stuff.

What if my dog doesn't respond?

Create a learning environment that is quiet and free of distractions. Make sure your dog is hungry and your treats are motivating. Exercise your dog prior to training if necessary.

Do what works for you.

If you follow the steps outlined in this book, it *can* work. I've included some free extras to help you out.

If it doesn't, either you don't understand it well enough yet or there's something wrong with your dog's biochemistry (in which case you should have your dog examined by a veterinarian to rule out any possible medical conditions).

Do clicker trainers use punishment?

Yes, but not the kind you're probably thinking. There are actually two types.

Positive punishment (P+) is the **addition** of a stimulus in order to decrease the frequency of a behavior.

Negative punishment (P-) is the **removal** of a stimulus in order to decrease the frequency of a behavior.

Research has shown that using positive punishment results in side effects, usually more unwanted behavior such as fear, avoidance and aggressive reactions. Clicker trainers don't use this type of punishment because of this.

Instead, clicker trainers use negative punishment. This typically involves taking something away the dog enjoys, such as your attention for jumping or time outs for mounting at the dog park, in order to decrease the frequency of the behavior.

If you would like to understand more about the science behind how animals and humans learn, I highly encourage you to do some research on the following terms related to learning theory, as well as view the additional resources in the free extras area.

- *Classical Conditioning*
- *Operant Conditioning*
- *Premack Principle*
- *Desensitization versus Flooding*
- *'Little Albert' Experiment*

Are treats and clickers used forever?

No. Once a dog knows a behavior reliably and can demonstrate it on cue, there's no need to continue using a clicker for that particular behavior.

A clicker makes teaching behaviors much, much faster than using our voice alone.

Where did clicker training come from?

It was first mainly used by dolphin trainers that needed a way to teach behaviors without the use of physical force.

Hopefully now you know some things about clicker training that you can share with other dog parents when the opportunity presents itself.

Getting Started

What You'll Need

A hungry, motivated dog

A clicker

A container for treats (pouch or bowl)

10-50 treats (pea-sized and tasty)

Congratulations on taking the first step.

A little work now will pay huge dividends throughout your dog's life.

Motivation & Rewards

The smaller the treat, the more repetitions you can get out of a session before your dog gets full.

When first starting out, you should use a portion of your dog's daily meals for training, if possible. You'll want to save the highest value of treats (your dog determines the value) for the most distracting of situations. The ones your dog goes bonkers for.

Experiment with different commercial treats (I recommend freeze dried beef liver, Natural Balance rolls or Charlie Bears from Trader Joe's) and human food, too, like cheese, fruits and vegetables.

If you have a small dog, or a dog that isn't very food motivated, you can portion their normal food out ahead of time and use it for enrichment throughout the day.

To spare you of repetitive motion injuries from bending over for a small dog, try using a wooden spoon coated in peanut butter for licks that has been chilled in the freezer to harden.

Toys can also be used as a reward during clicker training, and in some cases we can provide access to other things dogs enjoy, known as functional rewards.

Praise should always be used as a reward, too.

3 Ways Clickers Are Used

Capturing

Capturing is clicking once for a behavior the moment as it naturally occurs. Think of it like taking a picture.

You say cheese, everyone smiles, and then you click to take a photo (one that stays in your dog's mind to mark a memorable occasion).

This is the most common way of using a clicker.

Shaping

Have you ever wanted to teach a fun trick like bow, rollover or spin that doesn't always occur naturally or frequently?

Shaping is clicking for successive approximations of a target behavior. It's like playing the hot/cold game with your dog, gradually guiding them to the behavior you want.

Shaping is a powerful tool in training behaviors that we can't quickly and effectively teach with just our voice alone.

Targeting

Ever wonder how animals are trained for movies or certain service dog tasks?

By training a dog to touch an object, such as a targeting stick, you can get them to freely follow it and lead the dog anywhere

you want them to go, instead of having to pull, push, lift or coax.

You can target the dog into the car, onto a grooming table or over jumps. Hand targeting can also be used to socialize shy and mouthy dogs with strangers' in a safe way.

Practicing Without Your Dog

Before you begin, you may want to practice using the clicker without your dog present. Do not practice with your dog present until you are ready for the next section.

How comfortable does the clicker feel in your hand? When you switch hands?

Where are your treats? How fast can you deliver them to your dog or bowl from your treat pouch or container? Hint: No more than 3-5 seconds is my recommendation for beginners. Otherwise the dog may lose interest and not associate the reward with the preceding click.

Timing Exercise

The exercise below will help you to be mindful of three things:

1. What specific behavior you are looking for.
2. How to wait patiently and observe your dog for the behavior you want to mark.
3. Developing the timing of your click by choosing when you want to mark the behavior.

This can be done several ways, when your dog is not present. The basic idea to developing timing is that you or a helper tosses a ball, toy or other light object into the air and then you attempt to click it exactly as it reaches its highest point (OR the moment it hits the ground).

Delivery Exercise

You can also practice clicking then tossing treats into your dog's bowl or a cup when they are not around. This will help you become comfortable developing mechanics that immediately follow your click.

STEP 0: Charging the Clicker

Before we can use a clicker, we have to create the association that the clicker sound means a reward is coming.

To do this, click and then immediately treat your dog approximately twenty times consecutively.

Once you've completed this step, you're now ready to begin training and need not repeat this step again.

STEP 1: Behavior Fluency

It is important to get a dog repeating a behavior frequently and accurately before adding a verbal cue.

It's best to work on only one cue at a time during your training sessions so that you avoid confusing your dog.

To begin understanding how capturing works, try the **Two Important Beginner Cues** section.

STEP 2: Adding a Verbal Cue

Once your dog is repeating a behavior frequently, prompt them with the word you'd like them to respond to. Wait five seconds, maybe longer the first time.

Condition yourself not to repeat yourself. When we repeat ourselves, for example "Sit sit sit", we're actually training our dog not to respond until the third time we've said sit.

If your dog isn't performing the behavior, you may need to practice more. If your dog performs the behavior, use a 'jackpot' reward. Toss a few treats instead of just one. This will increase the likelihood that the behavior is associated with the verbal cue.

From this point on, continue rewarding with treats 100% of the time to strengthen the behavior. Practice in different rooms around your home. Once your dog is responding 9 out of 10 times, you're ready to increase the duration, distance or level of distraction.

STEP 3: Practice!

Practice makes improvement.

Your dog should be responding to your cue at least 9 out of 10 times before increasing the level of distraction (low to medium and medium to high).

See **The Three D's** section for more on duration, distance and distraction.

Two Important Beginner Cues

Starting with these two cues will help you to understand and develop your timing and treat delivery mechanics, as well as establish a solid foundation for future work.

Attention to Name

Use a special, inviting tone when you say the dog's name.

Capture eye contact by marking it with a clicker the moment your dog's eyes meet your eyes. After you click, immediately reward with a treat and praise.

Wait briefly for your dog to look away and become slightly distracted, then prompt your dog with its name again.

You'll want to continue repeating this exercise during your session, focusing on and rewarding only this specific behavior.

Continue to repeat this exercise but be sure to end your session on a good note. End your session before your dog gets full or before they lose interest and motivation. Get one last good response then say "All done."

Practice: 1-3 times per day in up to three locations around the home. Your goal is to maintain eye contact and reward before your dog gets a chance to look away from you.

Sit

Use a special, inviting tone when you say the word 'sit'.

Capture sit by marking it with a clicker the moment your dog's rear end makes contact with the ground. After you click, immediately reward with a treat and praise.

Back up and get your dog to break position, then capture the behavior again and reward. If the dog does not sit, lure the dog by bringing the treat back over its head and click when appropriate.

You'll want to continue repeating this exercise during your session, focusing on and rewarding only this specific behavior.

Continue to repeat this exercise but be sure to end your session on a good note. End your session before your dog gets full or before they lose interest and motivation. Get one last good response then say "All done."

Practice: 1-3 times per day in up to three locations around the home, plus any time the dog is jumping, before you give it a toy or treat, meals, or any affection. Your goal is to have your dog sit and reward before your dog gets a chance to break position.

The Three D's

Duration, Distance and Distraction

There is a reason that dogs do not always respond to us in certain situations. Dogs are poor at generalizing, meaning they're very people-specific and situation-specific learners. What they do best with one person, they might not do as well with another.

One of the reasons I prefer in-home private training is because that is where dogs learn best! There is least possible distraction, unlike group classes! But just because your dog is familiar with basic cues doesn't mean that it's ready for the outside world.

Low-level places: House, garage, backyard or other quiet situations.

Medium-level places: The front yard, light vehicle traffic, walks and light people traffic.

High-level places: A busy park, crowded streets, trails, the dog park, and places with lots of squirrels, birds or other noises.

These are situations where it is difficult, if not seemingly impossible, to get your dog to listen to you. Save the yummiest of treats for this level of distraction.

Once your dog is responding to a cue at least 9 out of 10 times, you're ready to take your training to a medium distraction level.

Once responding at least 9 out of 10 times with medium distraction, you're then ready to take your training to the most distracting of places!

You will still have to work up your dog's reliability in new places in order to produce the level of compliance you're expecting. Use the following three rules as a guideline:

Always start with lower distractions and work up to higher distraction levels.

Always increase duration before adding distance or distraction.

Always increase distance before increasing distraction.

STEP 4: Weaning Off Food

The truth is that dogs want what is in it for them. Cutting off food reinforcement permanently because we think a dog has learned something is a bad idea. We want the behavior to persist even in the absence of food, so we'll have to wean them off food gradually with intermittent reinforcement.

In my opinion, your dog should be performing a behavior 9 times out of 10 in the highest levels of distraction before you even consider weaning them off food.

Reward with food every other performance, substituting praise instead. As time goes on, reward every third or fourth performance until eventually no food is required.

You should still occasionally reward behaviors though. A behavior that isn't rewarded will become extinguished because the dog no longer has any incentive to perform it.

Free Extras

Click on any link below to open it in your browser.

Get 10% off Clicker Ring with discount code EBOOK10

Karen Pryor Clicker Training - The Leader in Positive Reinforcement Training

Dogwise – Over 2,000 Books on All Things Dog!

My favorite YouTube videos

Beginner

[Intro to Clicker Training](#)

[Clicker Training Basics](#)

[What is Clicker Training?](#)

[Getting Started on Clicker Training](#)

[Loose Leash Walking – Part 1](#)

[Loose Leash Walking – Part 2](#)

Advanced

[Dog Getting a Beer – Teach Your Dog How in Five Steps](#)

ClickerTrained.com

A free video community that I created for you to watch and learn or share your expertise. This site is currently in beta testing but subscribers are welcome to signup.

If you're already clicker training, ask me to import your existing YouTube channel. Every time you publish a video on YouTube, it will automatically post to the related Facebook and Twitter feed for ClickerTrained.com to increase your visibility.

In the near future, I'll be adding a variety of additional features that allow users to do cool things like categorize and up or down vote content.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to my friends Jon and David. Your knowledge and generosity have been instrumental to the development of Clicker Plus as a lean startup.

Karen Pryor, author of [Don't Shoot the Dog - The New Art of Teaching and Training](#)

Gail Fisher, author of [The Thinking Dog - Crossover to Clicker Training](#)

About the Author

Josh Pitts is the founder of Clicker Plus and a professional dog trainer with a passion for creating innovative products and services that solve problems for dog parents, pet business and society.

[Click here for full bio](#)

Did you like this eBook? Email it to a friend who could benefit from it.

Here are some ways you can connect with me and share:

ClickerPlus.com

Facebook.com/ClickerPlus

Twitter.com/ClickerPlus

Instagram.com/ClickerRing

Pinterest.com/ClickerPlus

Plus.Google.com/+ClickerPlus

YouTube.com/user/ClickerPlus

DogGuyJosh.com

Facebook.com/DogGuyJoshChico

Twitter.com/DogGuyJosh

Instagram.com/DogGuyJosh

Pinterest.com/DogGuyJosh

DogGuyJosh.Tumblr.com

LinkedIn.com/in/joshnpitts

plus.Google.com/+DogGuyJosh

Clicker Plus

Click anywhere. Train everywhere.

© 2015 ClickerPlus.com