Intro to Clicker Training for Puppy Raisers
Dog Training
Positive Reinforcement Training
Marker Training
CLICKER TRAINING
• Dog training is the process of systematically influencing your dog’s experiences to encourage certain behaviors and discourage others.
THE STICK OR THE CARROT?

• Pitfalls of Punishment-Based Training
• (using pain or intimidation):

• distrust, avoidance, dislike of work
• reliance upon threat
• Stress -> fear, anxiety, aggression
Benefits of Positive Reinforcement Training

- This method builds a bond and trust between you and your dog, which is extremely important for your working relationship!
- Results in a confident dog who enjoys interacting with you and participating in training!
WHAT IS POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT?

• Adding a reward to encourage a desirable behavior.
  • The dog chooses what counts as a reward and what doesn’t at any moment.
What do dogs want/like/value?
What do dogs want/like/value?

Food (kibble)
What do dogs want/like/value?

Food

Play (toys, ball, tug, play with other dogs)
What do dogs want/like/value?

Food 🥓

Play (toys, ball, tug, play with other dogs)

Massage/Petting/Snuggling
What do dogs want/like/value?

- Food
- Play (toys, ball, tug, play with other dogs)
- Massage/Petting/Snuggling
- Walking, Sniffing, Environmental Access
What do dogs want/like/value?

Food

Play (toys, ball, tug, play with other dogs)

Massage/Petting/ Snuggling

Walking, Sniffing, Environmental Access

Chewing
The Key to Positive Reinforcement:

Desirable, trained behaviors
WOULD THIS WORK FOR A DOG?

You’ve been generally good all day, let’s have a picnic tomorrow!

Cadence
WOULD THIS WORK FOR A DOG?

You’ve been generally good all day, let’s have a picnic tomorrow!

Why not?
• Training using a tool called a Reward Marker for clarifying your use of Positive Reinforcement to train your dog.
WHAT IS A REWARD MARKER?

• A signal that guarantees the dog will get a reward, which helps us communicate exactly when (and how) the dog earned a reward.
REWARD MARKER OPTIONS

- Clicker
- A handheld noisemaker that makes a distinct, consistent “click” when pressed

Mark = Click

Why not use a “marker word”? 

Flint
LET’S GET STARTED!

1. Ready some treats or other small objects to practice getting and giving the treat at the right moment.

If you have something like a bowl or cup handy, you can use that as a target to place the treats into.
LET’S GET STARTED!

• 2. Have your Marker ready.

Put your finger on the button of your clicker (or on the top of a clicky pen for practice if you don’t have a clicker).
LET’S GET STARTED!

3. Stand still.

• Don’t reach for the treats or rest your hand where they are.
• Don’t make any noise or movements that would draw your dog’s attention.
• When we Mark, we want the dog to notice with all of their attention, so the pattern of ‘Mark-> reward’ is very clear.

Blaze
LET’S GET STARTED!

4. Mark (click) *immediately* when you see the wanted behavior happen.

Mark at the exact moment you see the behavior happen. Accuracy is important!

It is important to have a clear picture of what you are looking for, so you don’t hesitate about whether or not to Mark and miss the right moment.
• 5. Once the Mark is finished, reach for one treat, pick it up, and place it in the bowl or cup (or just on the table).

• Be sure that you don’t reach for the treat at the same time as you Mark or before you Mark (either of these can distract the dog from the marker). Finish marking, then get the treat immediately afterward.
CLICKER DOS & DON’TS

• Remember that a mark happens the *instant* a behavior occurs and ALWAYS means a reward is coming!

• It is **NOT** to be used for getting attention or to distract the dog.

• If you inadvertently click a behavior you don’t want, you still must follow with a treat anyway. **Don’t dilute the click!**
BASIC CLICKER TRAINING RULES

• Do not use any verbal or physical corrections while using your clicker as this can create a negative association that can work against your training.

• Make training sessions short and fun. Playing after training can also help make it even more fun and effective.
TEACHING DOGS SKILLS

• Four methods we use to teach dogs new skills are capturing, luring, targeting and shaping.

  • **Capturing**: rewarding the dog for doing a behavior all on their own, without being asked.
  
  • **Luring**: using a baited hand to draw dog into a space or position.
  
  • **Targeting**: teaching a dog to use its nose or paw to touch hands and objects.
  
  • **Shaping**: rewarding for small pieces of a behavior to morph it into a more complex behavior.
CUES

- What is a cue?
  - It is the instruction for the dog (i.e., sit, watch, touch).
- Cue Rules:
  - The cue should come BEFORE the behavior and C/T.
  - Avoid repeating cues.
  - Don’t say the cue after the behavior is performed (i.e., “Good sit!”).
THE COMPLETE MODEL

- Cue-> Behavior and Click-> Treat (or other reward)

- The ABCs of training:
  - Antecedent-Behavior-Consequence
In the beginning, you will be C/T for every response.

As your dog becomes reliable with what you’re asking within a certain context, you can start to reduce the rate of reinforcement.

You will start to provide praise and other reinforcement for the dog, including treats from time to time, to maintain the behavior.
CRITERIA CHANGES

- Criteria changes can be:
  - Increasing distance, duration, or distraction (3 Ds)
  - Modifying or adding to the behavior
  - Changing environment
  - Changing handlers
REINFORCEMENT

- Use Kibble only
- Why we don’t use higher-value food for (HVT)
- Remember other types of reinforcement
- 2.5 cups a day
DELIVERING REINFORCEMENT WISELY

• Remember to click, *then* reach into your treat pouch for the treat.
• Deliver the treat all the way to the dog’s mouth.
• Where you place the treat will affect how the dog performs a behavior over time.
TROUBLESHOOTING

• Re-evaluate your training plan:
  • Did I set them up for success?
  • Oops moments
• Is your dog comfortable? Stress Cues
• Short, quick sessions are usually best! End on a high note
THANK YOU!

All Puppy Photos from Amanda Engel Photography

https://www.amandaengelphotography.com/
PORTL

https://www.artandscienceofanimaltraining.org/tools/portl-shaping-game/

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9XtEaOttMWI

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YSu7ghj4ib0