



Ten Tips for Clicker Training

Clicker training is a science-based way to communicate with your pet. It's easier to learn than standard command-based training. Puppies love it and old dogs CAN learn new tricks!

There is only one rule: Every click must be followed by a treat.

Key tips:

1. Keep the treats small. Use your dogs kibble, or sometimes delicious treats when teaching something new, e.g. little cubes of cheese, hot dog sausage, ham or chicken.
2. Click once (in-out.) If you want to express special enthusiasm, increase the number of treats (treat : treat : treat : treat) , not the number of clicks.
3. Keep practice sessions short. Much more is learned in three sessions of five minutes each than in an hour of boring repetition. You can get dramatic results, and teach your pet many new things, by fitting a few clicks a day here and there in your normal routine.
4. Don't wait for the "whole picture" or the perfect behaviour. Work out what the tiny steps are that comprise the behaviour you want and click and treat for those small movements in the right direction. For example, you want the dog to sit, and it starts to crouch its back: click. You want it to pick up an object – click for looking at it.
5. Keep raising your goal. As soon as you have a good (frequent and reliable) response to the first step in whatever you are teaching, start raising the bar and asking for the next small step before you click. Gradually work towards the finished /complete behaviour you want. This is called "shaping" a behaviour. If the dog finds it difficult you are probably asking for too much at each step – break things down even more!
6. When your animal has learned to do something for clicks, it will begin showing you the behaviour spontaneously, trying to get you to click. Now is the time to begin offering a **cue**, such as a word or a hand signal. Start clicking for that behaviour if it happens during or after the cue. Start ignoring that behaviour when the cue wasn't given.
7. If your pet does not respond to a cue, it is not disobeying; it probably just hasn't learned the cue completely. Find more ways to cue it and click it for the desired behaviour. E.g. Try working in a quieter, less distracting place for a while.
8. Once you have behaviours on cue, start to fade the clicker – start by clicking and treating only the BEST or QUICKEST responses. You can stop using the clicker once the behaviour is really reliable – but you can always use a click occasionally to boost it!
9. Fix bad behaviour by clicking good behaviour. Click the puppy for relieving itself in the proper spot. Click for paws on the ground, not on the visitors. Instead of scolding for making noise, click for silence. Cure pulling on lead by clicking and treating those moments when the lead happens to go slack.
10. Above all, have fun! Clicker-training is a wonderful, positive way to enrich your relationship with your pet.