Introduction

Dogs are intelligent, thinking creatures - and the more opportunities they have to use their skills and learn, through kind methods of training, the better. Clicker training is one of the most modern, effective and enjoyable methods available. Based on sound scientific principles, this tool will allow you to communicate with your dog and train him to perform both basic obedience and more complicated tasks.

Getting Started

What is a Clicker?
A Clicker is a small plastic box containing a piece of flexible steel. When pressed and released at one end, this makes a distinctive ‘click, click’ sound which can be taught to have meaning to your dog.

How does it work?
Over a number of repetitions, your dog can learn that the sound of the Clicker means he’s done the right thing and that a reward - food, play or affection, is on its way.

How will my dog understand what it means?
Your dog will make the association between the Clicker and goodies by repetition and reward. The sound of the clicker marks the dogs’ action as being right, a little like putting a tick next to a correct sum on a page!

Why is the Clicker so effective?
It is always positive and highly accurate. You can give clear information to your dog about his actions up close, or from a distance, without other background feelings being expressed as they often are in your voice. The Clicker rewards actions you like - simply ignore actions that you don’t.

Can all dogs be trained using the Clicker?
Nearly all dogs, no matter what their age, can be trained with the clicker. Some very nervous dogs may need additional time or help, while older dogs which have been trained in ‘traditional’ ways may be a little reluctant to explore new behaviours at first. Patience is the key with these dogs!
How do I start?

Make sure you and your dog are somewhere calm and quiet, such as in your lounge or the garden. Have some really tasty small treats, such as cheese, sausage, or chicken at the ready. Hold the Clicker behind your back to begin with - there is no need to point it at your dog, and you should avoid clicking too near his ears!

• Say your dog’s name in a happy voice.

• As soon as he looks at you, ‘click & treat’.

• Repeat this three or four times.

• Soon your dog will start to understand the meaning of the clicker and will react to the sound, thinking ‘Great, where’s my treat!’

You will also have taught him to pay attention to you when you say his name!

Now you are ready to move on to other exercises and tasks!
Teaching the basics

SIT

• Keep quiet and show your dog you have a food treat in your hand. Hold it just above his nose, right up close. Now lift your hand up and back, so that he has to look up to follow your fingers. Having to look up like this causes a physical chain reaction: his rear end has to go down, and . . . suddenly your dog is sitting! As soon as his bottom touches the ground, ‘click & treat’.

• Repeat this a few times. (If your dog has lifted his front legs off the ground to try to get the treat, your hand is probably too high.)

• Now you can say the word ‘SIT’ just before you move the treat. In a matter of minutes you have taught your dog a verbal request to sit, plus a really effective hand signal. Congratulations!

• Now you need to phase out the treat. With no food in your hand, ask your dog to sit. If he does so click immediately then give a treat. If your dog does not sit when asked help him with the hand signal then reward for good efforts.

• Practice until your dogs’ sits are really quick and totally reliable by asking him to sit before he gets anything in life that he likes, such as - having his dinner, having his lead put on, being let out into the garden etc.
Once your dog has learned to sit on command reliably, you can then maintain the behaviour by waiting before you ‘click & treat’.

Try this exercise to build on your dog’s reliability:

- Ask your dog to sit, count to five, then ‘click & treat’.
- Ask your dog to sit, then count to ten, then ‘click & treat’.
- Ask your dog to sit, then count to two, and ‘click & treat’.
- Ask your dog to sit, then count to 25, then click and jackpot!

Make sure that you keep your dog in a sitting position for random amounts of time - and build up to about a minute. The click ends the behaviour, so make sure that you click while your dog is still sitting, then treat two to three seconds later.
DOWN

The down needs a little more patience than the sit, because you just have to wait for your dog to do the right thing. Keep watching him and be ready for that moment of genius!

- With the food treat held above your dog’s nose lower your hand right down to the floor, directly between your dog’s front paws. Hold on to the treat by turning your palm down with the treat hidden inside your hand. This way the dog will want to burrow his nose underneath and will turn his head sideways to nibble at it.

- Signs of success are: your dog raising a paw to try and get the treat from your hand or, his front end going down in a play-bow position, and moving backwards slightly. Both of these behaviours require you to wait. Eventually his back end will flop down to the floor too.

- The instant your dog lies down click, then drop the treat on to the floor and allow him to eat it. (This prevents your dog from following your hand back up again like a yo-yo). Repeat this several times, sometimes with the treat in your hand, sometimes without. Once you can guarantee that your dog will lie down by following your hand to the floor, you can now add in the word “DOWN”.

![Images of dog training](image-url)
Removing the ‘treat’

- Now stand up straight. Quietly, ask your dog to ‘Down’, but this time don’t help him with a hand signal. Most dogs will try sitting, or even giving a paw, before having the idea that lying down might work. Be patient and try not to repeat the cue word. The instant that your dog lies down, click, then give a jackpot reward of several tasty treats.

- Repeat this several times in several different places in the house and garden, until your dog is responding reliably anywhere and everywhere.

STAY

Once your dog has learned to lie down on command reliably, you can then teach him to stay down for longer by waiting before you ‘click and treat’.

- Ask your dog to down, count to five, then ‘click and treat’.
- Ask your dog to down, then count to ten, then ‘click and treat’.
- Ask your dog to down, then count to two, then ‘click and treat’.
- Ask your dog to down, count to 30, then click and jackpot!

Make sure that you keep your dog in position for random amounts of time -and build up to about two minutes. Praise him all the time that he is lying down. The click ends the behaviour, so make sure that you click while your dog is still lying down, then treat two to three seconds later.
Walking on the lead

The main reason why so many dogs pull on the lead is that they get rewarded for it! Dogs perceive that by pulling they get to the park more quickly and so can lead their owner to where they want to go, rather than the other way round!

Dogs need information about when they are in the right place when walking nicely on the lead, and this is where the clicker really comes into its own. Rather than telling your dog off for pulling, ‘non-reward’ him by simply standing still and waiting. When the dog is in the right place, let him know by clicking and treating.

- Put your dog on the lead in the lounge, hallway or garden. Stand still to begin with.

- As soon as your dog allows any slack in the lead and looks at you, click and treat, then start walking in any direction you choose.

- Watch your dogs’ position carefully. If there is tension on the lead, stand still. Do not move off again until the lead is slack.

- Every time a loop appears in the lead, ‘click and treat’.

- Repeat this a few times, then stop and play with your dog for a short while.

- Now put the treats into your pocket. Click the correct position as soon as your dog adopts it, then produce the treat. Be generous with the treats to begin with, then gradually reward only the best responses.

Once he is reliably walking calmly at your side you can begin to practice outside on walks, but don’t expect too much too soon! You may stand still more than you walk forward to begin with but be patient. On days when you are in a hurry, use a Beaphar Gentle Leader head-collar to help prevent any pulling from becoming a habit. ‘Click & treat’ when your dog is in the right place while wearing the headcollar to speed up your training.
Coming when called

It is essential that dogs return to their owners when they are called - both for their safety and your sanity! Your dog already knows that when you say his name he needs to look at you. If this needs some revision - now's the time!

- Standing directly in front of your dog, say his name and waggle the treat in your outstretched hand. If your dog moves towards you, click and treat immediately.

- Repeat this, but now move backwards one or two paces and encourage him to come to you for clicks and treats.

- Increase the distance that your dog has to come to get the food - sometimes only one step, on other occasions from ten or twelve paces.

- When your dog is coming to you reliably like this, add a word – 'Come' or 'Here' after his name.

You are now ready to add in one extra element - as soon as your dog reaches you, touch his collar, click and give him the treat. This teaches the dog to come to you and then wait while you hold him before he gets his reward.

Practice these exercises by calling your dog for a click and jackpot of treats, his dinner, or a game, when he least expects it, eg. from another room.

If your dog is very slow or doesn't come when called, do not be tempted to punish or scold him - this will only make him more reluctant next time! Instead, show him what he could have earned and then put the food or toy away. Go back to basics and teach him to pay attention to his name if necessary!
Roll-over

Teaching your dog to roll over on cue will allow you to inspect his tummy, groom and dry him without fuss and impress your friends! Ask your dog to lie down. Once down, watch which way your dog’s hips are angled. Offering a treat close to the side of your dog’s mouth, lure his head so that he is looking backwards, over his own shoulder.

Follow through with the treat while the dog flops onto his back. Keep a tight hold of the treat while he rolls right over onto his back. Click and treat for small efforts and especially as soon as he rolls right over.

Stop luring your dog over as soon as possible. Don’t rush, let him work out what earned him the click and treat.

Add the cue word ‘Roll-over’ only when he is reliably offering the behaviour.

Perfect the trick by practicing until your dog can dive into a roll-over from a standing position. This looks really impressive!
Give a Paw

Ask your dog to sit. Now offer him a small piece of food, held tightly in your clenched fist, close to the floor. Now watch carefully! You are going to click and then release the treat on the instant that your dog moves either paw. Most dogs will initially attempt to snuffle at the food with their nose or mouth. If you hold on to the food, most will then try a different tactic, by touching your hand with a paw. ‘Click & treat’ immediately when this happens. Repeat at least five times.

Now your dog must deliberately move to touch your hand with his paw to get his ‘click & treat’.

Lift your hand a few inches from the floor. Your dog will have to reach higher to touch you with his paw. ‘Click & treat’ immediately for good attempts. At the point where your dog is reliably offering you his paw when you offer your hand, you can add the cue, or command word. Say ‘paw’, then wait.

After several perfect responses, you can reduce the use of the clicker and the treats, rewarding only exceptional efforts.
Common Questions

These common questions are frequently asked of clicker trainers.

Q. I have more than one dog at home. Should I teach them both at once, or separately?

A. In the initial stages it is probably best to train your dogs separately so that you can concentrate on one dog at a time! However, once your dogs all understand the principles of this fun new training game, you can train them together with no problem at all. If one dog hears a click which was not meant for him, he may look hopeful of getting a reward, but if it is not forthcoming, he will soon understand that he will have to wait his turn – no matter how keen he’s being!

Q. What happens if my dog is frightened of the clicker?

A. This rarely happens if the clicker is introduced carefully, as described previously, with the clicker held behind your back or muffled in your pocket to start with. It usually helps to start to teach the dog specific exercises, rather than making him suspicious of the sound by giving a click for no particular reason and then offering a treat. If a dog is truly fearful of the sound, it is possible to gradually build his confidence by using a much softer noise - the sound of a pen top clicking or making a depression in a bottle top from a soft drink. If your dog is still fearful of such noises, the word ‘Bingo!’ said quickly and in the same tone of voice can work well as an alternative.

Q. Can children use the clicker?

A. Of course! In fact, as most children are now well advanced in computer skills, which require good hand-eye co-ordination (such as using a mouse), their timing with the Clicker is usually better than an adults. However, it is always recommended that children are supervised when training a dog to ensure that only appropriate behaviours are rewarded in both parties!
Q. Will I need to use the clicker forever?

A. No. A clicker is a tool, not the ‘be all and end all’ of dog training. It is ideal to use the clicker whenever introducing a new exercise or trick but should be phased out when exercises are well known and understood as soon as possible.

Q. What is the benefit of using clicker training instead of other methods?

A. Clicker training is kind, fair and effective. It gives your dog the chance to think and use his mental and physical skills rather than just complying with commands. Clicker training is far more accurate than other methods - and means that complex sequences of behaviour such as loading or unloading the washing machine can be easily taught to an average pet dog! Clicker training is also fun - dogs work out very rapidly that it indicates a pleasurable experience and want to learn more. Finally, clicker training means that your dog will not be reliant on food to perform exercises. Although each task is taught using food or toys, this is quickly replaced with praise and the sheer satisfaction of getting the behaviour right. Within one or two sessions, the vast majority of previously untrained dogs offer ‘sits’ and ‘downs’ without any luring or hand signals, just with a quiet voice command.

Q. My dog is not particularly interested in food treats. Can I still use the clicker?

A. Yes, certainly! Food works best because it is quick and easy to give as a reward. Most dogs have a favourite food which they are prepared to work for, such as tiny pieces of cheese or chicken, dried or cooked liver, pieces of sausage, or dog biscuits. Try to find your dog’s favourite treat. Other dogs can be encouraged to work for portions of their dinner. If your dog really isn’t motivated by food, perhaps he likes toys and games. In this case, you can click to tell him that the job was well done, then offer a good game with a toy. A good game should last a minimum of 30 seconds each time but bear in mind that this will slow your training.
Further help

Would you like to join a dog training class to further your dog's obedience and your clicker training skills?

Then please contact:

The Association of Pet Dog Trainers
Peacocks Farm
Northchapel
Petworth
West Sussex
GU28 9JB

www.apdt.co.uk

Training dogs has changed a great deal in the last few years. It is no longer considered necessary, or acceptable, to use harsh methods in training and the use of gentle, motivational methods are as successful as they are enjoyable to use.

Have you tried the Beaphar Gentle Leader® Headcollar?

The Beaphar Gentle Leader® is a unique, patented design headcollar that helps train your dog to STOP PULLING on the lead. It has been scientifically designed to work with your dog's natural instincts in order to control unwanted behaviour.

For more information about the Beaphar Gentle Leader® visit:
www.gentleleader.co.uk
Beaphar Clicker Trainer

Dog training has come a long way in the last few years. Dogs are intelligent, thinking creatures - and the more opportunities they have to use their skills and learn, through kind methods of training, the better.

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“The Clicker trainer is the best training method we know. Brilliant!”
S.B. - Nottinghamshire

“Easy to use, and fun too.”
R.O. - Cheshire

“I thought you couldn’t teach old dogs new tricks.”
A.L. - London