

Clicker Training - The Very Basics:

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- **Reward the desired behavior with a click followed by a treat.**
 - You can wait for the desired behavior to happen randomly or, you can “shape” or “lead” to obtain the desired behavior.
 - The reward (click-then-treat) prompts the dog to repeat the desired behavior
 - The reward also conditions the dog to expect a treat after hearing the clicker, and consequently to work for the click.

- **Repeat a few sessions until the dog is providing the desired behavior in an “unsolicited manner” (without prompting) repeatedly for 2 to 5 sessions.**

- **Place the behavior “on cue” (tie it to a command)**
 - Intermittently command the dog to perform the desired behavior.
 - Reward the behavior when performed in response to the command
 - Do not reward the unsolicited behavior
 - This will take several sessions, but eventually the unsolicited behaviors will extinguish (stop) and the desired behaviors will continue because they are being reinforced.
 - This often takes longer with some of the first trained behaviors, but goes quicker after the dog learns more behaviors.

- **Condition the behavior**
 - Move to a variable reinforcement schedule for best conditioning
 - Reward some correct responses but not all
 - Start out with 3 of 4 (75%), then 2 of 3 (67%), and eventually move toward 1 of 2 (50%) reinforcement.

Example – Training “Sit” Command

- Click and reward sitting behavior as it may occur naturally
- Continue rewarding until sit behavior is consistent and being offered repeatedly
- Command SIT and reward when the dog sits after the command is given
 - Do not reward unsolicited sits
- Move to variable reinforcement schedule

Pointers

Work on one behavior at a time
Don't force the dog to do the behavior
Make sessions short and frequent
Make treats small and easy to eat

References – Don't Shoot the Dog; Karen Pryor, Author