



## WHAT IS CLICKER TRAINING?

Clicker training is an effective and kind training method used on animals. It works on **marking desirable behaviours** with a distinctive sound (the click) and rewarding that behaviour.

Clicker training usually uses a device that emits a short click sound which is operated at exactly the same time that the behaviour we are wanting to train is displayed. It's what we call a **Conditioned Reinforcer** – in other words, the animal has learned that the click signifies that a reward will arrive in association with the behaviour that was offered.

We combine the click with **positive reinforcement (a reward)** which for most animals is food. Finding out individual food preferences is therefore important otherwise it won't act as a reward. It's also worth noting that for some breeds of dog, like Border Collies, play or verbal/physical praise is a greater reward than food.



A collection of clickers available

**Clicker training can be used on any animal.** I have found it to be an extremely successful method of training a wide range of animals including dogs, cats, birds, rats, rabbits, guinea pigs, horses, sheep and even fish (although a torch being switched on and off works better for goldfish and the like!).

### How do animals learn using a clicker?

At the early stages of clicker training we are using a process of learning called **Classical Conditioning**. **Classical conditioning is reflexive and habitual** and works on the **association of an action** (e.g. a sound, an event, a certain environment etc.) **with a consequence**. In the case of clicker training: pairing the sound of the clicker with a pleasant consequence (food). The animal then begins to build up an **association** between the two.

But, later in the training, **once the animal learns that their behaviour brings about a desired consequence, they begin to perform it intentionally**. This is called **Operant Conditioning**.

For animals **this type of purposeful learning is so much better because they are more aware of what they are doing**. This helps them remember the behaviours that they have been taught. Operant conditioning also helps develop confidence because it **empowers the animal as they have control over the consequences of their actions**.

### Why is clicker training effective?

Clicker training is effective because **it focuses on the positive rather than the negative**. Using the clicker helps achieve a **clear channel of communication between the trainer and the animal**. Its meaning never differs, unlike the voice that has different tones and contains emotion.

Clicker training helps us with timing by **marking the actual behaviour we want precisely as it happens**. Sometimes, in traditional methods of training, where verbal praise is given, it is possible that by the time we have praised the animal and given the reward they may have offered another behaviour. Consequently the animal may become confused.



## Why don't clicker trainers use commands?

A command is meaningless unless the animal knows what the behaviour is. So with clicker training, **once the animal understands the behaviour and is consistently performing it, then a command (or cue) is added.**

The animal is taught the name of the command **by saying (or signalling) the cue just before the animal repeats the behaviour.** Over time the click and reward is given when the animal performs the behaviour **AFTER** the cue is given.

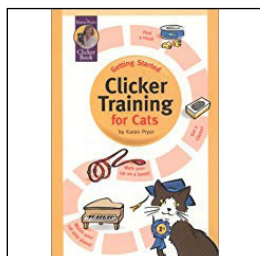
The click is withheld if the animal performs the behaviour without it. **The animal rapidly learns to watch or listen for the cue** in order to perform the desired response in order to get a click earn the reward.

## Does the clicker need to be used forever?

The clicker does not need to be used forever. **Once a behaviour has been learned with the cue in place, and they are consistently getting it right, the click can be faded out.** The treats are then not given every time the behaviour is performed and instead a pat or verbal praise is offered. Treats can still be given randomly to help keep the animal motivated.

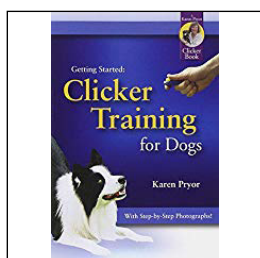
For lots more information on clicker training visit [www.clickertraining.com](http://www.clickertraining.com)

### Recommended Products:



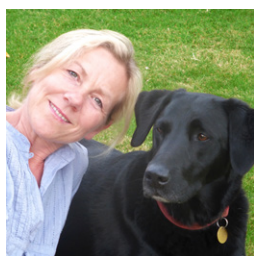
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