



Basic Training Techniques



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The Educated Dog

An educated dog is a healthier, happier dog. By training your dog, you will not only strengthen the bond between you and your dog, but build their confidence and reduce any anxiety your dog may be feeling.

An Educated Dog:

- Allows you to handle every part of his body; to check for injury or illness and/or to give him medication.
- Has good manners, so he can spend most of his time indoors with his people, which means more supervision, less boredom, and fewer opportunities for mischief. The more time you spend with your dog, the more likely you will be to notice when something is wrong with him, such as a limp, a cough, a sensitive area, or loss of appetite. By recognizing such irregularities early, you can seek medical attention immediately and, hopefully, prevent more serious problems.
- Wants to stay near you which means he will have less opportunity to get into trouble.
- Will walk or run beside you on a leash without pulling, dragging, or strangling, so you and your dog can get more exercise and spend more time together.
- Knows that “drop it” and “leave it” are phrases that mean business, so he will have fewer opportunities to swallow dangerous objects. He also can be taught what things and places are out of bounds, like hot stoves, heaters, or anxious cats. However, you will still need to limit his access to dangerous places when you cannot supervise or instruct him.
- Will “sit” immediately. No matter what danger may be imminent, a dog that is suddenly still is suddenly safe. And a dog that will “stay” in that position is even safer.
- Understands his boundaries, knows what’s expected of him and has few anxieties. Less stress means a healthier dog.

By training your dog, you can help prevent tragedy and develop a better relationship with him. Keep in mind, however, that even an educated dog needs supervision, instruction and boundaries – sometimes even physical boundaries. Allowing your dog, no matter how educated he may be, to walk, run, roam outside of a fenced area, or off a leash, is putting him in danger.

Selecting a Class

Check the Yellow Pages under “pet training” or “dog training” or visit our website www.adoptmountainpets.org or call Second Chance at (970) 626-2273.

Here are some tips to help select an obedience class that’s right for you:

- Quality obedience instructors are knowledgeable about many different types of training methods and use techniques that neither the dogs nor their owners find consistently unpleasant.
- Good training methods focus primarily on reinforcing good behavior. Use of choke chains or pinch collars or using collars to lift dogs off the ground (“stringing them up”) are not appropriate or humane training methods.
- Quality obedience instructors communicate well with people and with dogs. Remember that they are instructing you about how to train your dog.
- Specific problems you may have with your dog may not be addressed in a basic obedience course. If you’re seeking help with house soiling, barking, aggression, or separation anxiety, ask if the course covers these issues – do not assume it will.
- Ask the instructor what training methods are used and how they (the instructor and staff) were trained. Also, ask to observe a class before you commit to one. If you’re refused an observation, or if your observation results in anything that makes you uncomfortable, look elsewhere.
- Avoid anyone who guarantees his or her work; whose primary methods focus on punishment; or who wants to take your dog and train him for you (effective training must include you and the environment in which you and your dog interact).

Getting Started with the Clicker

The easiest way to start clicker training is to teach your dog to hand target. During this process your dog will learn that the click sound ALWAYS means a treat is coming, and he'll learn that offering a specific behavior earns a click/treat. This will become the foundation for teaching all sorts of new behaviors.

What you need:

- A clicker
- Tasty, soft, bite-sized treats – try hot dogs, cheese, chicken, or beef cut into 1/4 inch cubes. Place about 15-20 treats in a small bowl
- A quiet place with no distractions that has a table or counter on which you can place the treat bowl so that it is too high for the dog to reach.

Step one: Practicing without the dog

Without your dog around, practice clicking and transferring one food treat from the treat bowl to an empty bowl. This may seem a little silly, but clicker training involves mechanical skills and you want to get familiar with the “equipment” and the rhythm of the clicker game.

So, click **once** (the click is a quick two-beat sound), and deliver a treat from one bowl to another. Repeat until this feels comfortable and natural. When you see the abbreviation C/T, this is what you will do, only you'll deliver the treat to the dog.

Step two: “Charging” the clicker

Now bring your dog into the room. He should be mildly hungry. He need not be on leash, but if you need to keep him on leash to keep him close at first, just stand on the end of it so he can't wander off. Once he starts playing the game, he'll want to stay close and you won't need the leash anymore.

Click and give your dog a treat from the bowl on the table. Do not reach toward the bowl until you have clicked. Do this about 10 times. Make sure the dog is in different positions when he hears the click (sitting, standing, facing you from the front, facing you from the side, etc.).

Repeat this session two times.

To test whether the dog understands that click=treat, wait until he is interested in something (not you) and click. If he turns to you looking for a treat, you know he's got the click/treat association. Now you're ready to start using the clicker to mark behaviors that you want the dog to do.

Step three: Teaching target

With your treats close by and your clicker in one hand, put your free hand an inch or two directly in front of your dog's nose. Your hand should be open and flat, palm out. When the dog sniffs your hand, C/T. You can feed the treat directly to the dog or throw it on the floor – make sure he sees it. Remove your target hand (put it behind your back) as you C/T. Repeat this about three times.

On the fourth time, move your hand a little to one side; on the next time, move your hand a little to the other side. Always C/T when the dog touches your hand with his nose. Be sure that you are not moving your hand into his nose.

Now present your hand a little higher, than a little lower, then a little further away from his nose (six inches). Always C/T when the dog touches your hand with his nose.

Getting Started with the Clicker (Continued)

Now present your hand a little further away so that your dog must take a step or two to get to it. If he doesn't move, move your body around a little to see if you can get him up and moving (some dogs get stuck in the "sit" position if they have been rewarded for this in the past). Do this "moving" touch three or four times, then end your training session.

End your training session with a verbal cue, such as "all done." It's often nice to end a training session with some petting, some play, or a walk.

Tips:

- Keep the game moving and fun – your 15-20 clicks should happen in the space of two to three minutes.
- Try to avoid bending at the waist while training. Bend at the knees so that you are not looming over the dog. With a small dog it may be best to work on your knees, or alternatively, to put the dog up on a bench or table.
- End the session before your dog does, but if he loses interest before you stop, end the session and come back a little later. Sometimes dogs need a little time to process the new thing they are learning, so don't get discouraged by this.
- If you can, do three to four of these short sessions a day. If you can only do one, that's okay too. Your dog will remember what he learned and make progress either way.
- Remember click always means treat, so even if you make a mistake and click in error, he must receive a treat.

Moving On

- A good way to be sure your dog understands this behavior is to hold your hand high enough that he must lift his front feet off the floor to touch it. Once he offers this behavior, you can be fairly sure he understands what you want him to do.
- Adding a verbal cue – for this particular behavior, the cue is putting your hand out. No verbal cue is needed, but we humans like verbal cues, so if you want to add one, here's how. Once the dog is offering the behavior as soon as he sees your hand, start saying the cue word "touch" *as he touches his nose to your hand*. This way he is associating the word with his action. Do this for about two training sessions. In the next training session, say "touch" just before his nose touches your hand. Then, in subsequent sessions, say "touch" as you offer your hand. Now you have a verbal cue!
- Variable Schedule of Reinforcement – you have been using a "continuous schedule of reinforcement" which means the dog gets a treat every time he performs the behavior. Now you're ready to move to a variable schedule of reinforcement, meaning he only gets a treat sometimes. Only C/T every third, sixth, second, fourth, or tenth time he performs the behavior.
- Where to put the darn treats – if you started with the treats in a bowl, and now you're doing this behavior in other locations, you probably have already run into the problem of where to keep your treats. It's handy to buy a "bait bag" that you wear at your waist; this can be a bag made specifically for dog training or just a fanny pack. A carpenter's apron works well as does any kitchen apron with pockets.
- Once your dog is performing the behavior reliably on cue (i.e., he will do the behavior when you give the verbal cue at least 90% of the time) on a variable schedule of reinforcement, you don't really need the clicker any more for that behavior. You should still reward your dog often with praise and variably with a food treat, but you don't need the clicker any more--until you're ready to teach a new behavior!

Having fun with hand targeting

Now that your dog knows how to hand target, there are lots of fun things you can teach him!

The Moving Touch

Heel: Standing straight, put your left hand by your left side, palm facing back; with the dog behind you, say "touch," but move several steps forward before allowing your dog to make contact with your hand. C/T when he touches. Gradually increase the number of steps he must take to touch your hand. Now begin saying "heel" as you walk forward – you have a new behavior! For small dogs, it is easier to transfer the touch cue to a dowel or target stick first (see below), then have the dog follow the stick instead of your hand.

Getting Started with the Clicker (Continued)

Weave: Stand with your legs apart and your dog in front of you. Put your right hand (or touch stick for a small dog) between and behind your legs and say “touch” to get him to move through your legs. Now put your left hand out in front of you, encouraging him to come around your right leg, and say “touch” again. Put your left hand between and behind your legs and say touch so he moves between your legs again. Again put your right hand in front of your legs to encourage him to come around your left leg to the front and say “touch”. When he starts to move smoothly around your legs, change the cue to “weave.”

Come: With your dog in front of you – hold your hand in front of you and say “touch.” Gradually increase the distance he must come to get to your hand. When he is coming from distance of ten feet or so, change your cue to “come” or “here.”

On or Up: If you want your dog to hop up on the couch, or hop on the scale at the veterinarian’s office – use your “touch” cue. Hold your hand over the couch or scale and say “touch” so the dog has to hop up on the object to reach your hand. You might have to start with a lower object at first if he is reluctant to jump up on a higher surface. When he is freely offering the behavior in response to your outstretched hand, change your cue to “on” or “up.”

Puppy Nipping: Touch is also a good alternative, incompatible behavior for puppy nipping. When your pup is inclined to mouth you, ask for the “touch” behavior. This gives him something else to do instead of nipping at you.

Transferring the “Touch” Cue to a New Object

Find the . . . : Do you have something you misplace regularly – your car keys, glasses, remote control or cell phone? You can teach your dog to help you find it, using the touch cue. Hold your keys in your hand and give your “touch” cue. Do this four or five times. Now hold the keys so that your dog’s nose will touch the keys first. C/T only for nose touches to the keys, not the ones to your hand. Put your hand with the keys on the floor and C/T for touches to the keys. Now take your hand away and C/T if your dog touches the keys with his nose. Don’t worry if he is confused at first and tries to touch your hand. Shape the behavior if you need to – i.e., C/T if he looks at the keys or for any movement toward the keys. Be patient – he’ll get it. If he’s having trouble with this behavior, jackpot (give four or five treats instead of one) when he finally touches the keys on the floor. Once he’s offering the new behavior (touching the keys with his nose) add the new cue “find my keys.” Now start making the keys harder to find – put them further away, put them under a pillow or ottoman.

Tips:

- When introducing a new behavior, go back to a continuous schedule of reinforcement.
- Lower the value of your treats – as your dog starts to enjoy the clicker game, you may find you can use lower-value treats (like kibble); save higher value treats for more difficult situations or for jackpots.
- Remember to reduce your dog’s meal size for the amount of treats you are feeding during training.

Loose Leash Walking

There are many ways of teaching loose leash walking and you may want to use several of the methods below. The most important thing is that, while you are teaching this skill, you must NEVER allow the dog to pull on the leash. We understand that this is hard because you may want to take your dog for a walk before he is fully proficient at not pulling. Use one or more of the methods explained here to train your dog and if you must walk him on leash before he understands not to pull, use a walking tool that helps to prevent pulling (see section at the end of this handout on “Walking Tools”).

Setting up for Success

- Start in an area with few or no distractions. You won't be able to hold your dog's attention if there are other pets, children, squirrels, rabbits, etc., running around.
- Use a flat collar while training your dog, rather than a choke collar, prong collar or head halter.
- Make sure your dog understands the clicker game (see handout “Getting Started with the Clicker”).
- Make your “loose leash” criteria very clear -- reward for NO tension on the leash, and do not allow your dog to pull “a little bit” because it is too difficult for the dog to learn the difference between pulling a little and pulling a lot. A good sign that the leash is loose is that the leash clip is hanging straight down from your dog's collar.

Getting Started

- Start your training session with your dog in a sitting position at your side with a loose leash. As you step forward, slap your thigh to encourage her to walk with you. Click and treat (C/T) every one or two steps as long as your dog is not pulling.
- Keep your dog's interest by using your voice, slapping your thigh, or making high-pitched sounds. C/T as long as the leash is loose. Anytime the leash tightens, stop moving. Get your dog's attention back on you, and then continue walking. If your dog continues to pull, you probably need to move to a less distracting environment.
- Use a cue such as “with me” or “let's go” when you change directions.
- Gradually increase the number of steps your takes before C/Ting.

Method 1: Red Light – Green Light

Begin walking a normal pace with your dog on leash. C/T for a few steps of non-pulling. If she darts out to the end of the leash, stop (don't pull back on the leash, just stop). Wait for your dog to ease up or look back at you (be patient). At that second, click and wait for your dog to come to you for the treat. Take a couple of steps. If your dog stays close and doesn't pull, C/T while you walk. Give lots of praise and “happy” talk while she walks with you. If she tightens the leash again, stop. As long as the distractions are kept to a minimum, most clicker-trained dogs will catch on.

Method 2: Choose to Heel

Work off-leash inside your home or in a safe, enclosed fenced area (like a tennis court). Walk around without saying a word to your dog. Every time she comes up to you, click, praise and treat. If she continues to walk with you, talk to her with a “happy” voice (use a high pitched “good dog”), and click and treat often. If she walks away after getting the treat, continue walking and wait for her to come to you again. If she totally ignores you, take a break and try again in a less-distracting area (the smells on the ground may be more interesting than you!). Next time, work with her before her regular feeding time (when she's hungry), and let her know you've got a delicious treat.

Method 3: Magnetizing

With your dog on leash, show her that you've got a great treat. As she approaches, walk backward, making sure you're in a safe area where you won't trip over furniture, and use your “happy” voice to coax her to follow. She'll most likely follow you; C/T every couple of steps at first. If she walks away from you and reaches the end of the leash, **stop** and use your voice or slap your thigh to coax her to follow you again. Continue walking backward with your dog following you until she stays with you reliably, then turn around so you are facing the same direction as your dog. Walk forward with your dog walking beside you, C/Ting frequently at first. Gradually require more steps with you before she gets a C/T.

Loose Leash Walking (Continued)

Method 4: Walking towards a goal

Place a treat or toy that your dog really likes on the floor. Stand 15-20 feet from the goodie with your dog on leash, sitting at your side. Begin walking toward the goodie. If the leash remains loose, continue walking. If your dog lunges toward the goodie, stop. When the dog releases tension on the leash, continue walking forward. Repeat until your dog is able to walk to the goodie without pulling on the leash. The treat or toy is your dog's reward – click as she gets it. If your dog is very treat motivated and continues to lunge, try a lower value treat, such as a dog biscuit, and try it when she's not hungry. If you don't want to encourage your dog to pick up food off the floor, use a different temptation, such as a toy, a person or an open door to the fenced backyard.

Tips:

- When you walk your dog, change directions frequently. This makes you more interesting to your dog and encourages her to pay attention. Give your cue word before you change direction and avoid yanking on the leash.
- Remember to start in a place with few distractions and gradually work up to locations where there are lots of distractions.
- Loose leash walking is a more relaxed behavior than a formal "heel." Heeling requires that the dog be intensely focused on you. This is very tiring for the dog and doesn't allow him the freedom to sniff and explore which is important for his mental and emotional wellbeing. If you would like to teach a heel command, use it only when you need extra control – when crossing the street or walking in a crowd.
- With a puppy, these methods will work fairly quickly (if you are consistent). If you are working with an adult dog that has been "successfully" pulling for months or even years, this is going to take longer. Be patient.

Walking Tools

These tools may prevent your dog from pulling as hard (though some dogs do learn to pull even while wearing these tools), but they will NOT teach your dog to walk on a loose leash. Use them while you are working on loose leash walking to prevent setbacks in your training resulting from successful pulling. You may have to experiment with several tools to find the one that works the best for you and your dog. You may also need help getting the tool properly fitted.

- **Head Halters:** Head halters are a collar with a strap that goes around the dog's nose and the leash is attached under his chin. When the dog pulls, the head halter causes his nose to be turned back toward you, making it physically difficult for him to pull. There are several different brands of head halters (Gentle Leader™, Halti™, Canny Collar™ and Snoot Loop™, to name a few). Head halters must be properly fitted, introduced gradually, and used appropriately.
- **Front-hook Harnesses:** As with head halters, the leash on a front-hook harness fastens in front of the dog's chest, so that when he pulls, he is turned back toward you. There are a few different brands of front-hook harnesses, including the Sensation/Sensible™ harness and the Easy Walk™ harness.
- **No-pull Harness:** These harnesses are designed to create pressure behind the dog's front legs, or around his chest when he pulls, making pulling uncomfortable for him. There are several brands of no pull harnesses including Sporn™ and Holt™.

Teaching Your Dog to “Sit”

Definition:

“Sit where you are.”

Practical uses:

Have your dog sit before you set down his food dish, put on his leash, let him out the door, pet him, etc. This concept is called “say please” and can help to prevent many common problems such as door-darting, jumping up on people, and pestering for attention. It also helps him learn that doing what you ask is always the best choice and the fastest way of getting what he wants. When in doubt, SIT! This stops whatever inappropriate behavior he may be engaged in.

How to teach:

Start in a low-distraction area that is familiar to your dog, and have your dog on leash. You can stand on the end of your leash or tether him to something heavy if you want to have your hands free. Wait for the dog to sit, and when he does, click and treat (C/T). In this case, it is best to throw the treat on the floor so that the dog has to stand up to get the treat (make sure he sees it). Wait again for the dog to sit, and C/T when he does.

Adding the cue:

When the dog is offering the behavior (sitting and looking to you in anticipation of the C/T), begin saying the cue word “sit” *as she sits*, so the dog associates the behavior with the word. Do this about 20 times over two different training sessions.

In your next training session, start by saying the cue word as the dog sits. After a few repetitions, say the cue word before she sits. Now you have a cue!

Moving On:

- Gradually increase the length of time your dog sits before you click. Work up to about one minute of sitting. Increase the time gradually, just a couple seconds at a time, over multiple sessions. If the dog gets up before you C/T, ask for the “sit” again, but make it shorter so the dog succeeds. Make sure the dog has at least five successes before you try a longer duration again. This is the beginning of the “stay.”
- Variable Schedule of Reinforcement – you have been using a “continuous schedule of reinforcement” which means the dog gets a treat every time he performs the behavior. Now you’re ready to move to a variable schedule of reinforcement, meaning he only gets a treat sometimes. Only C/T every third, sixth, second, fourth, or tenth time he performs the behavior.
- Once your dog is performing the behavior reliably on cue (i.e., he will do the behavior at least 90% of the time when you give the verbal cue) on a variable schedule of reinforcement, you don’t really need the clicker any more for this behavior. You should still reward your dog often and variably with praise and food treats, but you don’t need the clicker any more – until you’re ready to teach a new behavior!

Tips:

- If he sits only part way down the first time, you may “shape” his behavior by rewarding him for a partial sit the first few times, then not rewarding him until he moves successively closer to a full sit.
- Some breeds, such as greyhounds, don’t sit readily. If your dog doesn’t like the sit position, you may want to substitute another stationary position, such as down.

Teaching Your Dog “Down”

Definition:

“Lie Down.” (We recommend using the cue word “off” rather than “down” for “Get off of me” or for “Get off the bed.”)

Practical uses:

Down is the best, most comfortable position for your dog to stay in for any length of time. Down (and especially down-stay) is a wonderful calming maneuver and can also help teach your dog to be more independent.

How to teach:

Different dogs will do better with different methods of teaching this behavior. Here are three ways of teaching the behavior. You may want to experiment to find the best method for you and your dog.

1. **Snapshot training:** In this method, you simply wait for the dog to lie down – something he does naturally multiple times a day. You must be ready with your clicker and treat at all times in order to “capture” this behavior and mark it. You may be able to speed up this process by trying on of the following techniques:
 - Start in a small room with no toys or distractions (like a bathroom) with your dog. Have his bed or something he likes to lie on nearby. Don’t interact with him and just wait until he lies down, then click/ treat (C/T). Throw the treat so that he must get up to get it, then ignore him again until he lies down – C/T.
 - If your dog enjoys chewing on an object, use his favorite chewy and give it to him. Most dogs will lie down to chew, so when he lies down, click and throw the treat, so he gets up to get the treat.
2. **Shaping:** Get your clicker out and ask your dog for a few of the behaviors he knows how to do. Then wait for him to offer a new behavior – any behavior (if you’re lucky, it might be a down!). C/T for any new behavior he offers about three times. Then stop C/Ting that behavior and wait for him to again offer a new behavior, but this time, C/T only for a down. He may offer several behaviors before he gets to down, but since down is a fairly natural position, you shouldn’t have to wait long. Don’t let him get too frustrated though. If he doesn’t offer a down in a minute or so, C/T a behavior he is offering a few times and then end the game and try again later.
3. **Luring:** With the dog sitting, hold the treat right in front of his nose. Bring the treat straight down between the dog’s legs to the floor. The dog’s head should follow the treat down to the floor. Pull the treat forward along the floor, and the rest of his body should follow naturally. If pulling the treat forward makes him stand up to reach the treat, try pulling it back toward his chest. As soon as his elbows touch the floor, C/T. When using the lure method, make sure you fade out the lure quickly; otherwise your dog will only learn to follow your hand.

Adding the cue:

When the dog is offering the behavior (lying down and looking to you in anticipation of the C/T), begin saying the cue word, “down” as she lies down, so the dog associates the behavior with the word. Do this about 20 times over two different training sessions.

In your next training session, say the cue word before the dog lies down. If she lies down then she understands the cue, if not go back to saying the cue word as she lies down for a few more repetitions.

Moving On:

1. Gradually increase the length of time your dog is in the down position before you click. Work up to about one minute before clicking. Increase the time gradually, just a couple seconds at a time, over multiple sessions. If your dog gets up before you C/T, ask for the “down” again, but make it shorter so the dog succeeds. Make sure the dog has at least five successes before you try a longer duration again. This is the beginning of the “down stay.”
2. Once your dog is responding to the cue, start giving the cue sometimes when the dog is standing and sometimes when the dog is sitting.
3. Variable Schedule of Reinforcement – you have been using a “continuous schedule of reinforcement” which means the dog gets a treat every time she performs the behavior. Now you’re ready to move to a variable schedule of reinforcement, meaning she only gets a treat sometimes. Only C/T every third, sixth, second, fourth, or tenth time she performs the behavior.

Teaching Your Dog “Down” (Continued)

4. Once your dog is performing the behavior reliably on cue (i.e., he will do the behavior at least 90% of the time when you give the verbal cue) on a variable schedule of reinforcement, you don't really need the clicker any more for this behavior. You should still reward your dog often and variably with praise or a food treat, but you don't need the clicker any more for this behavior.

Tips:

- If she lies down only part way the first time, you may shape this behavior by rewarding her for a partial down the first few times, then not rewarding her until she moves successively closer to a full down.
- When you C/T, throw the treat so the dog must get up to eat it. That way she can offer the down again.
- Once you have moved to a variable schedule of reinforcement you may start to use it to shape a “better” behavior. For example, if you want the dog to respond more quickly to your cue, then C/T only for the quicker responses.

Teaching Your Dog to “Settle”

Definition:

“Relax, be calm.”

Practical uses:

“Settle” should be more relaxed than a “Down-stay” or “Sit-stay”; the dog need not maintain a specific position. You can use it in the waiting room at the veterinarian, or when you are out on a walk and stop to chat with a neighbor.

How to teach:

- Sit in a chair with your dog on leash. Step on the leash about 12-15 inches (for a medium-size dog) from where it hooks to your dog’s collar. The dog should have just enough leash length to allow him to sit, stand, or lie down, but not enough to allow him to jump up on you.
- Ignore the dog. It is his job to decide how he is most comfortable with the length of leash you have given him. Most dogs will decide to sit or lie down after just a few minutes. As long as the dog is not struggling against the leash or pestering you, click/treat (C/T).

Adding the cue:

When the dog starts to offer the desired behavior (relaxed body position, not pestering or struggling) in response to your standing on the leash, say a cue word, “settle.” Do this about 20 times over two different training sessions.

In your next training session, start by saying the cue word as you step on the leash. Gradually “back up” the cue until you are saying it before the dog performs the behavior.

Moving on:

- Gradually increase the length of time your dog must “settle” before you click. Work up to about 30 seconds of relaxed body postures/non-pestering. Increase the time gradually, just a couple seconds at a time, over multiple sessions.
- If the dog begins pestering before you C/T, ask for the “settle” again, but reward for a shorter duration so the dog succeeds. Make sure the dog has at least five successes before you try a longer duration again.
- Variable Schedule of Reinforcement – you have been using a “continuous schedule of reinforcement” which means the dog gets a treat every time he performs the behavior. Now you’re ready to move to a variable schedule of reinforcement, meaning he only gets a treat sometimes. Only C/T every third, sixth, second, fourth, or tenth time he performs the behavior.
- Once your dog is performing the behavior reliably on cue (i.e., he will do the behavior at least 90% of the time when you give the verbal cue) on a variable schedule of reinforcement, you don’t really need the clicker any more for this behavior. You should still reward your dog often and variably with praise or a food treat, but you don’t need the clicker any more -- until you’re ready to teach a new behavior!

Tips:

- Start with a two- to three-second settle and work up to five minutes or so. For dogs under six months of age, a two- to three-minute settle is long enough.
- For longer settles, praise or treat (don’t click) several times during the settle, but have the dog maintain the settle.

Teaching Your Dog to “Come”

Definition:

"Come to me."

Practical uses:

Coming when called is one of the most important and useful commands you can teach your dog. In an emergency, a reliable “come” or recall can save your dog’s life, but most of the time it’s just convenient to be able to get your dog to come when called. Because it is such an important behavior, use your best treats and most enthusiastic praise for successful recalls.

How to teach:

Make sure your dog understands the clicker game (see handout “Getting Started with the Clicker”).

Start training in a quiet place with few distractions. Be 100 percent sure he will come to you. With the dog a short distance from you and on leash, say his name. When he looks or turns in your direction, click and say your recall cue word (choose a word that does not already have an association for your dog). He will come the rest of the way to you because he knows that click means a treat is coming. When he reaches you, take his collar in one hand, and with the other hand provide a steady delivery of high-value treats (something he doesn’t get every day, but really loves) and praise, petting, play or other rewards he really likes for at least 20-30 seconds (time yourself; this will feel like a long time). This is called an “extended-duration” reward, and you want to do this EVERY time you are practicing the come. We want the dog to understand that come means come all the way to me, and we want to desensitize him to having his collar grabbed. We also want him to know that coming when called always results in the most wonderful things. Gradually increase the distance between you and the dog when you give the cue to about six feet or the length of your leash.

Practice one recall like this two or three times a day (remember to do your extended duration reward every time), every day for one week before moving on. Within a few days, your dog should be coming enthusiastically every time. Be sure you only say your recall cue word once each time you practice.

Moving on:

- During the second week of practicing two to three recalls a day, start increasing the distance from which you call your dog. You should use a long line to keep control of the dog. If you call and the dog does not come, do not repeat the command. Wait a few seconds and then call your dog’s name. If he looks at you, click and call him to you. He should come all the way to you for his 20 -- 30 seconds of high-value rewards. You may need to temporarily decrease the distance in order to give the dog several successes before asking for more distance again.
- After two weeks of practicing this type of recall, your dog should be coming every time you call. If not, go back to a distance where your dog does come reliably and practice from there for several days before increasing the distance again. You may also want to think about whether your rewards are rewarding enough from the dog’s point of view.
- Now you can reduce your practice recalls to once daily, while you increase distance and distractions (see below). If at any point your dog is having trouble with distractions and/or distance, go back to practicing two to three times daily where you are 100 percent sure your dog will come. Be sure to ask for a recall at least several times a week for the first three months, always rewarding with the extended-duration reward.

Teaching Your Dog to “Come” (Continued)

Tips:

- As you increase the distance, it may be helpful to have a partner who holds the dog loosely while you get into position and then releases him when you say “come.” Encourage the dog enthusiastically all the way to you.
- It is very important to remember that coming must always result in something positive. If you call your dog to scold or punish him, he will think he is being punished for coming and will not want to come next time you call him.
- Practice come on leash or a long line for at least the first six months, so that your dog doesn’t learn to play “keep away” or “chase me” with you.
- Take hold of the dog’s collar with one hand as you reward him from the other hand every time he comes. This prevents the dog from playing “keep away” and accustoms him to being grabbed by the collar.
- Off-leash practice should only be done in a confined area (indoors, a tennis court or fenced yard) and only when your dog is coming consistently and reliably on-leash.
- The cue word you use for coming when called should always mean “come all the way to me, let me take hold of your collar, and I will give you the very best treats and most lavish praise.” In those situations where you just need the dog to come into your general vicinity, use a different word.

Adding distractions:

- Once your dog is coming on cue from a distance of 20 feet or so, you can start to add distractions. While the dog is coming, have someone bounce a ball, ring the doorbell, offer a treat, etc. When you first add distractions, make the come very easy; for example, call the dog from a very short distance, be enthusiastic, and use your extended-duration reward. Do not let the dog be reinforced by the distraction (i.e., don’t let him get the ball or treat that is being offered as a distraction).
- If you have been training in a quiet location with few distractions, start practicing in locations with more distractions. If possible, increase the environmental distractions gradually. So, if you have been training in your living room, move to the back yard, then the front yard, then a quiet park, then a busier park. And, as always, make it easier for the dog to succeed when the environmental distractions are more difficult.

Come Games

There are lots of fun ways to practice your recall. See our handout entitled “Come Games.”

Teaching Your Dog to “Watch Me”

Definition:

"Watch me, look at my face, and focus on me."

Practical uses:

“Watch Me” is a useful behavior when you want to get your dog’s focus on you instead of something like another dog, a squirrel, or other temptations.

How to teach:

Do something to get your dog’s attention—move quickly or make a noise with your mouth—when the dog looks at your face, click and treat (C/T). Use different actions/sounds to get the dog to look at you and don’t always reward in the same body position (for example, make sure the dog isn’t always sitting when you C/T).

Get in the habit, even when not training, to C/T whenever your dog looks at you. This rewards “checking in” and encourages your dog to look to you for direction and guidance.

Adding the cue:

When the dog is offering the behavior (looking at your face without your having to do something to get her attention), begin saying the cue word (“watch me” or “look”) as she looks at you, so that the dog associates the behavior with the word.

In your next training session, start by saying the cue word before the dog looks at you. After a few repetitions, wait for the dog to look away, and then use your cue word. If she looks at you, you know she understands the cue.

Moving On:

- Gradually increase the length of time your dog looks at you before you click. Work up to about 30 seconds of attention. Increase the time gradually, just a couple seconds at a time, over multiple sessions.
- If the dog looks away before you C/T, ask for the “watch me” again, but make it shorter so the dog succeeds. Make sure the dog has at least five successes before you try a longer duration again.
- Variable Schedule of Reinforcement – you have been using a “continuous schedule of reinforcement” which means the dog gets a treat every time he performs the behavior. Now you’re ready to move to a variable schedule of reinforcement, meaning he only gets a treat sometimes. Only C/T every third, sixth, second, fourth, or tenth time he performs the behavior.
- Once your dog is performing the behavior reliably on cue (i.e., he will do the behavior when you give the verbal cue at least 90% of the time) on a variable schedule of reinforcement, you don’t really need the clicker any more for this behavior. You should still reward your dog often and variably with praise or a food treat, but you don’t need the clicker any more for this behavior!

Tips:

- Remember that direct eye contact can be threatening to a dog. Looking directly into your dog’s eyes may cause her to look away as a gesture of appeasement to you. Smile at your dog; if necessary, look at the top of her head or her ear rather than directly into her eyes.
- Make sure you are standing erect – not bending at the waist – so that you are not “looming” over the dog. If you are working with a small dog, consider getting on your knees (still keeping your upper body erect) or putting the dog on a bench or table.

Teaching Your Dog to “Drop it”

Definition:

"Drop whatever is in your mouth, and I'll give you something even better!"

Practical uses:

“Drop it” is useful when your dog picks up something in his mouth that he shouldn't have – your shoe, your child's favorite toy, or a chicken bone, for example. It's also useful for those dogs that grab the leash in their mouths when being walked and for those mouthy dogs that want to grab at your hands, arms and clothing in play.

Many dogs learn that when their owner is yelling “drop it” they are going to be deprived of the goodie they have in their mouths, so they will gulp it down faster. It is imperative that, to your dog, this command means he has a chance to get something even better, so he will willingly let go of the forbidden object. This could even mean the difference between life and death for your dog.

How to teach:

Give your dog a toy or chewie. You want to start with something your dog is interested in having in his mouth, but not a really high-value item that he is not going to want to give up. Wait for him to drop the item and, when he does, click and treat (C/T), and pick up the item. You may want to throw the treat a few feet away so he is busy getting the treat and doesn't try to grab for the item at the same time you do. Give the item back to the dog and repeat 10-12 times.

Adding the cue:

Begin saying your cue word, “drop it,” *as the dog drops the toy*. Continue for two to three more sessions of 10-12 C/Ts. In your next session, use the “drop it” cue just before the dog drops the item. C/T when the dog drops the item.

Moving On:

- Once your dog is performing the behavior on cue, you can start using a higher value item -- for some dogs that might be a raw hide, a tennis ball, or a bone.
- For dogs that love to play fetch, the reward for “drop it” can be throwing the ball or toy.
- Variable Schedule of Reinforcement – you have been using a “continuous schedule of reinforcement” which means the dog gets a treat every time he performs the behavior. Now you're ready to move to a variable schedule of reinforcement, meaning he only gets a treat sometimes. Only C/T every third, sixth, second, fourth, or tenth time he performs the behavior. Do, however, return the item to the dog every time (except the last time when you end the session — make sure he gets a C/T for that one!).
- Once your dog is performing the behavior reliably on cue (i.e., he will do the behavior at least 90% of the time when you give the verbal cue) on a variable schedule of reinforcement, you don't really need the clicker any more for this behavior. You should still reward your dog often and variably with praise and a food treat, but you don't need the clicker any more -- until you're ready to teach a new behavior!

Teaching Your Dog to Not Jump Up

Definition:

Rather than teach the dog to “not” do something, we will ask him to do something he knows how to do that is incompatible with jumping up on you or someone else. You may use “sit” or “touch” or some other behavior as your alternate incompatible behavior. Your dog must have the alternate behavior on cue in order to do this.

Practical uses:

Use when your dog is jumping up on you or on someone else.

How to teach:

1. *Using sit as the alternate, incompatible behavior:* when your dog starts to jump up, give your cue, “sit.” Click and treat (C/T) when the dog sits. If the dog jumps up and does not sit, stand still and wait. Do not repeat the command. Wait for the dog to sit, and C/T when he does. You may want to toss the treat on the floor so the dog gets up and you have another chance to give the “sit” cue. *Practicing with other people:* Hold your dog’s leash or put him on the tether. Be sure you do not pull on or put tension on the leash. Have another person approach your dog. As the person gets within the dog’s range, say “sit.” Click and have the person treat. If the dog jumps up and does not sit, have the person stand still and wait. Do not repeat the command. Wait for the dog to sit — click and have the person give the treat.
2. *Using “touch” as the alternate, incompatible behavior:* when your dog starts to jump up, give your verbal cue and your hand signal for “touch.” C/T when the dog touches his nose to your hand. If the dog jumps up and does not “touch,” stand still and wait with your hand extended. Do not repeat the command. Wait for the dog to touch, and C/T when he does. *Practicing with other people:* hold your dog’s leash or put him on the tether. Be sure you do not pull on or put tension on the leash. Have another person approach your dog. As the person approaches, have them present their hand and say “touch.” Click and have the person treat. If the dog jumps up and does not touch, have the person stand still and wait, keeping the target hand extended. Do not repeat the command. Wait for the dog to “touch.” Click and have the person give the treat.

Moving on:

- What you are working toward is having your dog offer your chosen alternative, incompatible behavior whenever he is approached by someone, without even having to give a verbal cue. In other words, the “cue” becomes the approach of a human. This requires consistency on the part of every person approaching the dog, so you need to enlist the help of all friends, family members and guests that interact with the dog.
- Variable Schedule of Reinforcement – stick with a continuous schedule of reinforcement for the initial approach. You can have the person toss the treat and then ask for the behavior several more times, rewarding on a variable schedule of reinforcement.

Tips:

- When a dog jumps up on you, he wants your attention; remember that HE IS RECEIVING ATTENTION if you push him away, knee him in the chest, or step on his hind feet and is, therefore, being rewarded for jumping up (he is getting what he wants).
- When the dog realizes that he gets NO attention from you while he is jumping up, but does get rewarded when he stops jumping up and sits or targets, he will stop jumping up and begin to offer the alternate behavior.
- If the dog jumps up, do not turn away, just stand still and wait for the dog to offer the alternate behavior.
- Be patient and persistent; often the dog has been successful in getting attention by jumping up for quite some time, and it may take him a while to learn that this method no longer works.
- Be consistent. Every member of the household and everyone who enters the house MUST practice this technique with the dog.
- Remember that once you have taught him to come and sit quietly for attention, you must reward this behavior. Be careful not to ignore him when he comes and sits politely waiting for a reward.

Teaching Your Cat to “High Five”

Definition:

Cat touches one of his front paws to your hand.

HOW TO TEACH:**High Five:**

Sit or squat next to or in front of the cat. Hold your hand flat and in front of the cat, within paws reach. When he lifts one leg off the ground, click and treat (C/T). C/T any paw movement toward your hand. When his paw touches your hand (final behavior) C/T.

Adding the cue:

You are ready to add the cue when he touches his paw to your hand all the time. Say “High Five” as the cat’s paw is touching your hand. After one session you can begin to say “High Five” before the behavior. Remember that the cat should be offering the behavior before you start using verbal cues.

COMMENTS:

- If the cat is using his claws during this behavior, hold your hand in place and wait for him to retract them, then C/T.
- If the cat is too distracted, start working the cat in an area (e.g., bedroom) that the cat uses as a favorite hangout.
- The behavior may happen very quickly so make sure you are paying close attention to the body position of the cat.
- Keep training sessions for cats to no more than two minutes or 10 treats. Take breaks -- grooming the cat or giving attention at appropriate times -- between each behavior session.

Teaching Your Cat to “Sit”

Definition:

The cat’s hind end is touching the ground

HOW TO TEACH:**SIT:**

Stand or sit next to or in front of the cat, holding your clicker and treats. If you have treats that he wants, then the cat will wait for you to give him one. While he is waiting he will sit. When his hind end touches the ground, click and treat (C/T), placing the treat in a location where he will have to get up to eat. Again stand or sit next to or in front of him, he will again sit and again you C/T.

Adding the cue:

You are ready to add the cue when the cat begins to offer the sit all the time. Say “sit” as the cat’s hind end touches the ground. After a few sessions you can begin to say “sit” before the cat sits. Remember that the cat should be offering the “sit” before you start using verbal cues.

COMMENTS:

- If the cat is too distracted, start working the cat in an area (e.g., bedroom) that the cat uses as a favorite hangout.
- The behavior may happen very quickly, so make sure you are paying close attention to the body position of the cat.
- Keep training sessions for cats to no more than two minutes or 10 treats. Take breaks -- grooming the cat or giving attention at appropriate times - between each behavior session.

Teaching Your Cat to Come When Called

Definition

The cat comes when called, touching his nose to person's hand or comes close enough to rub on the person.

How to Teach:

Come:

To teach come, first teach your cat to target. Once your cat stretches he's neck to touch your hand, begin to hold it far enough away that he has to get up or move his entire body to touch your hand. Continue to increase the distance between your hand and the cat in small increments until you are several feet from the cat.

Adding the cue:

You are ready to add the cue when your cat consistently crosses a room to touch his nose to your hand. Say "come" as your cat starts to move in your direction. After a few sessions of saying it when your cat moves, you can start to say "come" before he moves. From there you can say "come" when in another room. Remember to have the behavior consistent though before you start using verbal cues.

Uses:

If your cat darts out the door you can easily get him to come back in.

Comments:

- If the cat is too distracted, start working the cat in an area that is a normal place for the cat to go when comfortable or to eat (e.g., bedroom).
- The behavior will happen quickly, so make sure you are paying close attention to the body position of the cat.
- Keep training sessions for cats to no more than two minutes and 10 treats. Take breaks - grooming the cat or giving attention at appropriate times - between each training session.
- Do not call your cat to come for anything negative, like giving medicine. Instead go get your cat. You want coming to ALWAYS result in something positive.

Teaching Your Cat to Walk On a Leash

HOW TO TEACH:

First you'll need to familiarize your cat with wearing a harness. Your cat should be comfortable wearing a harness for 10 to 15 minutes before starting to work on leash training.

Getting Used to the Leash:

Start in a quiet, safe place like indoors or a securely fenced yard.

Attach a six- to eight-foot, lightweight leash to the harness (never attach a leash to the cat's collar). When your cat feels tension on the leash, he may pull or back up. Wait patiently until there is no tension on the leash, then click and treat (C/T). As long as he is not pulling, allow him to move around with the leash on, following him to prevent tension on the leash.

Walking on a Leash:

Using a target (a longer dowel works well in this case), have your cat follow the target (see handout on teaching your cat to target). C/T when he follows the target for one or two steps. Gradually increase the number of steps your cat must take to get the C/T. Once he is following the target for 10 or more steps, add a cue like "let's go" to signal him to follow you.

Going for a walk:

Choose quiet times and places to walk your cat. Be aware that there are things that might frighten your cat – loud noises, approaching dogs, moving vehicles, etc. For your first few walks, you might want to take his carrier with you, so that if he becomes frightened you can put him in the carrier. If you try to hold him when he is frightened and panicked, he may scratch you or injure himself.

COMMENTS:

- Be aware that walking a cat is different from walking a dog. Sometimes you can ask him to follow you using your "let's go" cue. Other times you will follow him, allowing him to sniff and explore.
- Keep your walks short – 10 to 15 minutes.
- Carry treats to reward good behavior.