

# REWARD MARKER TRAINING

## CLICKER, "YES" AND OTHER REWARD MARKERS

### What is reward marker training (also called clicker training)?

Reward marker training sets up a way to communicate clearly with your dog. It means using a sound (a click or a verbal sound like the word "yes") to communicate with your dog. This method of training has been used for more than forty years. The method is best known from the world of marine animal training where people need a way to communicate with animals like dolphins and orcas that can't be controlled physically.

### How does it work?

It is fabulously simple. First we teach the dog that the click or the word "yes" means he has won a treat. Then we use the click or "yes" to tell the dog when he has done something we like.

Essentially: When your dog does what you want him to do—like a sit or a down—you click or "yes" and give him a treat. This gives your dog *instant, specific* feedback.

You can tell a child you will take him out for ice cream tomorrow because he earned good grades today. A dog, on the other hand, needs immediate pointers to help him understand what behavior he is being rewarded for. A clicker or the word "yes" are a way to do this.

### Charging the clicker or the word "Yes."

Or teaching that click or "yes" means treat.

- Grab a handful of really yummy treats cut into small pieces.
- Every time you "yes" or click, give your dog a treat (be careful not to yes or click and treat at the same time; the treat must follow the yes or click, not precede or coincide with it).
- Do this standing up, sitting down, while moving about, indoors, outdoors. Basically, make sure your dog understands that the yes or click means treat in all situations.
- Do the exercise a few times a day for a few minutes at a time until, when you yes or click, you notice that your dog is eagerly anticipating the treat.

Don't give away that a treat is coming except with the yes or click. For example, be careful not to reach for a treat, point the clicker toward the dog, or reach toward him with the treat before you click. Train yourself to insert a count or a word before you hand over the treat: Click. One one-thousand. Treat.

### Reward marker rules.

Click or say "yes" only once.

If you click or "yes" you *must* treat.

The clicker is not a remote control. Don't use it to call your dog to you.

**Training Tip:** Some dogs are startled by the sound of the clicker. If your dog shows any signs of discomfort (shies away, leaves the room) wrap the clicker in a towel or a sock to muffle the noise. Try again, and when your dog clearly shows he enjoys the exercise, unwrap the clicker a little at a time.