

Quick Start – HANDOUT

Welcome to the 4 week Quick Start course. Over the next 4 Sundays we will look at how reward based training using a Clicker, food rewards, play and toys can help you and your dog form a positive relationship. After completion of the course you can join the Club's Classes 1, 2, 3. Each Instructor will assess when you and your dog are ready to move to the next Class. When your dog is 12 months of age you can register for the pre-agility course.

Clicker Training - What is a Clicker?

A *clicker* is simply a small plastic device that makes a distinctive "click" sound when pressed. The clicker has no value or meaning of its own but can quickly be conditioned to represent access to "good things" to your dog.

How does it work?

By clicking once then immediately treating with a small titbit, your dog learns the association that "click" means "good job" - you've earned a reward! You'll be training your dog to behave as you want, while 'Fido' thinks he's training you to click! Dogs enjoy the mental challenge of the clicker training game as they grow to realise that their behaviour determines the rewards.

Better than "good dog"!

A clicker is more effective than simply saying "good dog" for two main reasons. One is that it is a very distinctive sound, completely unlike human speech. Dogs quickly learn that each and every click has significance for them (leads to rewards) On the other hand, by necessity dogs learn to "tune out" most human words because the majority of words don't have any significance for them.

Secondly, the clicker is much quicker than spoken words. To be effective a reward should be delivered within one second of the behaviour you wish to reinforce. In practice, this can be very difficult. In the few extra seconds, a dog can do lots of different things – how does the dog know which one earned the treat? Was it the sit or jumping up and licking your face? The clicker pinpoints exactly which behaviour it is that you liked and "bridges" the time between the behaviour and the reward. Dolphin trainers have been using this type of training for years using a whistle instead of a clicker. When the dolphin jumps, the trainer blows a whistle to let the dolphin know, "Yes, I liked that, come and get a fish." The clicker tells your dog, "I liked that and you've earned a reward."

Getting started with a clicker...

Your dog is important to you and your family. Time spent training basic behaviours will be rewarding for you and your dog. You can start clicker training your dog or puppy from the first day you bring it home. Click and reward for all the behaviours you like: sitting, lying quietly, even toileting in the right spot. You don't have to use the clicker for just one behaviour at a time - click and reward all the behaviours you would like to see become part of your pet's usual repertoire. This is called opportunity training or free shaping, and means you simply watch, click and reward. The behaviours you click will increase in frequency while the behaviours that have not been clicked will begin to extinguish.

A great way to train all dogs

Puppies are a special delight to clicker train, as they grasp the "training game" very quickly, however clicker training can be just as effective on dogs of all ages and personalities. Dogs that may have had a bad association with previous training methods or who are very timid often blossom under this no-pressure, no-threat system of training. Amazingly it works equally well with pushy dogs that learn that to gain rewards they have to stop being a bully and THINK what it is that will make their owner CLICK!

Advantages of Using a Clicker...

- It is a short, sharp clear sound, very different to the human voice.
- Dogs, by necessity, "tune out" most of what we say as it does not apply to them. They soon learn the clicker is their special sound.
- Clicker training will help you to say less to your dog and observe more.
- Dogs communicate mainly by body language. It is only fair that we learn a bit about their "language" instead of expecting them only to learn our verbal one.
- Understanding your dog's movements will make training easier.
- For most people, clicking requires a more conscious effort than speaking does, making you more aware of timing your rewards.
- Once your dog understands click means treat, you don't need to have food in sight to reward your dog. You can keep treats hidden in your pocket or on the table.
- Click and treat training automatically teaches your dog to pay attention to you - without force.
- It opens the channels of communication between you and your dog. You'll think you're training him, while your dog will think he's training YOU to click!
- Training time will become the best time you spend with your dog. The training game itself becomes rewarding to your dog.

Some Important Points About Clickers

- Think of your clicker as a battery operated camera. You're going to use your clicker to take snapshots of all the things you like your dog to do (sitting, lying down, keeping four feet on the ground when visitors arrive, etc.)
- To keep the battery in your camera charged, you have to follow each click with a treat. If you click without treating, the clicker like the camera would cease to work.
- The clicker is just a training tool that helps you communicate with your dog. Once your dog fully understands a new behaviour you don't need to use the clicker any more – the information it provided has been assimilated.
- The clicker ends a behaviour – it doesn't matter what the dog does after the click (the photo is already taken, remember), he has already earned his reward.

Dog Club has made a short video to assist new members of the Club's Quick Start course with their practice at home with their dog. It is located on U-tube at <https://youtu.be/LcGNz9RLYMU> if you would like to view it. It is not a public video, and Dog Club provides it to you for your own personal use.

Milton Ulladulla Dog Training Club Inc

Web page: www.mudtc.org.au

Email: mudtc@outlook.com

PO Box 274 Milton 2538