

Click or Marker Word (like YES) – Exercise 1

A. Clicker Mechanics

Learn the mechanical skills of clicking before you work with your dog. This will hone your ability to keep your hands still and in neutral positions between each click/treat.

Make sure to keep your dog out of earshot while you practice with the clicker! The first time he hears the click, it should send a powerful message, and you risk diluting its meaning if he listens to you clicking and sees no result.

Setup

Place a handful of treats in your treat bag and put your treat bag around your waist. Choose which hand will be your “clicker hand” and use the other hand to deliver treats.

Steps (*this practice is for you without your dog*)

1. Place a cup in front of you. Now just practice clicking the clicker while keeping your empty treat hand still.
2. Start with your empty treat hand at a neutral position. Then use that empty hand to take one treat from your treat bag and put the treat in the cup. Then return your empty hand to a neutral position. Now practice by repeating to click and deliver treats until all the treats in your bag are in the cup.
3. Practice with speed. Repeat the exercise above 3 more times and see how much you can increase your speed at delivering treats to the cup. Be careful not to move your treat hand at the same time as you click. These two events must be separated—it is click or marker word and then treat.
4. Next, practice the act of throwing treats on the floor or onto certain areas like your dog’s bed or into his crate after clicking.

B. Introduce the Clicker (or Marker Word) to Your Dog

When the mechanics of using the clicker (or marker word) AND delivering treats are clear to you, you can introduce the method to your dog. Simply click and treat (C/T) or mark and treat (M/T).

This will teach your dog that every CLICK or marker word like YES will earn him a treat and that will motivate him to work with you.

 Listen to this podcast to understand more about the science and history of clicker training and learning: [When Things Click: The Power Of Judgment-Free Learning](https://www.npr.org) – available at <https://www.npr.org>

