



Clicker Training – How to “charge” the clicker

What is a “clicker”? It’s a small, usually square, time tested animal training device that has a metal piece constructed inside so that when you press it, it makes a “clicking” sound. Originally it was used with large marine animals that were too big for a human to train with physical force. Today it is one of the leading tools for K9 positive reinforcement training. A clicker is used to “mark” a correct response.

A clicker has to be “charged” in order for it to have any meaning to your K9 teammate. Charging teaches your K9 teammate that the “click” sound means there is a reward coming. To “charge” your clicker you will need your K9 teammate, some REALLY special “quick” treats, a quiet area, and your clicker.

1. Make sure your K9 teammate is paying attention to you or near enough to give them a treat – you don’t want to go to your K9 teammate to reward them, you want them to come to you (unless you are teaching “stay”).
2. As long as your K9 teammate isn’t doing something you oppose, click and give your K9 teammate the treat immediately afterwards.
3. Repeat this process about 20-25 times (make sure you are using small treats!)
4. Pause and wait for your K9 teammate to look away and then click again. If your K9 teammate turns to you to get their reward, they are beginning to understand the association that “click means reward!”
5. Repeat these instructions a few times each day through the next week. Remember: you aren’t “training” your K9 teammate to do any specific behavior in this process – they are just learning to associate the click with the reward.

THE RULES:

As we start to train different techniques through the weeks, keep the following rules in mind...

1. Make sure the reward is quick and of high importance to your K9. A pat on the head is quick, but not a high motivator when training. A super large biscuit might sound good to us, but it is neither a high motivator nor quick from your K9’s point of view.
2. Always click when the correct behavior is happening, not before and not after.
3. Click only once and even if you make a mistake in your timing, ALWAYS deliver a reward after you click.
4. Make sure you only use the clicker as a reinforcement of the correct response. Don’t use the clicker as an independent cue.