

Catching a loose dog, clicker-style!

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Aunt Mary's old Cairn terrier, Rowdy, got out the door, and now he won't come in. Everyone's trying to catch him before he gets out on the street.

"Here, Rowdy, here boy," Rowdy comes close, wagging his tail, but when the boys lunge for his collar, he zips out of reach again. Rowdy thinks this is a GREAT game.

Here's how to fix that problem with the clicker, even with a dog that's not clicker trained at all.

Get some small, solid food you can toss, such as little cubes of cheese. Sit on the ground.



Call Rowdy. When he turns his head, click and throw a piece of cheese all the way to him. Don't try to lure or bait him with the food. Throw it; make it easy.

When he's eaten that piece of cheese, call him again, just once. If he looks or steps your way, click and throw him another bite.

A greedy dog will usually approach you now. Let him come two steps toward you. Click, and toss cheese. Next time, wait for four steps and click.

When Rowdy is nearly within reach be careful not to grab at him or make any sudden moves.

Now when you click, toss the cheese closer to you so he has to come in a bit to get it. As he does so, click and hold cheese out in your hand. Let him take it. Don't GRAB!

Now lure him to your lap; click and give him the cheese in your far hand. If he dives away, let him. Shape him back into your lap again. Put your hand lightly on his back. When you click, take the hand away and give him cheese from the other hand.

Now, ruffle his fur, click, lift your hand away, and give him cheese.

NOW, gently take his collar, click, give him cheese, and haul him indoors where he belongs.

Jackpot him there.

Repeat as needed. I predict that "catch time" will shorten to zero in three more episodes.

Quick Fix from Karen Pryor, provided with permission, from the Don't Shoot the Dog! News