

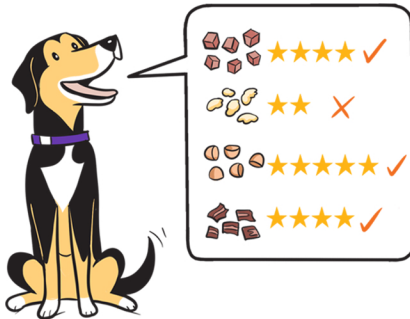
Using Food in Training

Food, in the form of treats, is the most common type of reinforcer used in clicker training. It is easy to deliver quickly and many dogs love food. In fact, most animals find food rewarding because food is a **primary reinforcer**. Primary reinforcers are things that animals seek out because they are tied to survival.

Tips for using food effectively in training:

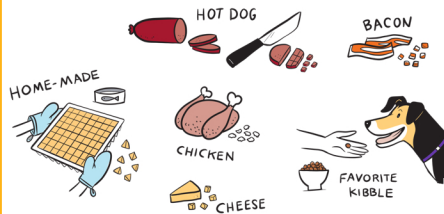
Use treats that are valuable to YOUR dog

The value of the treat will depend on YOUR dog's preferences.



Use treats that are pea-sized or SMALLER

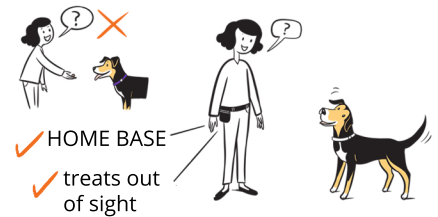
so that your dog doesn't fill up too quickly or consume too many calories.



Adjusting the amount your dog eats at mealtimes will also help regulate your dog's caloric intake.

Approach treats as a PAYCHECK, not a bribe

A paycheck comes *after* the task is complete, not before. Keep the treats in your pouch and your hand empty at home base. This helps your dog learn to perform the behavior without a treat in sight.



Match the treat value to the DIFFICULTY of the task

If what you're asking is extra difficult, then the treat should be extra yummy to motivate your dog to perform what you want them to do.



Use a HIGH RATE of Reinforcement

when training a new behavior, reinforce more repetitions in a shorter period of time.



Your trainer can help you determine when non-food reinforcers are appropriate for your dog.

Play, praise, affection, and other opportunities for enjoyment or access to something your dog values can also be used to reinforce your dog, but are often not as efficient as food for teaching new behaviors, or require advanced training on the part of the trainer to be used efficiently in a training session.

Once your dog is fluent with a behavior, it can be maintained by varying reinforcers - sometimes use a treat and other times offer praise, or another activity your dog enjoys. Your trainer can help you determine when this is appropriate for your dog.