## Practice Your Clicker Timing

The following exercises are done without a clicker and without your dog. Don't use the actual clicker when practicing without your dog. You don't want to ruin the meaning of the sound of the clicker by having your dog hear extraneous clicks without getting rewards. Instead, use a ball point pen that clicks or just imitate holding a clicker in your hand and press down with your thumb.

1. While stopped at a light, "click" traffic (thumb action) as each car passes a specific spot on the road or street sign.
2. While watching TV, click for scene changes or pick a common word the show uses and click for that, find other things on TV shows that are repetitious and will help you get better timing.
3. Try your new mechanical skills in new environments – go to another room, outside, while sitting, while standing.

## Create a List of Reinforcers

Learn what is reinforcing for your dog and create a list of the reinforcers that motivate your dog. Reinforcers come in different forms. They can be meal times, treats, toys, different types of exercises, different people, etc. You need to learn what motivates your dog so you can use it to your advantage. Knowing what your dog will "work for" in different types of environments will be very valuable as you progress in teaching your dog new and different skills.

Fill out the following table and continually add to it as you get to know your dog more and learn from him what motivates him in different environments. You can use this to your advantage.
Examples: Cheese, specific treats, hot dogs, squeaker toys, ball, stuffed toy, playing tug, going for walk, ride in car, etc.

| Foods | Toys | Interactions |
|---|---|---|
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## Loading the Clicker

Loading the clicker means teaching your dog to associate the sound of the clicker earns them a reward. Your dog needs to learn the meaning of the clicker. This is fairly easy for dogs to understand when practiced repeatedly. Use the Focus Game, Capture a Sit to help load the clicker and teach your dog the meaning of the sound. Work on the Focus Game first to get your dog's attention before moving to Capturing a Sit. Perform these exercises in a quiet room with the door shut to keep distractions low. If you are practicing these in a larger open room, you might want to have your dog on leash so they don't wander away. Stand on the leash or tie it to a chair or table leg.

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## Focus Game

The Focus Game allows you teach your dog how to focus on you and it gives you opportunity to work on your Good Form or neutral position. You will use this game in class to get your dog to focus on you when needed, such as, when other dogs are entering or exiting class.

Also, use this game as your warm up exercise at the start of every training session.

**Steps**

1. Stand near your dog.
2. Keep your treat and clicker hand in neutral position.
3. Click and toss a treat in a rapid manner a few times to get your dog engaged. Click for anything as long as your dog has "4 on the floor" (all four feet on the floor)
4. After tossing a treat, pause and wait for your dog to look at you
5. Click and toss treat for that engagement
6. Always go back to neutral position (Good Form) after tossing a treat
7. Repeat several times

**Click Points**

- Nose off the ground
- Head parallel to the ground
- Head up
- When dog is looking at you

This game is NOT about teaching your dog to stare at you. It is about getting your dog's focus and engagement with you. Looking at you becomes a bonus behavior!

## Sit - Level 1: Capturing a Sit and Practicing Good Form

The Capture a Sit exercise allows you teach your dog how to sit and it gives you opportunity to work on your Good Form. You'll get better with timing, your dog will learn the meaning of the clicker, as well as, begin to build a default sit.

## Exercise 1

This exercise is an extension of the Focus Game. Do this exercise with your dog off leash or dragging the leash.

**Steps**

1. In a quiet room, with little distractions stand near your dog.
2. Have your treat and clicker hand in neutral position.
3. Click and toss treat rapidly a few times to get your dog engaged. Click for anything as long as your dog has "4 on the floor."
4. Repeat, click and toss treat 3-5 times.
5. Next, after tossing a treat, pause and wait for your dog to look at you.
6. Click and toss treat for that engagement. Repeat a couple of times rewarding for dog looking at you.
7. This time after tossing a treat, pause and wait for your dog to sit.
8. Click, as he is beginning to sit, and toss treat away to reset your dog. Repeat several times.
9. Always go back to neutral position (Good Form) after tossing a treat.
10. 3 sets of 10, taking a short break in between sets.
11. Praise, praise, praise when done!

**Click Points**

- Head up
- When dog is looking at you
- As dog is crouching to sit
- Dog sits

## Exercise 2

Go to a quiet distraction free room in the house with your dog, clicker, treats, leash and a good book. This exercise can be used to help to get your dog to sit if you aren't getting a sit during the previous exercise. This exercise requires patience on your part.

**Steps**

1. Sit in a comfortable chair and tether your dog to the chair with the leash.
2. Pretend to read your book keeping a small part of your attention on your dog.
3. Keep your treat hand in a neutral position on your book.
4. When your dog finally gets bored and sits click then toss a treat so he has to get up to eat the treat.
5. Stay **quiet** during this exercise; let the dog do the work. Soon you'll notice that he sits more frequently, this tells you he "gets it".

**Click Points**

- As dog is crouching to sit
- When dog sits

# Got'cha - Recall (Come when called)

This is not a clicker exercise. This exercise is used to condition your dog to know that grabbing the collar is a good thing which helps prevent dogs from trying to avoid being caught. This exercise has two parts. The first part is with no cueing.

## Part 1: No Cue

First do the exercise silently so that your dog becomes desensitized with having his collar grabbed.

1. Silently, without words or luring, show your dog you have a treat and hold it close to you so he comes in close to get it.
2. Gently take hold of his collar.
3. Give him the treat and release his collar.
4. Repeat several times during different times of day and in different situations.

## Part 2: Add Cue "Got'cha"

When the dog is comfortable with having his collar grabbed, add the cue "Got'cha".

1. Say the cue "Got'cha".
2. Grasp the collar.
3. Give a treat and release the collar.
4. Repeat these steps 5-10 times.

**Sequence of timing is important**

It is essential the dog learns grasping of the collar means a treat. Don't give a treat at the same time as grabbing the collar or just before taking hold of the collar. Be sure you grab the collar first, and then give treat.

# Holding the Leash

This skill will help the handler hold the leash and clicker with one hand freeing up the other hand to do targeting and treating. The hold is designed to enable the handler to have a strong grip on the leash without accidentally clicking if the dog pulls hard. Tying a knot in your leash enables you to easily create a short leash when needed for leash walking.

**Steps**

Leash and clicker position: (these instructions assume the dog is on your left side)

1. Creating of the knot:
    a. With dog leashed and standing beside you, form a "J" with the leash
    b. Grasp the spot on the leash that is near your belly button
    c. Tie a knot at that spot
2. Holding the leash:
    a. Slide the loop of the leash over your right hand resting on the wrist (like a trapeze artist).
    b. Excess leash goes across your palm and between middle and index finger
    c. With your three lower fingers grasp the excess leash holding the knot. Your hand should now be making the shape of a shooting gun (shoot the gun).
3. Hold clicker between your index finger and thumb.
4. The leash crosses your body to dog, with the dog on the same side as your treat bag.
5. Use your left hand for target and treats.

**Click Points**

- none