

Do you and your Staby click?

by Cindy Pfister

Positive Reinforcement—Part 2. This is the 7th article of the series by the Educational Committee. Part 1 of this article was published in Stand-By-Me Issue 8. The articles of this series continue to be available in the library on the Members Only part of the website.



Do you and your Staby click? No, we're not talking about connecting on an emotional level. We're talking about dog training! Clicker training to be exact!

Clicker training is based on the principles of operant conditioning, which is the use of consequences to modify behavior. It's a humane, no-punishment way to instill basic obedience commands, teach tricks, shape complicated behavior and even change some behavior problems.

If you never used a clicker with your Staby, then you're missing out on a simple, powerful way to unleash his brain power and potential. Clicker training is better than a verbal cue, because it is exact and there's no variation in tone, inflection or body language. Plus, you are removing a lot of confusion from training: the dog "get's it" quickly. The click means "That's it! You did something I like!" It also means "now you get something you want". By following this sequence, we tell our dog exactly what we like, and then reinforce it. Simply put, it's a very clear way to communicate non-verbally with your Staby.

THREE RULES OF CLICKER TRAINING:

1. Click **WHILE** your Staby is doing something you'd like him to repeat,
2. **ALWAYS** follow a click with a treat,
3. Treat as soon as possible after the click (within 2 sec.)

Many people think that if one click is good, two or three is great! Clickers are not remote controls. A simple rule: 1 click equals 1 treat. A click is a **PROMISE** that a treat is coming, and you can't lie to your Staby by clicking without giving a treat. Even if you clicked at the wrong time you still must give the treat. A mis-timed click is less of a training problem than making the click meaningless or confusing.



NOTE: *If your Staby is frightened or upset by the sound of the clicker, hold the clicker in your pocket, or cover the metal part with several layers of tape to soften the sound, or, click from another room while your Staby is eating something wonderful and gradually move closer until he is comfortable. You could also use a small squeak toy instead of the clicker; just remember to follow the same rules.*



Ike, 22 months

- Get some (pea size) treats and your clicker
- Press the clicker and give the treat
- Repeat, repeat, repeat

To get started, we begin by "charging" the clicker, which is the process that teaches your Staby that the click sound leads to a treat.

When your Staby begins to look for the treat when he hears the click, he's made the connection that the sound will lead to a reward. Now, you're ready to train! Here are two simple exercises to get started:
SIT: Place a food lure in front of your Staby's nose, move your hand slowly back between the eyes, the rear usually goes down. As soon as your Staby sits, mark the behavior with a click and give the treat.

DOWN: Place your Staby in a sit. Use your food lure and keep your motion slow and steady. With your dog in a sitting position, your hand motion is an "L".

Move the food straight down between your Staby's feet, then slightly forward along the floor. Click and treat when your dog's elbows are on the floor.

With a little imagination and planning you can teach your Staby almost anything. So, grab that clicker and treats and let's start **TRAINING!**

