

Positive Reinforcers

Clicker training uses many types of positive reinforcers. A positive reinforcer is anything your dog likes and that he will work to get. When you give the positive reinforcer for a behavior, it will strengthen the behavior or make it happen more often. For example if you give your dog a treat for sitting, he will probably sit again in hopes of getting another treat.

The type of positive reinforcer you use must be something your dog really likes. If your dog likes it he will find it rewarding and reinforcing. Reinforcers have different values. A piece of steak is more rewarding than a piece of dry kibble.

Some reinforcers are not practical to use for training. Your dog may love to chase a ball, but you will not get many repetitions when your dog is running around with his reward. Save the ball toss for the end of a training session.

In order to make the reinforcers more effective you will chose which reinforcers you want to give your dog. You will also control access to the reinforcers. For example, if your dog always gets pieces of steak with his dinner he may not be very excited at his next training session. On the other hand, if he rarely gets steak he is likely to be very eager to earn his reward on your next training session.

As you continue training, you will use different kinds of positive reinforcers but initially you will use food as a reward. You will want to have a variety of reinforcers. Dogs can get bored with the same food reward. You will also need higher value rewards for when the work is harder. The list below should inspire you to find out what your dog finds truly rewarding.

Food Rewards:

| | | |
|------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| Popcorn | Rice Chex | Fruit |
| Charlee Bears | Homemade Dog Treats | Waffles |
| Cat Treats | Cheese | Goldfish Crackers |
| Chicken | Pizza | Rabbit Pellets |
| Cheerios | Hot Dogs | Cooked Hamburger |
| Vegetables | Peanut Butter | French Fries |
| Hard Boiled Eggs | Banana Bread | Bacon |
| Pasta | Liver | Meatballs |
| Croutons | Rollover | Nutter Butter Cookies |

Non-Food Rewards:

| | | |
|---------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| Balls and Toys | Coming Inside | A Feather or Leaf |
| Game of Fetch | Tummy Rubs | Swimming |
| Ride in the Car | Petting | Playing in a Sandbox |
| Playing in Water | Going for a Walk | Your Undivided Attention |
| Going to the Park | Digging | |
| Paper Towel Tube | Verbal Praise | |
| Paper Bag | Empty Milk Container | |
| Game of Hide & Seek | Playing with other Dogs | |
| Going Outside | Getting on the Bed | |