

# Marker Training

## **What is Marker Training?**

Marker training is a training system using Operant Conditioning to form an association between a behavior and a consequence. In Marker training, there are only two consequences to a behavior that we are training. There is either a reward or no-reward. The consequence depends on if the dog performs the command that we are trying to teach. Marker training is extremely effective if used correctly because it allows you to precisely mark steps within a command.

## **What is a Mark?**

The Mark should be thought of as a snapshot of what they performed correctly. It is also a bridge that tells the dog that he just did well and there is a reward on the way. A mark can be either a click from a clicker or a verbal cue using a word of your choosing. Make sure once you've chosen the mark that it remains the same cue consistently.

## **Tips for Marker Training:**

### **1. Timing, timing, timing....**

Be sure that when you mark a behavior (yes) it is at the exact moment the dog does what you wanted. The association period for a dog is very short and the better your timing is the less confusion for your dog. If you need to, practice with a friend or have someone watch you to critique your timing.

### **2. High value rewards make for happy dogs.**

Dog's do not all find value in the same things. For example a small piece of kibble may be enough of a reward to get your dog to sit inside with no distractions, but is not enough once you go outside. This happens often with dogs that their distraction level will change what they value. So training inside your dog may value something like cut up soft treats, but outside may need small pieces of cut up hot dog.

### **3. Bribery is against the rules!**

Marker training should not be confused with bribing your dog. Keep the treats hidden in a treat pouch and they do not "appear" until the dog has completed the command and the mark has been given.

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### **4. Don't be a bore!**

One of the downfalls to marker training is to make the “yes” mean that 1 piece of kibble will appear, this will become boring to the dog and the “yes” will not be as exciting. Instead the dog should always wonder what is coming. Sometimes it may be 1 treat, sometimes it may be 3, or at times your dog may do something really well and get a “jackpot”.

### **5. Pause for a moment**

Give yourself a moment in between the mark and the act of reaching for a treat. Do not be moving for the treat as you are marking the desired behavior. If someone was taking a snapshot of the moment when you mark a behavior it should show you motionless and the dog doing exactly what you wanted.

### **6. Use Treats that are easy to chew/swallow.**

The treats you choose to use should be soft so they are easy to chew. They will also need to be small enough for the dog to chew quickly, but not so small that they are swallowed and you lose the dogs attention.

### **7. Leave the dog wanting more!**

It is best when doing marker training to keep the sessions short. We recommend multiple training sessions of about 5-10 min throughout the day/evening. Training longer does not mean better. If you train too long your dog will lose interest and it will no longer be a good experience for them or you.

### **8. Train everywhere.**

The more places you train and introduce your dog to- the better. I suggest to clients training not only in their house, but in the back yard, front yard, at the park, in the parking lot to your local stores, in the pet store, at a friend's house and anywhere else you can think of.

**Following these simple tips will ensure your training goes smoothly and effectively. Call No Leash Needed if you have any questions. Get out there and have some fun with your dog!!**