



Clicker Training Your Cat

Did you know "clicker training" is the fastest way to train an animal? A clicker is a mechanical plastic device that makes a click sound when you push a button. Therefore, this training involves using a marker sound, the "*click*", to communicate that an animal is doing something you want him/her to do. Because a reward always follows the click, the behavior that happened during the click is positively reinforced.

What you'll need: *Jackpot reward + Clicker*

Step 1. Find you kitty's motivator: Training cats is much easier when you know their preferences. You must use a motivator your cat is willing to work for (this is called a "jackpot"). For food motivated cats, this could mean tuna, baby food, chicken etc. Use something they highly value while keeping in mind any dietary restrictions.

Step 2. Timing: If using food as a motivator, ensure to do it before meal time. Also, catching your kitty mid-nap might not be the best time to train them. Always avoid training in a distracting/loud environment.

Step 3. Choosing the right clicker: Sometimes a clicker designed to train dogs can scare cats due to making too loud of a noise. Be sure to use a clicker your cat can both hear and be comfortable with. Clickers are a great training tool because the animals' auditory reward remains consistent, so try to use the same clicker every training session.

Step 4. Building association (or "Charging the clicker"): Initially, the sound of a clicker means nothing to your kitty. You will need to teach him/her to understand a treat will always follow the sound of a click. Start by pushing the clicker button and follow it *immediately* with a small reward. Do this several times until your cat shows he/she is looking for the treat. Some cats will build this association after a tries, others may take days or weeks. Be patient, your kitty will get there!

Step 5. Start training: Pick a behavior you'd like to encourage and start using the "click and treat" to communicate to your kitty that he/she is doing what you want. Some of the behaviors cats do naturally such as looking at you or sitting are the best to start with. When you catch your cat doing that behavior you like, let him/her know. Always click then reward him/her immediately after completing the behavior you requested of your kitty but never physically force the cat to complete a behavior.

Step 6. Introduce a verbal signal: Once your cat has mastered a behavior, start adding a verbal signal. Begin with saying the word of your choosing immediately before your kitty performs the behavior, then right after the behavior is performed, you *click* and *reward*.

see more on the back...



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Step 7. Ignore unwanted behaviors: If your cat performs a behavior that you do not like, simply ignore it and wait for those behaviors you do want. Never punish a cat for performing a behavior, even with a "no". Remember, your attention is a form of reward for your pet. The best way to make a behavior go away is to ignore it while rewarding (encouraging) the behaviors you want. Once you start clicking a desired behavior, you will see this behavior more and more.

Step 8. Lengthen time between verbal signal and behavior: You will do this by giving the verbal signal just a bit earlier and earlier each time. You will soon notice that your cat will be waiting for your signal to perform the behavior and this is when your verbal signal has become a cue. This means your kitty should be waiting to give you the behavior until you give him/her the cue for it.

Step 9. Move on to another behavior: Once you have one behavior on cue, your kitty is ready to start learning another behavior. Remember that natural behaviors for felines are often the ones that are trained more easily and the most fun to teach.



Fur-midable Tip #1: Only click ONCE then follow with a treat, even if the cat doesn't show much interest or takes a few seconds to eat the treat.



Fur-midable Tip #2: Hold the clicker in your pocket or behind your back if the sound of your clicker startles your kitty.



Fur-midable Tip #3: Once you have started to transition the verbal signal into a cue, DO NOT click-treat for the behavior unless you have given the cue for it.



Fur-midable Tip #4: Training cats is all about positive reinforcement! For every unwanted behavior your cat performs, you should teach them another to substitute it with. Only focus on the behaviors you do want and ignore all others.

Congratulations!
Your cat is now clicker trained!