

Observing and Marking

Exercise 5.3

The power of clicker training is the ability to mark an instant in time with a click. It informs the dog which behavior will receive reinforcement. Precise timing or clicking the second a behavior occurs takes practice and hand-eye coordination skills. This exercise focuses on observational skills and improves a trainer's timing in marking behavior.

You'll need

Clicker

The exercise

In Part 1, you will observe a ball hitting the ground. In Part 2, you will observe a dog changing positions (sit, down, stand). Practice timing the click to mark an instant in time.

Part 1

1. Hold the clicker in a comfortable and neutral position.
2. Open and play the video "**Click the Bouncing Ball.**"
3. Click once each time the ball hits the ground in the video.
4. Switch hands or the finger used to click and repeat the video.

Did your clicks happen at the same time you heard the ball hitting the ground?

Likely you found your timing was more precise with a specific clicker hand or finger.

Were your clicks early or late (before or after the ball sound)?

Continue to practice until a majority of clicks are happening simultaneously with the sound of the ball hitting the floor.

Part 2

1. Hold the clicker in a comfortable and neutral position.
2. Open and play the video “**Observing and Marking Behavior.**”
3. Click once each time the dog *lies down* in the video.
4. Repeat the video, but this time click once each time the dog *stands*.
5. Repeat the video, but this time click once each time the dog *sits*.
6. Repeat the video, but this time click each time the dog changes position (sit, down, and stand).

Questions

Did the click happen at the same time you saw the dog’s elbows or rear touch the ground? Or when the dog stood up completely? Correct timing will take some anticipation of when the behavior is about to occur.

Were the clicks early or late (before or after the dog was in position)?

Take-home message

Precise timing takes practice. Continue to practice until you feel comfortable with timing the click to the position.