



# Bridge Training THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW

Bridge Training (also known as clicker training or correctly known as conditioned reinforcer training) is used by dog trainers, exotic animal trainers, marine animal trainers and those people wanting to accurately and precisely let their animal know that the animal has delivered a desirable behaviour. It's effective and fun. It's the method of training we use in puppy day care, on sleepovers, during puppy and doggy day care and on our group walks. It's fast, effective and fun!

Bridge training is a form of operant conditioning, this is where an animal learns his behaviour has a consequence, for example, the dog sits when we request it and he gets a treat or a pat. He did something and his behaviour made something happen.

With this type of training what we are doing is marking the time the animal does what we want (with a clicker or a word) and when he hears the mark (click / word) he understands that at that precise moment he did what we desired.

Your animal, no matter what species (yep, even fish!!) will learn quickly, effectively and efficiently. You'd be amazed at what you can teach your companion animal with bridge training. Here are some tips from Karen Pryor [www.clickertraining.com](http://www.clickertraining.com) that will help you on your way.

## Happy Training!

1. Say the word YES (or push and release the springy end of the clicker, making a two-toned click). Then treat. Keep the treats small. Use a delicious treat at first: for a dog or cat, little cubes of roast chicken or anything high ranking, not a lump of kibble.

2. Say YES/click DURING the desired behaviour), not after it is completed. The timing of the YES/click is crucial.



Don't be dismayed if your pet stops the behaviour when it hears the YES/click. The click ends the behaviour. Give the treat after that; the timing of the treat is not important.

3. Say YES/click when your dog or other pet does something you like. Begin with something easy that the dog is likely to do on its own. (Ideas: sit; come toward you; touch your hand with its nose; lift a foot; touch and follow a target object such as a pencil or a spoon.)
4. Say Yes (Click once, in-out) If you want to express special enthusiasm, increase the number of treats, not the number of clicks.
5. Keep practice sessions short. Much more is learned in three sessions of five minutes each than in an hour of boring repetition. You can get dramatic results, and teach your pet many new things, by fitting a few clicks a day here and there in your normal routine.
6. Fix bad behaviour by saying YES/clicking good behaviour. YES/click the puppy for relieving itself in the proper spot. YES/click for paws on the ground, not on the visitors. Instead of scolding for making noise, say YES/click for silence. Cure leash-pulling by clicking and treating those moments when the leash happens to go slack.



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7. Say YES/click for voluntary (or accidental) movements toward your goal. You may coax or lure the animal into a movement or position, but don't push, pull, or hold it. Let the animal discover how to do the behaviour on its own. If you need a leash for safety's sake, loop it over your shoulder or tie it to your belt.
8. Don't wait for the "whole picture" or the perfect behaviour. YES/click and treat for small movements in the right direction. You want the dog to sit, and it starts to crouch in back: click. You want it to come when called, and it takes a few steps your way: click.
9. Keep raising your goal. As soon as you have a good response-when a dog, for example, is voluntarily lying down, coming toward you, or sitting repeatedly-start asking for more. Wait a few beats, until the dog stays down a little longer, comes a little further, sits a little faster. Then YES/click. This is called "shaping" a behaviour.
10. When your animal has learned to do something for clicks, it will begin showing you the behaviour spontaneously, trying to get you to click. Now is the time to begin offering a cue, such as a word or a hand signal. Start clicking for that behaviour if it happens during or after the cue. Start ignoring that behaviour when the cue wasn't given.
11. Don't order the animal around; bridge training is not command-based. If your pet does not respond to a cue, it is not disobeying; it just hasn't learned the cue completely. Find more ways to cue it and YES/click it for the desired behaviour. Try working in a quieter, less distracting place for a while. If you have more than one pet, separate them for training, and let them take turns.
12. If you want to use a clicker, carry a clicker and "catch" cute behaviours like cocking the head, chasing the tail, or holding up one foot. You can click for many different behaviours, whenever you happen to notice them, without confusing your pet.

**REMEMBER – YES is free, you'll never drop it, lose it or forget it at home – so for most of us, a word is simply easier.**

13. If you get mad, stop training. Don't mix scoldings, leash-jerking, and correction training with bridge training; you will lose the animal's confidence in the clicker and in you.

**REMEMBER – If you get mad, you'll get frustrated and your dog will make mistakes – stop training and try again another time.**

14. If you are not making progress with a particular behaviour, you are probably saying YES/clicking too late. Accurate timing is important. Get someone else to watch you, and perhaps to YES/click for you, a few times.
15. Above all, have fun. Bridge training is a wonderful way to enrich your relationship with any learner.

