

Training for Shelter Dogs

“Click for Quiet”

The purpose of “Click for Quiet”:

- To help dogs feel more relaxed in their kennels and less frustrated or frightened about people coming up to the kennel
- To teach dogs to make eye contact and show polite behaviors such as sitting, and four paws on the floor to impress adopters
- To decrease the noise level in the shelter, which decreases stress for the dogs and people

Step 1: Change the Dog’s Emotional Response

Dogs might feel frightened, overly excited, or frustrated about people approaching or walking by the kennel. Step 1 will change the dog’s emotional response so they have a positive association with people approaching the kennel.

- Toss a treat or kibble into the kennel as you pass, regardless of what the dog is doing
- Don’t hover, just toss in a treat and keep moving
- You may repeat this several times with a dog
- Don’t ask the dog for any type of behavior. Right now you are just working on helping the dog feel good about people coming up
- For dogs who show poor kennel behavior, you can stand outside the kennel and toss kibble in as the public walks by
- As the dog develops a more positive association to people passing the kennel he will naturally begin to offer calm behavior
- Then, the dog is ready for Step 2

Step 2: Click for Quiet

Approach the kennel and wait for the dog to offer one of these behaviors:

- Stop barking/quiet
- Eye contact
- Four paws on the floor
- Sitting
- Anything cute and calm (such as a curious head tilt, or stretch)

Click at the moment the dog shows the behavior, then follow the click with a treat!

Note: You can be at Step 1 with one dog and Step 2 with the next dog, depending on the dog's behaviour and progress.

Why don't we tell the dog to sit?

You won't know if the dog knows what "sit" means (unknown history of previous training). Instead, we are waiting to see what behavior the dog will naturally offer that is calm. We are "capturing" this calm behaviour by clicking, and then treating. Dogs will figure out very quickly which behavior gets rewarded, and repeat it more and more!

Clicker review:

The click marks the behavior you like. It communicates to the dog "yes, that's what I want you to do!" The click also tells the dog a reward is coming. Always follow a click with a reward, even if you click by accident. If you skip the treat, the click will become meaningless to the dog.