



What is Marker Training?

Introduction

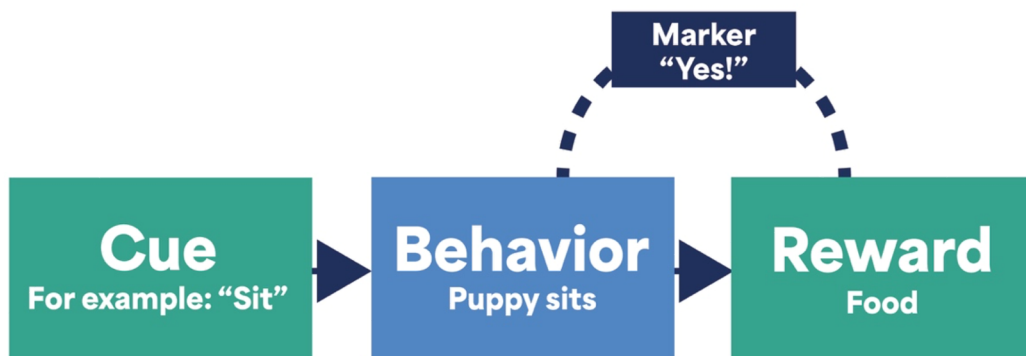
When we are training our puppies, we use a “marker” to tell our puppy that they have responded to a cue correctly and that a reward (reinforcer) is coming. Markers bridge the gap between behavior and reward.

At PAWS, we use the marker word “Yes!”

When we start marker training, we condition our puppies to know that “Yes” means a reward (usually food) is coming. We do this by repetitions of “Yes” followed by a reward. This builds the association.

The timing of the marker word is crucial and must be consistent!

You will often hear marker training referred to as clicker training as other trainers outside of PAWS may use a mechanical clicker instead of the word “Yes.”



Teaching Your Puppy “Yes!” = Food Reward

To begin with, before we start working with any cues, we want our puppies to create a strong association between the word “Yes!” and a food reward.

In a quiet, distraction-free place in your home, say “Yes!” and then immediately give your puppy a treat. It is fine to use their regular kibble at this stage. Do this 5-10 times in each training session over a period of 3 days.

During this stage, your puppy does not need to respond to any cue or perform any behavior, we are just teaching them that “Yes!” means a reward is coming.

Timing is Everything

When we start using our marker to train behaviors with our puppies, we need to make sure that our timing for the marker, “Yes!” is precise so our puppies can start to associate our verbal cues with behaviors.

For example, when we are training “Sit” we need to use our marker, “Yes!” as soon as our puppy’s butt hits the floor. The reward does not have to follow immediately, as “Yes!” means a reward is coming. Being accurate with the marker is more important than speedy reward delivery!

Other Resources

- 🐾 Article - Appropriate Rewards
- 🐾 Video - Leash Handling & Treat Delivery - Hints & Tips
- 🐾 Article - PAWS Approved Human Food Training Treats
- 🐾 Video - High Value Treats
- 🐾 Video - Using Toy Rewards