

Verbal marker vs. Clicker

The **clicker** has many benefits. The biggest benefit to the clicker is that it is a unique sound that will always be linked to a positive reward. The clicker gives dogs a means of communication with their owner. Without a marker like the clicker, communication often takes longer and is far more frustrating for both owner and dog.

The **verbal marker** is not as unique sounding, since it comes from the human mouth. However, the major benefit to a verbal marker is that it doesn't take as much coordination and it is always available. The clicker has to stay on you at all times in order to be put to consistent use. The best example of a consistent verbal marker is "yessss". It is not often used and therefore less likely to be a product of habituation, where your dog drowns it out.

Both markers can be used to shape a behavior. For example, in teaching the trick "roll-over", you do not need to wait for the dog to show the entire sequence of rolling over before rewarding it. Instead you can reward each step to the sequence, thus seeing much faster results and *guiding* your dog, rather than just hoping they do it eventually.

The biggest benefit of marking behavior is that it tells the dog that what they did at that very moment is the behavior that is rewarded. This way, you don't have to be as quick with handing out the treat. You already told your dog what he did right, now you can reach in your pocket and dig out the treat.

The best example of this is with a jumping dog. If your dog is jumping and then sits, by the time you get the treat out, the dog has probably given up sitting and is back to jumping. It's essential that you don't reward the incorrect behavior. Instead, you can "mark" the sitting behavior. Therefore your dog will know that it is the sitting you are looking for and once he has been conditioned to what the marker means, he will often stick to that position.