

When do I add a Cue?

When we first start to teach a new behaviour, we will use luring, guiding, shaping, targeting and more to guide our dog into the behaviour we are looking for. Once these cues and signals help get the behaviour rolling we can continue to reinforce the fantastic choices the dog makes to reproduce the behaviour.

Once the behaviour is predictable you can add a new cue. Usually, this is the time we add the verbal cue. This means you know the dog will likely perform the behaviour when presenting them with your original cue/signal etc. A 75% chance or better response is best.

When choosing what your cue will be

1. Use a word that is easy to remember and stay consistent with
2. Use common words, so that if your dog is interacting with other people they can cue the behaviour when needed. Creativity is wonderful but can be confusing for other people interacting with your dog. If you do choose to use uncommon words or even a different language people will still be able to use body language cues that we subconsciously use when signalling behaviours.

Here is what it looks like:

New Cue—> Old Cue—> Behaviour—>Mark—> Reinforce

“Sit”—>Hand signal/lure—>Dog sits—>”Yes”--->Give a treat

There are always some cues to help your dog predict the behaviour, even when we first start teaching it, but we are not really ready to add our finished polished cue until the behaviour is closer to the end product that we are looking for.