

## Marker

A marker is a word/sound/signal/ or other indicator a dog can perceive that confirms to the dog they have performed the correct behaviour and have earned a reward.

For most dogs and people we use a verbal marker “yes” or “good”. The word is your choice, but it should be short, to the point and the same each time you say it for consistency! So not “Yes!” and then the next one Yeeeeeeesssss.

You can also use a device like a clicker to help you be consistent and mark the behaviour you like.

Think of the marker as the shutter button on a camera. The moment you push that button is the moment you capture the image. That is the moment you are indicating to your dog that they are doing it correctly!

## Timing

The timing of your marker is one of the most essential parts of achieving success in your training!

Here is an example:

You want to teach your dog to walk directly beside you. So you will mark the behaviour when your dog is in position. The dog is coming from behind you to catch up...

In **scenario A** you accidentally mark late several times and the dog gets told the correct place to be is in front of you as they run past. This means you are going to get a behaviour where the dog thinks the goal is to come to in front of you

In **scenario B** you mark early several times, and your dog may start to believe they need to be behind you, but most likely they will think that catching up is what is the correct behaviour.

In **scenario C** you mark the dog as it comes into position beside you, this is the END GOAL of the finished behaviour, because you are able to CAPTURE it, you can quickly build on success and your dog will have a clearer understanding of where they need to be!

Speaking of timing, there is a really important part of your timing that has to do with the delivery of reinforcement.

Here is the normal sequence of events in your training:

| Antecedent  | Behaviour                          | Consequence         |
|-------------|------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Cue the dog | Dog does behaviour & marker sounds | Reward is delivered |

We need to make sure there is a distinction between the sounding of the marker and the delivery of the reward. If they happen simultaneously the marker becomes background noise (because the dog is fixating on the reward). To keep your training clean and help your dog succeed faster, do not reach for the reward until you have marked the behaviour. Don't rush to get the reward either. It will be delivered within a few seconds. The most important part is the communication of the marker word/sound etc that tells them THAT is the behaviour we want.

**Mark, then move.**