

## How do clicker trainers ask for behaviors?

By Karen Pryor

Clicker trainers differ from traditional trainers in that they wait until the behavior is well understood by the animal before using a command or "cue." A cue is the name of a behavior, such as "sit," or a hand movement or other clear signal. Until the animal knows what the behavior is, any name for it would be meaningless.

When the animal has been clicked several times for a behavior, and then confidently repeats the behavior, showing that it knows exactly what earns it a click and a reward, it is ready to learn the name of the behavior. Clicker trainers call this "introducing the cue."

To teach the animal the name of the behavior, or the cue, the trainer says or signals the cue before the animal repeats the behavior. After several repetitions, the trainer begins to click and reward when the animal does the behavior, but only after the cue is given. No click is given if the animal does the behavior without being given the cue first. The animal quickly learns to listen or watch for its cue, which tells it: If you do this behavior now, you will get a click and earn a reward.