

What if the animal does not obey the cue?

By Karen Pryor

Clicker trained animals want to perform behaviors for which they have been rewarded in the past. If they understand the meaning of the cue and desire the reward, they will perform the behavior.

If they do not perform the behavior, clicker trainers do not assume that the animal is "disobeying." Instead the trainer asks the following questions:

1. Does the animal know the meaning of the cue?
2. Does the animal know the meaning of the cue in the environment in which it was first taught, but not in the environment in which it was given?
3. Is the reward for doing the behavior sufficiently desired by the animal?

After answering those questions, the clicker trainer revises the training process to be sure that the animal knows the meaning of the cue in all environments, regardless of distractions, and feels rewarded for the behavior.