

# Marker ABCs

**A marker is a training tool that communicates to your puppy they just did something that you really like.**

- The marker can be a unique sound like a clicker or a special word that is delivered just as you see your puppy they just did something that you really like. A clicker is a small device that makes a “click” sound when pressed. If you like the idea of the clicker but you find that you are “all thumbs” using it, you can use a special word instead of the click. A good choice is the word “YES!” As soon as your dog does something you like you can say “YES!” and then give him a treat.

**Why bother using a marker sound when your dog does something right?**

- The marker instantaneously and precisely conveys the information to your puppy that they just did something you really like, just like taking a photograph captures a moment in time.
- Sometimes the behavior we want to reward happens so quickly that it is hard to reward the dog fast enough. A good example of this is loose-leash walking. We want to let the puppy know EXACTLY when he is walking in the right spot – alongside us with a loose leash. Marking at the very moment he is doing the right thing, and then giving him his reward, helps him **learn the correct behavior more quickly.**
- Sometimes the puppy is a distance away from you when he does the right thing - for example: sitting to be petted instead of jumping up on a stranger at the far side of the dog park, or crossing the living room to pick up a dog toy rather than chewing on the shoe right next to him. Your puppy needs to know when his good behavior has earned him a reward – and you can do that by quickly marking while your pup is at a distance, and then giving your puppy the well-earned reward right afterward.

**The marker is followed up with a reward.**

- When using a clicker or a word for your marker, only click or say your word **ONCE** for the behavior. Try not to repeat the click or the word. You want to mark once and then reward.
- By giving your dog a reward (food, treat, game) after each mark, he will learn to LOVE the sound of the marker. The marker sound will come to mean “REWARD TIME!”

## **Summary of Key Points for Marker Training:**

- ✓ Mark only when your dog has done something you like, otherwise you are reinforcing behavior you don't want
- ✓ Whenever you mark you **must** reward the dog as soon as possible afterward, with a treat or something to dog likes
- ✓ Instead of a clicker you can use the verbal marker “YES!”
- ✓ Only click once or say your word once.
- ✓ **Don't mark the dog to get his attention, mark him when he is already paying attention to you.**