

## GET THE BEHAVIOUR...

In order to train, you must first have something to reinforce. Therefore, the first rule of training is “Get the behaviour.” You won’t start with a precise, refined, complex behaviour. Instead, you’ll start with a rough behaviour - perhaps even a just small portion of the behaviour - and then gradually shape what you want.

There are four ways to get the behaviour:

\* **Modelling** is a technique used in traditional training. The dog is physically guided - or otherwise compelled - into doing the behaviour. Pushing a dog’s rear into a sit is modelling. Clicker trainers don’t use modelling because we want our dogs to be active participants in the training process, using their own brains to figure out what will earn them clicks.

\* **Luring** is a hands-off method of guiding the dog through a behaviour. For example, a food lure can be used to guide a dog from a sit into a down. This is a common method of getting more complex behaviours. Lures are usually food, but may be target sticks or anything the dog will follow. Trainers must take care to fade the lure early.

\* **Capturing** is an excellent method for training simple, naturally-occurring behaviours. The trainer waits for the dog to offer the behaviour, then marks and rewards it. A trainer wanting to train the dog to lie down would wait for the dog to lie down to rest, then click and treat.

\* **Shaping** is a technique of training a complex behaviour by training, and gradually building upon, the behaviour’s individual responses. For example, to shape a spin, the trainer would start with a glance to the right, then a head turn, then the movement of one paw, and so on, until the dog is turning all the way around. Shaping is what enables clicker trainers to train precise behaviours.

Some people believe that the only “legitimate” way to clicker train is by using capturing and shaping exclusively. Hogwash. Remember rule number one: “Get the behaviour.” If every behaviour were shaped from scratch, training would take forever. When training complex behaviours that show little relation to a commonly offered behaviour, it is often more efficient to lure the initial behaviour and use shaping to refine it.

Does that mean it’s always a waste of time to shape behaviour from scratch? Of course not. Free shaping is a great way to hone your timing and criteria-setting skills, and it’s an excellent way to teach your dog to use the clicker as a source of information. Shaping teaches your dog to think in a way that luring does not and truly makes him an active, equal partner in the training process.

Source:  
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