

Clicker Training Experience

by: Lianna B. Jones

I got my first dog when I was thirteen years old. It was our Christmas gift from our parents, and they let us pick out which kind to get. We (my brothers and I) picked the Labradoodle. A Labradoodle is a mix between a Labrador Retriever and a Standard Poodle. Labradoodles are very smart animals and were originally bred for service dogs.

Our Labradoodle, Caspian, learned to sit on command in five minutes, the same day we got him. After the first week, we easily taught him to learn his name, sit, touch, jump, fetch, and park (go to the bathroom when we tell him to).

The reason we trained Caspian with so much ease is because of the kind of training we use - Clicker Training. This kind of training is the elite training program. This is a very common training scenario - your dog does something you want him to do. You give him a treat. But by the time the treat gets in his mouth, he was doing something else, like jumping on someone. So your dog thinks he got the treat for jumping up on people. With Clicker Training, this is not a problem. As soon as we got our puppy, we taught him that when we 'clicked' with our clicker, then he got a treat. So as soon as he sat down, we clicked, and he knew that what he did was good. Then he associated the word and the hand motion with the deed. Pretty soon, when we said, "Sit," Caspian would do it right then.

Clicker Training was first started by Karen Pryor. Pryor is a pioneer of animal training. She owns dolphins, and since you can't punish dolphins, she used a whistle to mark the behavior she wanted. She then thought of clickers, and developed the Clicker Method. She wondered if this would work with other animals. It did. Clicker Training is effective with dogs, cats, dolphins, hamsters, rabbits, even leopards! Here is a link to Karen Pryor's Clicker Training website - www.clickertraining.com. You should be able to get clickers at your local pet supply store or online. There are several books available, too! For a dog trainer, I recommend "Getting Started: Clicker Training for Dogs" by Karen Pryor. There are also DVDs - "Clicker Puppy" and "Clicker Magic".

I have always thought that you shouldn't get a dog unless you are willing to train him. If a dog is not trained, then he can be a nuisance, not a fun doggy experience. Don't get me wrong - puppies have problems - messes in the floor, tearing up things, and worse. But it is much easier with a clicker and treats in your hand. Clicker Training for Dogs is the key to a great Doggy Experience.