

Markers

Choose Your Markers

Reward Marker (Verbal)

(examples: "yes" "nice")

Calm Reward Marker

(examples: "niiice" "goood")

No Reward Marker

(examples: "ah-ah" "hey" "oops")

General Release Word

(examples: "break" "free" "all done")

Why Use Markers?

Identifying specific behaviors you are teaching your puppy, either verbally or with a clicker, creates clarity. A marker is when you say a specific word like "yup" or "yes" (or click) to indicate to your puppy that he did a good thing. When your marker is paired with a treat, it becomes a powerful word that reinforces whatever behavior your puppy just performed, and makes it clear to your puppy that what he did deserved a reward. It a bridge, meaning you can still identify the desired behavior even if there is a delay in giving the reward.

A marker is vital when capturing behavior. Capturing is when your dog does the behavior on his own. You can "capture" that moment in time and Mark it, and then reward your dog. It is a powerful teaching technique and used in your concept games and for teaching behavior on default.

Reward Marker (RM): A reward marker is a word (or click of the clicker), which is followed by a reward for your dog. It marks the desired behavior, whether cued by you or offered by your dog. Make sure that your marker is only used for marking the behavior and doesn't become part of your verbal praise. That is why "good" would not be a Reward Marker (RM) if you tell your puppy he is good for other reasons, like when you are giving him affection or praise. Keep the RM very clear and separate from other words you use with your puppy. Reward Markers can build drive and momentum in your training. Soon your puppy will learn to "work for the marker," which will help you to shape behavior and wean your puppy off of food rewards and on to real-life rewards.

Calming Reward Marker (CRM): This is for when you want to mark a behavior, but still keep things calm. It is not to build drive but to acknowledge desired behavior and promote a continuation of calmness. There are specific exercises that will utilize the calm reward marker.

No Reward Marker (NRW): This is a verbal correction to use when your puppy chooses not to follow the cue and do something else instead. All rewards disappear when you say this: treats, toys, and your attention. I recommend a sound, such as "uh-oh" or "ah-ah," or a word like, "Hey" or "Oops." Don't use "No" for this marker, especially if you have a house with children. We use "no" so much in

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our everyday conversations, including punishment, so save it for that. The No Reward Marker is not punishment, but a word telling your dog to stop what he's doing and "try again."

Release Word: Cues such as Wait and Stay require a release. Other cues and games, such as Come and Heel, require your dog to remain with you until you say it is fine to go. Boundary training teaches your dog to remain on the boundary until you say your dog can get off. And Premack is a theoretical concept for giving your dog permission to have something, requiring a release. For these cues, it is essential to have a word to release your dog and let her know she has permission or is done and free to go. "Free" or "break" or "all done" or "that'll do" are all excellent choices, but you can choose what fits for you and your puppy.

When working with your dog, your dog needs to know if it is time to pay attention to you and when it is time that she can go off and do her own thing. It is especially important when you are out in public with your dog. It is much easier to work with your dog when you have her attention than when she is distracted by other things and not focusing on you. So, this is why having a release word is so important. It lets your dog know when it is time to work and pay attention to you, and when it is time for free play.

I warn against using "okay" again because we use that so much in casual conversation. The last thing you want is to have your dog on a stay while having a conversation with another person and saying okay in the discussion and having your dog take off on you because you inadvertently released her.

Practice to Get Your Timing Down

To get used to using your Markers, practice them on simple cues, such as Sit and Following a Lure. Timing is important!!!! In the beginning, you want to say your RM the moment your puppy does the correct behavior and immediately follow it with a treat, so the behavior-RM-treat all get associated together. For Sit, the RM happens when your puppy's rear touches the floor. Front paws should be on the floor, too! For Following a Lure, it is when your puppy's nose is very close to your moving fist without mouthing it.

Clicker Training

If you would like to train with a clicker, please do. A clicker is a very useful tool in training. The clicker is a Reward Marker and will take the place of the verbal word. You will need to "load the clicker" initially to help your puppy identify the click as the Reward Marker.

More on Releases Called Premack Cues

What is a Premack Cue? It is a form of release word and training strategy based on the Premack Principle. What is the Premack Principle, and how does it relate to dog training? Not many dog owners may be aware of Professor David Premack's existence, but many dog trainers are because his principle comes in handy when training dogs. David Premack's research and theory of reinforcement are valuable in understanding how dogs learn and how to train even the most stubborn dogs effectively.

David Premack was a professor of psychology. After extensive study of humans, Professor Premack concluded that "the more probable behaviors will reinforce less probable behaviors." This principle became known as the "Premack Principle." He discovered that people are willing to perform a less

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desirable behavior to get at the more desirable behavior. In everyday living, parents may unknowingly use the Premack principle many times when they tell their children: "You have to finish your homework first if you want to go to the game" or "You have to eat your broccoli if you want a slice of cake." That is why the Premack Principle is often also called "Grandma's Law."

His curiosity and test of his principle happened when he tried it on Cebus monkeys. And it was just as effective as it was on humans. In fact, he learned that it works on all animals.

Applying this principle in training dogs makes it easier for our dogs to choose to work for us! The less desirable behaviors are, unfortunately, the things we want our dogs to do: sit, stay, come, walk nicely on leash, come inside, etc. That is the "work." The more desirable behaviors, like eating, chewing, chasing, playing, sniffing, going outside, is the "play." So, using the Premack Principle means you have your dog "work" first, and then they are given permission to "play." In fact, by following this order of events, it will increase the desirability of the behaviors we want from our dogs, and they will choose them more often and listen and respond to us better. We will delve more into Premack in moth 2 of training.

So, as you are going through the journey of raising your puppy, consider using Premack cues as part of your training so that not only food, praise, and affection are rewards, but so is fun and desirable behaviors we call real-life rewards.

Sample Real-Life Rewards:

1. eating a meal
2. playing with toys
3. chasing a ball, frisbee or whip (chaser toy)
4. playing tug
5. going outside
6. sniffing during walks
7. playing with doggie friends
8. digging in an appropriate spot
9. swimming
10. playing with you

Sample Premack Cues

1. "get it" - for treats or playing with toys (chasing a toy, fetch, frisbee, etc.)
2. "say hi" - for greeting people or dogs
3. "free" - for leaving a boundary (bed, crate, etc.)
4. "eat" - for eating a meal
5. "ok, go!" for going through thresholds (doors, gates, out of car)
6. "go sniff" - for a break on leashed walks to be a dog and sniff, etc.

You will learn that I am the type of trainer that wants you to cater your training experience to what works for you. I am flexible with what verbal and visual cues you choose for the behaviors you are going to teach your dog. The examples are ideas for "forward thinking" and future training goals.

Videos for teaching releases and Pemack cues will follow in future homework assignments. For now with initial training, use your general release cue.

A Word on Rewards

Remember that rewards are anything that your puppy loves. This is designated by your puppy and things may change over time. Ideas of rewards are:

1. Food Ideas - Life's Abundance kibble, training treats, jerky, antioxidant bars, buffalo lung, cooked chicken or beef, cooked Palin salmon (or canned), peanut butter, goat yogurt.

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2. Squeaky toys
3. Tennis ball, Frisbee (never leave out - they are play with you only)
4. Your attention - petting, praise, playing a game
5. The leash or harness - dog knows he gets to go for a walk
6. Real-life rewards - a meal, going outside, running, chasing, digging, swimming...
7. Anything else your puppy loves.

Some rewards will be higher value than others, so take the time to figure this out so that you can use them to your advantage when training.

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