

## DIAGRAM

# The Dog Clicker

"Dogs always want to please you—that's how they're programmed—but they need to know how," says trainer Kristen Iannucci.

### 'GOOD DOGGIE' A CLICK AWAY

Try the click and treat method to capture a behavior you want in your dog and drill it home. Inexpensive clickers are sold at pet supply stores, but even a pen will do. Timing is important. Keep body language neutral so as not to send mixed signals.



### DOWN ON JUMPING!

Teach opposing behaviors. Have a friend knock on the door and enter your house, and simultaneously drill another behavior into your dog, like sitting, to counter the jumping. Click and treat the goal behavior.



### COME! SIT! STAY! ROLL OVER!

Focus on one behavior per training session. When the dog shows you the one you want, click and treat. Spend 2-3 minutes with a puppy and 5-10 for an older dog.



### CHEW ON THIS!

Catch unwanted chewing behavior in the act and immediately replace a chair, for example, with something appropriate to chew on, such as his dog toy. If the dog goes to its toy instead of the chair next time, click and treat.



### DITCH THE DOG-FIGHT!

Address your dog's anxiety by finding a distance where she is comfortable and not reacting and give her a yummy treat. Slowly decrease the distance from the trigger as you continue to reinforce calm behavior.

### 'BAD DOGGIE' DOESN'T WORK



**Kristen Iannucci '10**, co-owner of Happy Homes Dog Daycare & Training in Woodbridge, Connecticut, knows a positive and stress-free learning environment is just as important for dogs as it is for people. The QU graduate (veterinary technology major) and her partner use positive reinforcement and fear-free training practices, whether they are training a puppy, an unruly teenage dog or a new rescue with bad habits.

Iannucci owns the business with veterinarian and head trainer Tracy Johnson. "Positive reinforcement isn't about correction; it's about rewarding good behavior," says Iannucci. Johnson does behavior consultations and in-home training while Iannucci runs the daycare.

One of their biggest challenges is working with dogs previously "trained" with aversive techniques and intimidation tactics, such as the use of shock or prong collars. "These dogs aren't nearly as happy, pleasant or responsive as others," Iannucci notes, adding that often, dogs don't connect the unwanted behavior with the discipline, turning pet training into a cycle of continuous punishment.

"Traditional punishment-based methods don't tell dogs what you want," Iannucci notes.

Happy Homes subscribes to a "click and treat" method that asks for a behavior, pairs it with a cue and connects it with a reward through the use of a clicker. Dogs figure out that wrong behaviors, such as incessant barking, don't get them anything, but obeying cues yield a positive outcome. "Eventually, the dog chooses to make the right decision and will continue to do this when its owners aren't around as well," Iannucci says.

