

CONDITIONING YOUR MARKERS

If there's one thing that you should take away from this guide, it's how important markers are in dog training.

I mean, who doesn't want to literally be able to tell their dog exactly when they've done something right?

Now, what happens with a marker is that your dog becomes conditioned to what happens after the marker has been said.

This could be the delivery of food, a good old tug of war, or maybe even a throw of a ball...

Before we dive into how to condition your marker, I have a funny little story for you, and by the end of it, you'll know why I use more than one marker.

You see, in my early days of dog training I just used one marker for everything.



So after a training session with my first little cocker spaniel, Jess, I sounded my marker one final time, **"YES!"**

I reached into my pocket to give her a well-deserved treat and instead found that my arm was being detached from my shoulder, as she thought she was going to chase the ball.

Jess taught me the importance of clarity. So now, I use a different marker for food and toy rewards to avoid mistakes, confusion and disappointment (as your dog will definitely have a favourite).

SO LET'S DIVE INTO CONDITIONING...

FOOD MARKER

Step 1: Stand completely still with the food in a hidden place (like your pocket).

- It's really important that your dog can't see the food on display as this will slow down the conditioning phase (they'll be hyper-focused on the food and not the sound thus no conditioning will happen).

Step 2: Remaining completely still, say your marker word ("YES") and then proceed to feed your dog.

- The reason it's important to stand still, is because if you move while speaking, your dog will only register one of the two, and with them being the masters of body language, they'll most likely ignore your word and instead focus on the movement.

Step 3: Repeat this process until you see a noticeable response from your dog when you've said your word.

- This could be a head tilt or moving a step closer to you.

TOY MARKER

For your toy marker it's essential that your dog knows how to let go of the toy (if they can't let go, we can't use it within training).

When I'm conditioning a toy marker, I repeat the exact same process as the food marker.

However, I typically let the dog have a 10-15 second play before I **"out"** them and repeat the conditioning process.

For those of you looking for a toy marker word... **"Supaaaa"** is often my go-to and most satisfying to say (*my academy members will get it*).

