



Shaping Your Dog to Ask to Go Out (Without scratching at the door)

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Some owners lament that they have difficulty housetraining the dog because he doesn't ask to go out; he just "goes". Here are two possible approaches to teaching the dog to ask. In the first, the dog rings a bell with his nose, and the second uses a foot target. We do not recommend shaping the dog to ring the hanging bell with a paw, since that may result in scratching the door. To shape your dog to ring a bell:



- 1) Begin by shaping your dog to target the bell with his nose. Start out holding the bell stationary, holding your clicker in your other hand. As with all marker training, mark your dog's behavior with a <click> or "yes," followed by a treat.



- 2) Mark any interest or interaction with the bell, starting with the merest glance. You may hold the bell close to your dog's nose and move it away to raise criteria.



Deliver the treat away from the bell to reset the behavior.

- 3) Continue shaping dog to touch bell strongly with his nose.



4) Once dog is touching bell, let out the string so bell dangles.

5) Continue shaping dog to touch hanging bell.



6) Attach bell to doorknob, or hang it next to the door, and continue shaping bell touch. Shape a strong touch so bell rings.



7) When dog rings the hanging bell, <click> or “yes,” open the door, and toss the treat outside.

8) Every time dog wants to go out (or you want dog to go out) have him ring the bell first, mark the behavior (“yes”) then reward by letting him out. A food reward is optional. For many dogs, going outside is more reinforcing than food.

Cool Option: Lentek “Pet Chime” Wireless Remote Control Doorbell – This clever product consists of a paw-shaped transmitter, and a 2-tone receiver. With a flip of a switch, the receiver either sounds a doorbell chime or dog barking. It can be placed in another room, distant from the transmitter. The transmitter can be operated by the dog’s foot, or can be mounted so dog pushes it with his nose. More than one transmitter can be used, making it possible for the dog to “ring the bell” to ask to come in, as well as go out. Several Internet sites have this product, so check around for pricing and availability. Waaaaay cool!



- 1) As above, shape dog to notice and target the “paw”. It’s not necessary to hold it in your hand, but it’s often easier to start there. Alternatively, you can start with it on the floor.

- 2) Start shaping foot movement, starting with any paw lift, shaping your dog to touch the paw with his foot.



3) Shape stronger, more definite touches.

(As an aside, notice the expression on both the trainer's and the dog's faces. Can there be any doubt that clicker training is fun?!)



- 4) Move the target closer to the floor, continuing to shape strong touches.
- 5) Move away from the target, until dog is going to the target, and ringing the bell.
- 6) Proceed as above for attaching the behavior to "asking to go out" moving the paw to the door.



(We don't click this, but he's so cute!)

"Hey, Ma . . . Did you mean to leave this on the floor?"

(Logan is a 9 year-old Shepherd, Aussie, Malamute mix – near as we can tell).

This handout is provided to you by Gail Fisher's All Dogs Gym® where we believe an educated owner and an educated dog are the best ingredients for a lifetime of mutual enjoyment.