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After some exposure to the clicker, begin taking each puppy away from the litter for a short session on its own. Click and treat. A dab of pureed baby food meat on the tip of your finger makes a great treat, even for the tiniest breed. Then pick something the puppy happens to do, such as lifting a front paw, and click as the paw goes up. It may take ten or more clicks before the puppy begins lifting the paw on purpose; but then you'll be amazed at how enthusiastic the puppy becomes. "Hey, look! I can make that huge person give me food, just by doing *this!*"

Choose any simple behavior at first: it doesn't need to be something useful. A sit, spin, wave, play bow, back up, or lie down are all possibilities. You can teach all the puppies the same behavior or, if you have them identified individually, teach them each something different. Don't try to coax or lure your students into a particular behavior; you want each puppy to discover that its own actions make you click. This teaches the puppy a major life lesson: "I like to find out what people want me to do." That discovery won't happen if the puppy learns to just wait to be shown what to do.

How much time does this take, in your busy life? Two or three clicker lessons, of no more than two to five minutes each, are enough to develop some cute little behavior. No need for a lot of drilling; once a puppy learns what to do for a click, it won't forget.

More importantly, these brief lessons can transform a puppy of five weeks or so from an oblivious blob into an eager, observant learner.

You can capitalize on this awakened state in many ways. For example, when people come up to the litter box, do the puppies rush over and leap on the walls, begging for attention? Probably. So use clicker sense and make a new rule—a rule for puppies and for family and for visitors, too: only puppies that are *sitting* get petted, or lifted out of the pen. It doesn't take long to get the whole litter sitting; and you can click them all at once, for doing that. Now, when supper comes, the puppies will have to sit and be clicked before the dish goes down. Instead of repeatedly and unintentionally reinforcing jumping up, a behavior most dog owners really hate, you are building a bunch of pups with better manners than that, even before they leave for their new homes.



"Come when called" is another skill the whole litter can learn with clicks and treats, and a fun one for children to teach. Two or three children can take turns calling a puppy back and forth between them, clicking and treating when the puppy goes to the child who called. If you're a breeder, you're going to give your buyers a puppy that already has a head start on this important behavior.

How far can you go? Training with absolutely no corrections, just informative clicks and enjoyable treats, you can go a long way, even with a baby. When my last Border terrier puppy, a long-distance purchase bought sight unseen, arrived on the airplane, she was just nine weeks old. I brought her home, set her down, and gave her a little toy. She picked it up, carried it to me, and dropped it at my feet. Surely this is an accident? I thought. I tossed it. She went and got it, brought it back, and dropped it at my feet again. Using clicks and treats, the breeder, as a treat for *me*, had taught this tiny puppy a nice retrieve! Furthermore I never had to teach her anything more about the retrieve; she was a reliable and dedicated retriever of toys, balls, and other small objects, for the rest of her life.