



## Marking Mechanics

In class we will be using a verbal marker “yes” to tell our dogs when they’re doing something right. **“Yes” means you did it right, I owe you a cookie.** A **marker** is a sound or a word that has been paired with something reinforcing. Refer to the diagram below.

Why is this important? Dogs don’t speak English, so we can’t just tell them why we don’t want them to jump on grandma. We can however use a marker to tell our dogs when we like something and want them to keep doing it. We know that **reinforcement drives behavior**, so instead of getting mad at your dog for doing something wrong, redirect the behavior to what you **want them to do and reinforce that!**

**Introduce a marker by following the steps below.**



**Step 1:** With your dog facing you, say the word “yes!”  
Do not have a treat in your hand at this stage.

**Step 2:** Give your dog a tasty treat. Over time, “yes”  
will mean a treat is about to appear.

Use a marker to tell your dog when they're doing the behavior correctly.



**Step 1:** Give your dog a cue. In this example the cue is "sit."

**Step 2:** The second your dog performs the behavior (sit) mark "yes!" Follow up "yes" with a treat.

Timing is key at this stage. **We have 1.2 seconds to mark a behavior.** We need to give immediate feedback! If you mark too early or too late, your pup may start to get confused on what it is that you want!

Implement the **5:1 Magic Relationship Ratio into your daily life and training routine.** For every **one** time that you tell your dog that you don't like something, tell them **five** more times "yes" for doing something that you like. Don't keep it a secret that they're doing a good job, give your dog feedback! Hint: this also works for human relationships!

## More on Markers

This doesn't mean that we can't give negative feedback. As humans, we tend to focus mostly on the negative. We want pet parents to focus on the good, and to catch when their dog is "doing it right." However, it's ok to have boundaries, and there are times when we need to tell our dogs when we don't like something.

We can use a **non-reward** marker to tell our dogs to "try again." A non-reward marker is the opposite of a "yes," and tells the dog that they will not be receiving a treat. **You have 1.2 seconds to mark with a non-reward marker.** Instead of saying "no," try to use a sound like "uh-uh." "No" is one of the most overused words in dog training, and saying it can be a pretty tough habit to break.

**Rules:** Don't be a nag. No one wants to hear "no" or "uh-uh" all of the time. Remember that **reinforcement drives behavior** and that your dog is much more likely to do something if that behavior has been reinforced. **If you tell your dog "no" or "uh-uh," immediately tell them what you want them to do instead.** See the example below.



Step 1: If your dog is jumping on you, tell them "uh-uh" and ask them to sit.



Step 2: The second your dog performs the sit, mark "yes!" Follow up "yes" with a treat or praise.