Orientation Notes

I. Rules of ACA

1. All dogs must be on lead on ACA property at all times, unless otherwise directed by an instructor.
2. All Children under the age of 15 must be directly supervised by an adult at all times. Children may not "entertain" themselves while class is in session or at any time on ACA grounds.
3. Please do not drive more than 5 mph down the driveway.
4. Please clean up after your dog. There are pooper scoopers and trash cans at both ends of the building (outside). You are responsible for completely cleaning up after your own dog.
5. We have a zero tolerance policy for aggression (full contact)—instructor determines action to be taken in cases of aggression.
6. In case of snow/ice OR severe storms, please call **703-779-9955** by 4 p.m. on the day of class regarding class cancellation, etc.
7. Make-up classes can be taken with the permission of your instructor, in cases of canine or human illness. Please see your instructor for details.
8. I have an "open door" policy. You can call (540)955-9987 or (703)303-4797 and/or e-mail me at claudianbates@earthlink.net with any questions about **registration,** clicker theory, class policy, etc.
9. Tickets!
10. We reserve the right to encourage the use of the Gentle Leader for handlers who cannot manage the forward motion of their dogs.
11. **Please exercise your dog and potty him before entering the building. We have installed a very pricey state of the art floor that is super hard to clean. If your dog soils the floor, you will incur a $5 fine. No exceptions!**
12. Please refer to the "Operating Policies" form that you signed regarding building rules, etc.
13. Please be advised that we have further defined our policies regarding acceptable dog behavior at ACA as mentioned in the Operating Policies form (our waiver) signed by all ACA students. We are specifically addressing policy #8. In this regard, the following procedures/rules will go into effect 9/1/04:

Dogs who are off lead must stay with their owners in sequences or on courses. If a dog breaks lose to chase, attack, bark at, and/or play with another dog and travels more than 10 feet away from the handler in the attempt, a written warning will be given to the dog and handler. After the second warning, the dog will either be kept on a held lead for the duration of the session or be removed from classes as determined by the instructor and ACA partners. Dogs who are removed from class will need to pass an off-lead obedience test administered by the instructor.

Dogs who are on stays during handler course walks must remain on stays. Wandering dogs will be crated, tied, or put in cars—no exceptions.

Instructors have the right to decide whether a dog should be excused from class or moved into another class based on class performance and/or problems resulting from lack of off-lead control.

Any dog making aggressive contact (as determined by the class instructor) with another dog or human will be excused from class immediately, without refund.

II. Dog training in general

Dog learn…
1. By association: Dogs make positive and negative associations. Think about how your dog reacts to you walking towards the nail trimmers versus you walking towards the fridge!
2. Visually: Dogs are much more apt to learn hand signals/body language than voice. How many people have a difficult time fading the hand signal from the "down" cue. Answer: many!!!!

III. Clicker Theory: Everyone gets a clicker
   A. Clicker is a marker
   1. Conditioned (clicker, whistle, word) vs. Primary (food, water, sex) Reinforcers
   2. Behavior =consequence with clicker as the definitive marker

B. Why clicker?
>> 1. Unique sound
>> 2. Quicker than verbal
>> 3. Benefit of an incremental marker in shaping/chaining behavior

C. Shaping: Like the game hot and cold
>> 1. Take a small behavior and shape it into something else
>> 2 Example: Retrieve
>> 3. Picture whole behavior and break it down into smaller pieces, marking each piece and building on each increment

D. The training game: start of video

E. Adding cues and getting DASH

V. **The Behaviors:**
A. **Loading the clicker**
B. **Name game**
C. **Sit**
D. **Hand target touching**
E. **Greeting behavior**
F. **Recalls: Building on name game, Playing catch, Restrained**
G. **Collar Grab**

VI. Hints for success
   A. Ask for behavior when you know it will happen
   B. Start in a quiet environment
   C. Add small distractions first
   D. Keep sessions short (3-5 minutes max) many times/day/week

VII. Homework
   A. **Load the clicker.** Practice (without the dog), clicking and then treating. Then add the dog and click/treat 30-40 times. (Can be done with dog's kibble) ***See below if your dog is scared of the clicker sound.***
   B. **Name Game.** Say the dog's name. Click/treat the dog for responding.
   C. **Grab the collar.** Practice touching your dog's collar and working up to a good grab, clicking and treating as you hold the collar. Go carefully with dogs that don't like this and make sure that you do not click in the dog's ear!
   D. **Hand touches.** Hold your hand out. When the dog touches his nose to it (he probably will because you've been holding treats…) click/treat. This behavior is great for "check ins" and positioning.
   E. **Sit.** Using a food lure (only 3 times) move the treat over the dog's head until he sits. Begin using a cue only when the dog is offering the behavior 80-90% (or better) of the time.
   F. **Shape a trick.** Pick a behavior that your dog will offer easily. (Don't pick "speak" for the dog that hasn't barked in 5 years!). Decide what your "end product" trick will be and begin shaping the smallest increment of the behavior. Go on from there until you have your trick. Trick possibilities include: spin, play bow, roll-over, crawl, high five, etc.

VIII. What to do if your dog is afraid of the clicker…
Every session, at least one dog is afraid of the clicker noise. If this occurs, discontinue clicker use immediately and follow these desensitization steps:

   A. Put the clicker away and use a word such as "good," "yes," etc. Say the word, then give the   treat. Watch the dog for signs that he is relaxed. Do 3-4 sessions like this for about 1-1.5 minutes each session. DO NOT USE THE CLICKER AGAIN YET OR PUT DEMANDS ON THE DOG!
   B. Get a Snapple lid (yes, a Snapple lid). Use the word you used previously, just after "clicking"   the Snapple lid. (It's very quiet). If the dog stays calm, drop the word and just use the lid (treating after each click). Do 6-8 sessions like this for about 1-1.5 minutes each session. DO NOT USE THE CLICKER AGAIN YET OR PUT DEMANDS ON THE DOG!
   C. Muffle the clicker. Take electrical or first aid tape and wrap it around the clicker. Then place the clicker in your pocket and click. You need a click that is slightly louder than the Snapple lid but not as loud as usual. Click the clicker, in your pocket and feed. If the dog gets stressed, back up to the Snapple lid.

D. Once your dog acclimates, you can gradually take the clicker from your pocket and unwrap it.   The key is to keep your dog calm. The clicker needs to be a conditioned reinforcer, not a conditioned terrorizer!!!!

Introduction to Clicker Training

🐕 A **Clicker/whistle** is a tool used for communication with another species (in our classes, a dog). It emits a unique sound at a faster rate than the spoken word.

🐕 When your dog is conditioned to the clicker, he/she will understand that it means two things (1) whatever he/she is doing *at the time the click is heard* is a desirable (and therefore rewardable) behavior, and (2) a reward is coming.

🐕 The reward is the primary reinforcer. The reward can be anything *the dog finds desirable*. We use a combination of food and toys in agility training--**food for stationary exercises and toys for moving exercises**. The clicker is the secondary (or conditioned) reinforcer.

🐕 Until your dog becomes "clicker-wise", begin each training session (maybe the second through fourth session) by "loading" the clicker. Click 5-10 times and follow each click with a desirable treat. The food should never be in sight or in the handler's hand since we do not want the dog to be focused on the food. This applies to toys as well.

🐕 **Click only once. If your dog does something exceptionally well, or has a significant breakthrough during in a training session, use multiple *rewards* (called a "jackpot"), _not_ multiple clicks**.

🐕 If you click, then you **mus**t reward the dog. If you do not reward after each click, then the power of the clicker is diluted. *Remember to click first and reward after. Make sure you are not "tipping your hand" by putting your hand in your pocket, treat pouch, etc. as you are clicking. This could significantly muddy the waters for the dog!*

🐕 The "click" ends the behavior. What your dog does after the click and while waiting for the reward does not matter.

🐕 Do not add extra body language before or as you click. Your dog should be **listening** for the click, not watching for a signal from you. This is especially important in agility where the dog needs to focus ahead on the obstacles.

Shaping Behaviors

🐕 The process used to teach an animal new behaviors using a clicker is called "shaping".

🐕 In clicker training, the dog must take responsibility for learning. *We do not physically manipulate the dog to teach the desired behaviors.* Instead, we wait for the dog to offer increments of the behavior, and use the clicker to communicate to the dog that such behavior is the desired response.

🐕 If the dog is not offering the behavior, or is confused, we may help them out in the beginning by "luring" using a piece of food. This assistance, however, is used typically no more than three times, since we do not want the dog to become dependent on the food lure.

🐕 As the dog progresses, we raise our standards so more is expected from the dog in order for him/her to get a "click". As further progress is seen, we switch from a schedule of continuous reinforcement (clicking every time the correct behavior is offered) to a schedule of variable reinforcement (clicking *randomly*, after 1, 2, 3, or more offerings of the correct behavior).

🐕 A schedule of variable reinforcement is where we want to eventually head. When an animal does not know when he/she is going to earn the "click', he/she will actually put forth more effort. The ultimate schedule of variable reinforcement in agility is the dog's ability to complete a 20 (or more) obstacle course at a constant speed and level of enthusiasm—they know they will be reinforced, but they don't know when so they continue to work for it. **This is something that is built up over time from single obstacle (or behavior) work to sequence work to full course run-throughs (or multiple cued behaviors).**

The Four Parts of Operant Conditioning

Note: In operant conditioning "positive" means "adding" and "negative" meaning "subtracting" or "removing".

- 🐕 Positive Reinforcement: *Adding* something the dog values (food, toys/play, petting, praise) to increase the probability of the behavior happening. **We use positive reinforcement as our primary method of training**.

- 🐕 Negative Reinforcement: *Removing* something from the dog to increase the probability of the behavior happening.

- 🐕 Positive Punishment: *Adding* something the dog dislikes (collar jerk) to inhibit behavior.

- 🐕 Negative Punishment: *Removing* something the dog wants (such as your attention, or the opportunity to earn rewards) to decrease the behavior from happening. We suggest this method of "punishment" to refocus an inattentive dog both during and away from agility class. Put them in a crate or tie them safely on a short leash and ignore them for a period of time. To make the "punishment" even more "severe", play with and /or feed another dog in full sight of the offender.

Terms

- 🐕 Premack Principle: The opportunity to engage in a desired activity reinforces the behavior required to earn the opportunity. Example: A dog who loves car rides must sit before the car door is opened and he earns the car ride.

- 🐕 Reinforcer: Anything the dog finds rewarding.

- 🐕 Cue: The name or signal understood by the dog to initiate the behavior

Recommended Reading and Viewing:

Don't Shoot the Dog by Karen Pryor

******Ruff Love***, **Crate Games**, **and/or** Shaping Success by Susan Garrett (available at www.cleanrun.com)

Clean Run Magazine. A *must* have for any agility enthusiast. (available at www.cleanrun.com)

Mary Ellen Barry's Foundation Series in Clean Run Magazine and her DVDs also (available at www.cleanrun.com)

Linda Mecklenburg's Developing Jumping Skills.

Formula: Teaching a Behavior

     I.   Define the behavior: In order to train the correct behavior, you must first have a clear definition of what the behavior is. For example, a down. What is a down? We can define it as: dog goes into a reclining position in which his elbows and bottom are on the ground.

Question about the definition: How do you want the dog's hip position? (over on one hip or back feet under the dog?) This may seem like a trifling question but the more specific your criteria—definition, the better your dog will learn the behavior. So, when defining a behavior, be sure to consider all possible variables. **Be able to visualize the behavior down to the most minute detail.**

     II.   Break the behavior down into pieces as necessary: If you have a dog who is resistant to downing, you may have to break the behavior down into a few parts. Often dogs do not want to put both elbows down so marking one elbow down with a click and a treat and then "upping the ante" to both elbows may help to get the whole behavior.

     III.   Decide the method that you are going to use to train the behavior: free-shape or luring. If using a lure, remember to fade the lure quickly, after three times if possible.

     IV.   Decide what reward you will be using and how long the session will be—no more than 3 minutes for many animals! Count out rewards to be used in that time frame.

     V.   Train the dog.

     VI.   Record your progress to keep track of hits and/or misses. Also note whether or not you had treats or time left over. Evaluate your session: was it active, with the dog trying to "get it"? Did you or the dog get bored and wander off? Did your dog like the reward? Did he seem reluctant to end the session?

     VII.   Decide on your goal for your next session and develop or revise your plan of action.

A couple of hints:

1. Make sure that your dog is physically capable of doing the behavior. A dog with bad hips, for instance, might not be able to walk on his hind legs.

2. Keep your session short. Always keep your dog wanting more, not waiting to stop.

3. Use rewards that your dog likes or loves, not what you want him to like.

4. Split behaviors into their smallest parts for optimum success.

5. If your method is not working, don't blame the dog! Re-evaluate what you are doing and try to break the behavior down so that the dog can be successful.

6. Up the criteria when your dog is 85% successful at the current level.

7. If your dog is confused, frustrated, or has made repeated attempts that are "wrong", have the dog do something he can do without thinking (sit, attention, etc) and reward him. If the dog keeps trying the wrong thing and does not get rewarded, he may stop trying.

Training Tips for Success In and Out of Class

Class "down time" is a term I use to describe non-active times in class, before class, and after class. I include time spent with your dog to and from the car and walking before class. ***Remember, anytime you are with your dog you are training, either intentionally or incidentally.***

Pro-active "Dos"

- **Work Attention!** Attention work starts with **your attention on your dog!** During class, especially during down time, make sure you know what your dog is looking towards at all times! Re-direct his attention towards you and away from other dogs. Anytime you are with your dog in public, you should work the following attention exercises:

  Attention exercises: Name game, 1-2-3 Game, *Tricks, Heeling, RECALLS, Hand Targeting, Tugging, etc

- **Exercise the "Two Second Rule"** If your dog is focused on another dog or activity, other than the job at hand, get his attention immediately! Dogs who get focused on other dogs or activities are looking for something else to do besides working with you!

- **Practice recalls often!** The number one reason most dogs can't come off lead is due to non-existent recalls. If you have a good recall, being off-lead is no big deal. Practice without distractions and gradually work up to calling your dog away from food, other dogs, toys, sheep, etc.

- **Keep a three-foot perimeter around you and your dog!** Pay attention to people approaching your dog. Maintain a distance sufficient to keep your dog's attention.

- **Come to class armed!** Make sure that you have sufficient treats, toys, rewards, etc that interest your dog. Dogs will not work if there is no paycheck! Always have a baggie of "special reserve" for your dog. These are rewards that will always perk up your dog. (For my dogs it's liverwurst, peanut butter, or sardines-yuck!)

- **Take your show on the road!** Don't expect your dog to work well in class if your dog is only worked at home with minimal distractions. Take your dog to new locations and introduce him to new distractions often. **Use attention work** and take advantage of new locations and distractions.

Things to Avoid (in class and in general):

- **Don't let your dog pull you anywhere!** If your dog can pull you, by the strength of his muscle, then who is in charge? Who is training and who is BEING trained? If you cannot keep your dog's attention with the attention exercises, then a Gentle Leader is needed.

- **Don't become reliant on training aids!** A Gentle leader, choke collar, pinch collar, etc is just a training aid to use temporarily. Our goal is to eventually have a well-behaved dog **OFF lead**. Once your dog is attentive, try him without the GL (lots of Clicks and treats for attention and no-pulling). If he starts pulling or becomes inattentive again, use the collar.

- **Don't let your dog become "riveted" by another dog!** Many breeds like to "eye" other dogs, making the object of their stare quite uncomfortable. Break off the eye contact and take your dog away from the distraction, refocusing him on you.

- **If you do not have a 90% recall under distractions, don't take your dog off lead in class!** This is a no-brainer! We want to set our dogs up for success, not failure. Taking a dog (who wants to bolt away) off-lead is just asking for trouble.

Use common sense. Class is supposed to be a good learning experience for all dogs and handlers. We need to make sure that we are always putting the safety, well-being, and educational needs of our dogs and fellow students first.