

# Dog Scouts of America

## The Fine Art of Shaping Training Instructions

After you have made the association (bridge) between the unconditioned reinforcer (treat) and the reward marker (clicker) you can "shape" any behavior by rewarding each successive approximation of the behavior. In plain English, this means that you can teach the dog to wave, paint, play musical instruments, press elevator buttons and turn on light switches, by first rewarding the more simple, or "partial" behavior of lifting a paw slightly off the floor. Because chances are, you're not going to just happen to "catch" him painting, playing musical instruments and pressing elevator buttons on his own (the complete behavior) so that you can reward it (respondent learning).

For this badge, you should teach your dog a new behavior—one that is different from the paw swiping he learned for the Art of Shaping. Some suggestions are:

- Playing the piano with the nose.
- Squeaking the horn with the mouth.
- Shaking the maracas with the mouth.
- Shaking the tambourine with the mouth.
- Some other type of paw use, that does not resemble "painting".

This is like target stick training. The dog touches the instrument with his nose, and that is what will be shaped into an entire song. To get him to touch the instrument in the first place, make it appealing to him. Point to it, use a target stick to touch where you want him to touch, or place a small, dry food treat on the place you want him to touch. Click and treat when the nose comes in contact (whether you get a note or not).

Now that you have the "nose-poking" behavior, wait to click, little by little, until you get two notes, then three, then more. Watch for that "extinction burst." Just before the dog "gives up," he'll play like mad. Be sure you're paying attention, and you'll get a virtuoso performance from him. Capture the behavior with a click and a jackpot.

If you want to get the dog play a musical instrument, you will need multiple behaviors on one cue, so don't name the behavior yet. Wait until you get a few bars of "music" to name it "play piano" or whatever you'd like. Then, get the dog to perform while in front of crowd. Reward (click and treat) repeated, sustained behavior. **Make sure you have the behavior you want before you name it.**