



TEACHING THE DOG TO PLAY AN INSTRUMENT:

Any behavior can be shaped once the dog understands the relationship between the clicker and treat 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 simpler, or "partial" behavior of lifting a paw slightly off the floor.

For this badge, the dog must be taught a new behavior—one that is different from the paw swiping he learned for the Art of Shaping. The behavior may be to use his nose to play the piano, shake his head while holding maracas or a tambourine in his mouth, or hold a striker in his mouth and run it across a xylophone.

Teaching this skill is very much 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 with the instrument, whether you get a note or not.

Now that the dog has 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 of treats.

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.

Once the dog is able to play multiple notes on one cue, he is ready to join others in an "All Dog Band". While the band's performance is unlikely to be a chart topper, it will still be extremely enjoyable!