



## The “Something New!” Game

Dogs need to exercise their minds as well as their bodies. This game helps your dog use his brain by becoming engaged in the training process, thinking up behaviors to offer—as opposed to being instructed what to do. It’s also good for the human, allowing him to practice observing the dog, and honing timing skills related to marker training<sup>1</sup> and offering reward.

***Most of all, it’s pretty darn fun!***

**The game is also very handy if you have a dog who, for some reason, cannot exercise, if it’s too cold or wet outside, or you need to burn off your dog’s energy in a small space!**

### What You Need

- Your dog
- Variety of small, tasty treats
- A marker word, sound, or a clicker (*your dog should already be marker trained*)
- Leash (*optional, just to keep your dog near you while you’re playing the game*)
- Props (*optional, if you want to introduce something for your dog to interact with, such as a cardboard box*)

### How to Play the “Something New” Game

The objective of the game is to get your dog to offer behaviors or actions that he or she makes up in response to you saying “something new”. But, the dog can’t do the same two things in a row. Here’s how it works.

1. Stand or sit in front of your dog.
2. Say “something new” and stay completely still and silent.
3. WAIT for your dog to do ANYTHING (he may look at you wondering what’s going on, or look to the side, or sit down, or wag his tail).
4. The second your dog does anything, MARK IT (with your marker word, sound, or clicker) and three seconds later, toss him a treat.
5. Say “something new” again.
6. WAIT for your dog to do something else. He will likely offer you the same behavior he just did. If he does a repeat, say “oops” and wait until he does something different (even slightly different).
7. The second he does something new, MARK IT and three seconds later, toss him a treat.
8. REPEAT—always saying “something new”, marking a new behavior, and rewarding the dog with a tossed treat.

Once your dog catches on that he’s getting YOU to MARK HIM for behaviors he’s making up, you might be amazed at what your dog comes up with!

### Game Rules and Hints

- Dog cannot offer the two same behaviors in a row (some dogs will get in a bit of a rut and keep going back to the same behaviors every two-three times—you can say “oops” and then only mark new behaviors).

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<sup>1</sup> *Marker Training*: The trainer uses a sound, word, or clicker to ‘mark’ or immediately indicate the moment a dog is correct with a behavior. For example, the moment the dog’s bottom hits the floor in a sit, a trainer would use his desired marker to tell the dog that was the right behavior. A marker is followed by reinforcement with food and/or verbal praise. The marker creates a brief separation between food or touch and the performance of the behavior, so food is a reward, not an enticement. Behaviors can be either shaped, captured or lured using a marker. (Source: “Understanding Training Methods”: <http://www.apdt.com/petowners/choose/methods.aspx>, accessed 1/3/2014)



# GOLD STAR Dog Training

- Your dog may need a little help in the beginning—you may need to mark things he does that are unintentional (like a tail wag or looking at something else) and you may need to mark behaviors that are only a little different from the one he just offered (like sitting, and then sitting with a tail wag).
- Don't reward your dog for any "rude" behavior like jumping up, or barking at you; basically, don't mark and reward any behaviors you don't want to encourage!
- Watch your dog's body language to understand how he is reacting to the game. If he seems frustrated or confused, lower the bar on what you mark and reward at first; in other words, don't expect grand sophisticated behaviors...a tail wag may be a great place to start. You can always pause the game, ask your dog to do something he knows, reward for that, and try again.
- The better your marker timing is, the better your dog will learn the game!

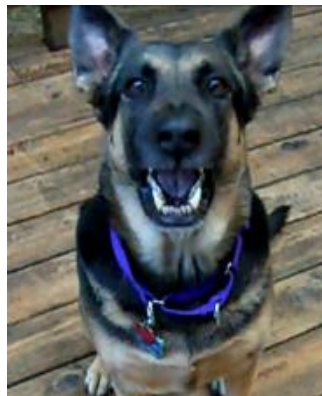
## Cora Plays the "Something New" Game



Ready to start. I say, "Something new!"



Cora goes down. I say, "Yes!" (my marker word) and she gets a treat.



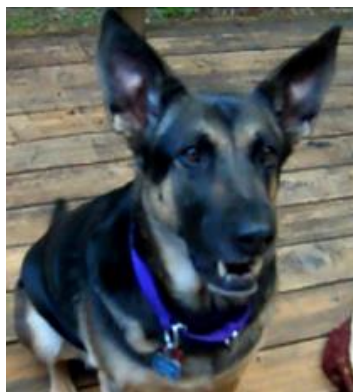
I say, "Something new!" Cora makes a talking sound. I mark and reward like before.



I say, "Something new!" Cora turns her head to the side. I mark and reward.



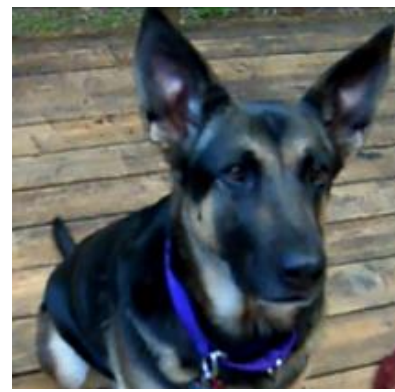
"Something new!" Cora turns her head to the other side. I mark and reward.



"Something new!" Cora makes a new sound. I mark and reward.



"Something new!" Cora takes a step toward me. I mark and reward.



I say "all done" and the game is over. Time for lunch!

Check out German Shepherd Mya playing the Something New Game! YouTube:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3z1lbkJ8h1k>