

## The Training Game

**Play the training game to experience being a trainer and a trainee like an orangutan!**

**Before you play, why do you think it is important to train an orangutan?**

Many organizations that have orangutans and other species in human care utilize training for many reasons.

Training often helps to:

- 1) Create a bond between the orangutans and the people that work closely with them, like keepers and veterinary staff. This allows for a comfortable relationship based on trust.
- 2) Encourage orangutans to use their minds and bodies, helping them to stay mentally and physically healthy. Many of the behaviors that are trained encourage the orangutans to do natural behaviors, like swinging on items through their habitat.
- 3) Allow the orangutans to take an active role in their own health care. It is a much more positive situation to simply ask an orangutan to take part in a health check. For example, an orangutan can be trained to open their mouth to check on their teeth, or to show their hip for an injection.

**Some words you should know to be a trainer in the game:**

- 1) *Behavior*: In general, animals in zoos or conservation organizations train their animals to do behaviors, not tricks. Tricks are only for entertainment. Behaviors are for the animals to achieve the goals listed above.
- 2) *Approximations*: Small steps that work towards a behavior. For example, turning halfway around is an approximation to turning fully around.
- 3) *Bridge*: An immediate signal that lets the animal know they did the right behavior and will receive a reward for it. For example, using a clicker, clap your hands, say the word "good", blow a whistle.
- 4) *Reward*: A favorite treat! This could be a food treat, or even a favorite toy.
- 5) *Jackpot*: A large amount of the reward at one time, often used at the end of a training session or after obtaining a full behavior.

**How to play the game:**

**-Set up:**

- Pair up with a friend. One of you will be the trainer, and one of you will be the trainee, or in this case, the orangutan!
- The trainer needs to decide on a bridge and get the object (clicker, whistle) if needed. The trainer also needs to get a bowl of rewards, like candy.
- The trainer can now set up about 20 small objects on a table, spread out to cover the whole table. These can be small toys, figurines, office supplies, etc.
- Once the table is set up, the "orangutan" can either sit or stand at the table, in one spot. The trainer needs to sit or stand at the opposite side of the table.

**-Train the "orangutan" to understand that bridges mean "good", and that a reward is coming:**

- Use your bridge (click, whistle, clap, say "good", etc), then immediately give the "orangutan" a reward (treat).

- Repeat this 5 to 10 more times. Make sure not to say or do anything other than this, so that it is not confusing to the “orangutan”.

**-Play the game!**

- The trainer needs to decide (without telling the other player) what they want the behavior to be. For example, if you have a paper clip and a cup on the table, the behavior may be to put the paper clip in the cup. Other behaviors may be to put a figurine on top of a tape dispenser, or to bounce a ball, or put on sunglasses. Be creative!
- Once the behavior is decided, the game can begin. The “orangutan” can start moving one of their hands slowly over the table in any direction they choose.
- The trainer does not react unless the “orangutan” moves in the direction of the first object they want them to touch. If the object is on the far back of the table, and the ‘orangutan” is moving their hand slowly back that direction, then the trainer should bridge and then reward. The “orangutan” now knows that they should move their hand that way. Bridging and rewarding when they move towards the behavior is a way of using approximations, and gives encouragement and positive feedback that they are getting closer to the behavior.
- The “orangutan” can start the behavior again, moving the same way that they learned was right. If they get to the same spot that they were rewarded in last time, the trainer will NOT repeat the bridge and reward, since the goal is for the “orangutan” to keep developing the behavior further. Once the “orangutan” gets even closer to the object, or is holding their hand over the object, the trainer will bridge and reward again. The “orangutan” now knows to either keep going that direction or to try interacting with an object if their hand is over one.
- If the “orangutan’s” hand is over the object that is involved in the behavior, and they touch the object, then the trainer can bridge and reward. Continue this process as the “orangutan” gets closer to the behavior, like picking up the object and moving it or using it in the decided behavior.
- Once the full behavior has been accomplished, the trainer will bridge and give the “orangutan” a jackpot, which is a large amount of the reward (ex: 5 pieces of candy instead of 1). This will show the “orangutan” that they did a great job and that this is the behavior that the trainer is seeking.
- Try playing again with the roles reversed.

**Congratulations, you are on your way to becoming a trainer!**