

## The Capturing Method

“Capturing” is waiting for the cat to perform a behavior without a cue. When capturing behavior, you are not directing the cat in any way. You are simply observing the cat and choosing to click and reinforce when they complete a behavior that you want to see happen again. Capturing is a method that works well when you are reinforcing behaviors that a cat does naturally.

### CAPTURING BEHAVIOR

#### STEP 1: Observe the cat

In whichever environment you find the cat, observe the cat to see what she does. Your cat may be in a kennel, in a cat condo, or even in a room specifically for training time. Any behavior that you would like to see again is eligible for capturing!

If the cat is fearful or appears to avoid interaction, you can still capture behavior! You can click and reinforce behaviors such as

- Turning head or body toward front of kennel
- Brief eye contact
- Slow eye blinks
- Touching a toy
- Moving location in the kennel

If the cat is very active or vocal, you can still capture behavior! You can click and reinforce behaviors such as

- Sitting or lying down
- Meows (you can even choose to only reinforce the softer sounding meows!)
- Playing with a toy
- Brief eye contact
- High five through the kennel door

#### STEP 2: Click then Reinforce

After you have observed the cat and you know the types of behavior that your cat is likely to engage in, make a list (even if just in your head) about behaviors you would like to see more of in the future. As soon as your cat completes a behavior on your list, click then reinforce! Then work on only that behavior for the rest of your training session.

#### STEPS 3a and 3b: Putting behavior on cue

After the cat is performing the behavior consistently, start associating the cue with the behavior. The cue is the visual or verbal signal that identifies specific behaviors for the cat. The cat will not make the association between a cue and the behavior until we teach her.

##### *STEP 3a: Cue as cat is completing behavior*

As soon as you can predict with certainty the cat will complete the behavior you have been clicking/reinforcing, give the cue as the cat is completing the behavior. For example, if you are capturing “sit”, you will say “sit” as the cat begins to bend her knees to sit. As soon as she completes the sit, click and reinforce. You will want to do this at least 10 times before using the cue before the cat completes behavior.

##### *STEP 3b: Cue before cat begins behavior*

Say the verbal cue “sit” before the cat has started to bend her knees to sit. If you have created a reliable association between your cue and the behavior, your cat will sit when you use the cue.

**Once you have the behavior truly on cue, the behavior is considered “mastered.” You are then ready to start working on a new behavior utilizing the Capturing method.**

# Using the Capturing Method for Some Common Behaviors

## Eye Contact

“Eye Contact” is a behavior that is defined by the cat looking at the trainer and making direct eye contact. In contrast to a stare, both human and cat should be looking at one another with soft eyes. You may even observe slow blinking from the cat, which is a positive sign.

- While watching your cat, wait for him to make eye contact with you.
- As soon as he does so, click then reinforce.
- A common verbal cue is saying “look” or “watch me.” A common visual cue for this behavior is touching your nose or pointing toward your eyes.

## Nose (or Head) Bump

“Nose (or Head) Bump” is a behavior that is defined by the cat using his nose or forehead to touch an object. While watching your cat, place an object in front of or near the cat. Do not direct your cat’s attention to the object.

- Watch your cat and wait for him to touch the object with his nose or head.
- As soon as he touches the object with his nose or head, click, then reinforce.
- A common verbal cue for this behavior is “Touch.” A common visual cue for this behavior is pointing to the object you would like the cat to touch.
- Note: The “object” can be your hand but *only* if you do not present your hand to the cat in any way as a “target” for him to touch. For example, if your hand is loose at your side while you’re sitting on the floor and the cat happens to bump your hand, you may click then reinforce for that behavior.

## Sit

“Sit” is a behavior that is defined by the cat bending her back legs and resting her hips on the floor while her front legs remain extended.

- While watching your cat, wait for her to place herself in a sitting position.
- As soon as she sits, click then reinforce.
- A common verbal cue for this behavior is “Sit.” A common visual cue for this behavior is moving your hand (palm open and facing upward) from about the cat’s chest level to above their head.

## Roll Over

“Roll Over” is a behavior that can be defined in two ways. A partial roll over (180°) is defined by the cat moving from laying one side of his body to the opposite side by “rolling” on his back. The cat starting from a “down” position and rolling to the left or right, ending in the same position from which he started, defines a full roll over (360°).

- While watching your cat, wait for him to roll over.
- As soon as he completely rolls over (partial or full – it is up to you!), click, then reinforce.
- A common verbal cue for this behavior is “Roll Over.” A common visual cue for this behavior is using your pointer finger to make the “rainbow” motion from one side of the cat to the other.

## Coming When Called

“Coming When Called” (aka a “recall”) is a behavior that is defined by the cat orienting toward the human and approaching the human. Most commonly, this behavior is complete once the cat has come within inches of the human who is calling her. It could even end by the cat jumping into a waiting human lap for positive attention!

- While watching your cat, wait for her to approach you.
- As soon as she is within inches of you, click then reinforce.
- A common verbal cue for this behavior is “come,” or saying the cat’s name and then “come” (such as, “Fluffy, come.” A common visual cue for this behavior is moving your hand (palm open and facing toward you) by bending your elbow. Go from an outstretched, straight arm to 90° bend in your elbow while moving your palm toward your belly button. Additionally, you may also choose to use a different visual cue such as a “point” from your hand to a location near you.