

Capture an Offered Behavior

Exercise 3.2

In this exercise, you'll capture a high frequency behavior your dog *naturally* offers. Next, you'll put it on cue!

You'll need

Dog (clicker-savvy)
Clicker and treats
Stopwatch or timer
Rate of Reinforcement Worksheet (at least 2 copies)

Setup

CHOOSE A BEHAVIOR TO CAPTURE

Capture a behavior your dog does naturally and one that happens with high frequency.

For this activity, we suggest capturing a lick lip ("lick your chops") behavior. Lip lick is a terrific option for this activity for several reasons:

1. You can take advantage of your treat delivery to get this behavior to occur with high frequency. Every time your dog eats a treat, he will naturally lick his lips after consuming the treat. This gives you an opportunity to rapidly capture the behavior during a training session. You can do this by clicking / treating for each lip lick that occurs after consuming a treat.
2. Lip lick is an excellent next step after you've captured the default or station behavior from exercise 3.1. This behavior gives you the opportunity to further develop the mechanical skills you began to hone with eye contact / stand and it incorporates your development of more advanced observational skills. Lip licks happen quickly, so you'll need to keep your eyes peeled for the behavior and your clicker hand ready to go!
3. This is a fun, "trick" behavior and does not function as a default station behavior. This makes it an excellent behavior for learning to add a cue. You'll accomplish adding a cue to this behavior in exercise 3.3.

If you choose not to capture a lip lick, you might try: paw lift; head turn to one side; head tilt; bow; stretch back legs; lie in frog pose; yawn; a certain sound that the dog makes; look at the ceiling. You can spend time observing your dog at different times of day and note his various behaviors.

Try to choose one that happens with enough frequency that you can readily capture it. If you choose instead to capture a behavior that happens with low frequency, you can increase opportunities to mark the behavior by carrying a few dry treats in your pocket and using a mouth “click” when you see the behavior occurring outside your training sessions.

Note your chosen behavior on the Rate of Reinforcement Worksheet and Cue Worksheet.

SET UP THE TRAINING AREA

Set up your training location with all needed equipment including timer. Prepare treats for your dog.

Training Steps

1. Warm up.

Start with a fun, 1-minute session in which you provide some “freebie” clicks and treats or click / treat for known behaviors.

2. Take a quick break.

Offer gentle rubs, a quick bit of play, or whatever interaction your dog enjoys for a few moments as a transition into your training session.

3. Click / treat for lip lick for one minute.

Provide your learner a “freebie” starter treat. Click the *instant* he licks his lip after consuming the treat and give another a treat. Click the instant he licks his lips after consuming *that* treat and give another treat. Repeat for one minute.

4. Take a training break.

Take your dog out of the training area and do something he finds enjoyable (e.g. play with him, pet and praise him, get him a drink). *Ending a training session abruptly can inadvertently punish a dog. Be mindful of this and end each session with a fun and engaging interaction with your dog.*

GREAT JOB! NOW IT'S TIME TO RECORD THE DATA FROM YOUR SESSION.

Record Session Data

Record the number of C/Ts and session duration on the Rate of Reinforcement

Worksheet and include a brief description of the lip lick behavior you are clicking (e.g. "8" C/Ts, "1" minute, note "brief tongue flick" or "full lick of chops"). Note anything important.

Conduct 2 additional 1-minute training sessions

Click / treat for lip lick for a total of three 1-minute sessions with breaks in between.

Data Review

1. Review the numbers recorded on the Rate of Reinforcement Worksheet for your first three sessions.
2. Calculate the rate of reinforcement for each session as the number of C/Ts divided by the duration in minutes (if you've been mindful of your 1 minute session, this is just the number of C/Ts within the one minute session).
3. Plot the rate of reinforcement for each session on the worksheet graph. To find the appropriate box to mark for a session: identify the session number along the bottom edge ("Session") of the graph; identify the number of C/Ts per minute along the left edge ("Rate of Reinforcement") of the graph; mark the box where the "Session" column and "Rate of Reinforcement" row intersect.
4. Prediction: Before doing any more training sessions, make a prediction based on your graphs. If your dog is becoming aware of what you are clicking for, would you expect the number of C/Ts to increase from the last session, stay the same, or decrease?

Conduct three additional 1-minute training sessions

Data review

5. Review, calculate and plot the rate of reinforcement on the worksheet for the second series of sessions.
6. Compare the results with your prediction. Did the rate of reinforcement increase, stay the same or decrease?

7. What is your conclusion? Is your dog learning what behavior is making you click? How can you tell?

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Now that you have judged (via data and observation) that your dog understands what behavior is getting you to click, try answering these questions:

8. What position is your dog in for most of his repetitions of the behavior? Is being in a certain position (sit, down, stand) part of the goal behavior? For example, if your dog sits almost all the time, and sitting is not part of the goal behavior, how does that change your conclusion that he “understands” what behavior is being clicked?
9. What position were you in for most of the repetitions for this training? If you were always in the same place, how does that change your conclusion that he “understands” what behavior is being clicked?
10. If you wanted to further refine his understanding of the captured behavior, what are some subsequent training sessions you might do?
11. In doing those subsequent training sessions, what would you predict for the number of C/Ts per minute: an increase from the last session, the same rate of reinforcement, or a decrease?

NEW SITUATIONS: CONDUCT ADDITIONAL TRAINING SESSIONS

12. Complete several additional training sessions based on your conclusions from Things To Consider! Use a fresh Rate of Reinforcement Worksheet.

13. Work each situation until you have achieved about 10-15 C/Ts per minute (on average).
14. Review, calculate, and plot the rate of reinforcement as before.

Excellent job! You're ready to add a cue to this behavior in exercise 3.3!

