

Capturing and Naming a Behavior

Exercise Introduction and Guidelines

Exercises 3.1-3.3

Exercise 3.1: Capture It! (Default Stand)

Exercise 3.2: Capture a New Behavior (Lip Lick)

Exercise 3.3: Name That Behavior (Lip Lick)

Welcome to your first training exercises!

In these exercises, you're going to *capture* a high frequency default station behavior (a stand), *capture* a different high frequency behavior that is a bit more challenging (a lip lick), and finally, give the captured lip lick behavior a name (put it on cue). As you learned in the online Lesson 3, capturing a behavior includes:

1. Arrangement of the environment to make the goal behavior very likely
2. Observing the behavior (watch for the behavior!)
3. Marking (clicking) the moment the behavior occurs
4. Delivering reinforcement (a food reinforcer for these course exercises)

Capturing: High vs. Low Frequency Behaviors

Capturing is an excellent strategy to train behaviors your dog naturally exhibits like eye contact, sit, stand, stretch, sneeze and many others. Capturing is very useful for behaviors that happen often (with high frequency) like eye contact or happen more rarely (with low frequency) like a stretch. For our training exercise purposes, we're going to focus on capturing high frequency behaviors to hone your clicker mechanics and your data collection skills.

But do remember, if there are behaviors – like a stretch, yawn, shake-off or other specific movement – that happen only sporadically or at specific times of the day, capturing is a strategic way to isolate the behavior so you can later put it on cue. The

key to capturing these low frequency behaviors is to click and treat the moment they happen. You'll need to be aware of the environmental "cue" or time of day the behavior usually happens and be ready to click and treat! Keep in mind that in the case of low frequency behaviors, your training session is only going to be a few seconds. After the single instance of offered behavior, your session is most likely over! So don't wait around expecting another stretch right after your dog's usual morning stretch. Capturing a low frequency behavior can take a few weeks!

Capturing: Default Behaviors

Behaviors including stand and eye contact can be beneficial to maintain as offered behaviors, especially in the context of training sessions. Trainers often refer to these as "default" behaviors; behaviors that are readily offered by the learner and reinforced by the trainer – even in the absence of an explicit cue (although there are relevant contextual cues that set the stage for the learner to perform the behavior). Since you may or may not wish to assign cues to these behaviors, we will not ask you to place these behaviors on a specific cue in this course. When it comes time for you to learn to put a behavior on cue, we'll ask you to select a different behavior, one that is unlikely to function as a default behavior in your training sessions

Guidelines

If you already have some experience with clicker training, you may be tempted during these exercises to use prompting¹ or shaping to build the behavior you want. However, because we want you to experience *capturing* a behavior in its pure form, we have provided some general guidelines and training plan questions to help you get started.

- Please refrain from repeated use of a food lure or a target to move your dog into a stand. An initial treat used at the very start of the session to bring your dog into a starting position *is* appropriate! Avoid using your body (either by backing away or moving forward) to encourage a stand.
- How will you arrange the environment to make the behavior likely?
 - Is there a location indoors or outdoors in which your dog is likely to stand?

¹ Prompting refers to using external means to get a behavior to happen. You might use a piece of food to lure the dog into doing the behavior, use a target to induce the behavior, or use your body to move your dog into the correct position for the behavior. All of these are examples of prompting.

- How and / or where will you deliver the food reinforcer to encourage another repetition of the behavior?
 - Will delivery to mouth, dropped on the ground, or placed on a plate encourage your dog to stand?

In Exercise 3.1 you'll explore the process of capturing the default station behavior of stand with eye contact. **In Exercise 3.2**, you'll capture a different, high frequency behavior. The suggested behavior is a lip lick; this is a fun one that will really hone your observation and clicker timing skills! **In Exercise 3.3**, you'll attach a cue to the lip lick behavior.

You'll need to work with a clicker-savvy dog who understands that a click means a treat is coming, and that his behavior controls the click. Before you begin any training session, create a thoughtful and prepared training environment. Put all other animals in another room so your subject animal has all your attention. Eliminate as much distraction as you can. For example, remove all toys and other props from the room unless they are specified in the exercise instructions. A prepared training environment and a thoughtfully structured session are key elements of good training.

For each exercise, familiarize yourself with the material before starting a session.

Video requirement

The default stand behavior (Exercise 3.1) is an important behavior that you will utilize and build upon throughout this course. To support your early and ongoing success with this station behavior, we require your submission of a short video showing the finished default stand. Your faculty instructor will provide feedback on the behavior and suggestions for your continued progress with this behavior.

Regional KPA students: Please send a brief (30 second to 1 minute) video to your faculty instructor as soon as possible and *at least one week before your first workshop*.

National / World KPA students: The default stand is the first behavior on your list of required video submissions. To take full advantage of your faculty instructor's feedback on this important behavior, please send this video as soon as possible *and at least one week before the due date for Unit 1 submissions*.

Happy Training!