Clicker Training With Cats

The point of clicker training is to assign a sound (which can be made from a hand-held device or just as effectively from the click of your tongue) to a high-value reward. Then, click and reward each behavior you’d like your cat to repeat. Once your cat is doing a behavior consistently, add a cue. To inspire your cat’s cooperation, keep the lessons short (5 minutes) and reward them with food and fun toys. Timing is important, so think of the clicker as a camera that you click the moment your cat does something you’d like them to repeat.

CLR Protocol

The CLR Protocol is one method of clicker training that I teach in my virtual cat training classes. Using the CLR protocol — Capture, Lure, and Reward — you will use clicks and rewards each time your cat performs the behavior in your presence.

Getting Started

1. Line up five to ten high value rewards. Click, and then give your cat the reward. Repeat this exercise before each meal until your cat looks for the reward the moment the sound is made. *This is best to do when your cat’s on an empty stomach.*

Choose a Behavior

2. Choose a simple behavior to cue, like sit. Initially, without saying the word, simply click and reward as your cat sits down to capture the behavior. To lure, guide your cat into position with a treat or toy, then click and reward. After your cat begins prompting you to click by sitting (or performing whatever behavior you’ve chosen) pair the cue word Sit to the behavior.

You’re Good to Go

3. Once your cat learns the cue, you can phase off the use of the clicker and food rewards. Continue to offer other rewards for their cooperation, like tossing a toy, feeding dinner and snacks, or giving them desired affection.