

Three Ways to Get the Behavior You Need

Capturing, Shaping & Luring

Watch your dog. See all the behaviors happening? Good trainers enjoy observing and learning about their dogs. Capturing, shaping and luring help you reinforce wanted behaviors by clearly communicating what earns a reward like food or play. In the early stages of learning, food is usually used since a dog is primed to work for it—just like people! Be generous when reinforcing your dog, so that the desired behavior is learned and maintained.

CAPTURING

Capturing is simply catching and rewarding a naturally occurring behavior like sitting, yawning or stretching. Have treats handy. Watch your dog for a desired behavior, like stretching. As your dog stretches, mark the behavior with a click or word. Pause, then feed a treat. Repeat when you can.

SHAPING

Shaping is the process of teaching a behavior by breaking it down into small steps. It's a creative process as you may need to break down the desired behavior into more steps or even skip some as your dog figures out what you want.

LURING

Luring is using a piece of food to move your dog into a position or get him to doing a certain motion. For example, with food in your hand, move your hand to the floor. Some dogs will follow the lure and lie down. Lures can be useful in jump-starting a behavior, with the lure fading/phasing it out after a few repetitions.



When your dog reliably offers the behavior you want, name it! As your dog begins the behavior, say the cue. Mark with a click or word, then deliver a treat. Repeat. Practice the cue with your dog many times, in different places inside your home. Then try outdoors. Knowing your dog will get distracted, go back a few steps, starting over as you trained indoors.

Written by: Beth Mullen, CBCC-KA

