

ID reinforcer

Find what your pet prefers: food, play, or affection. Then ID the specific “one” that is their favorite. (ex: cheese Vs chicken, fetch Vs chase, scratches on chin Vs head, etc.). Check out my “Suggested Treats” and my “Reward Tournament” handout for help.

Confirm

Across several sessions and days, simply offer the reinforcer to confirm that your pet is interested.

ID Marker

Choose the marker you plan to use to “mark” the behaviors or events you’re working on. (This may be a clicker, a mouth sound, a word, etc.). If using a word, choose one that is 1 or 2 syllables and one you don’t say often.

Pair

1. Present the marker
2. Immediately after, present the reinforcer
3. Allow pet to engage with the reinforcer a bit (ie: swallow the food, grab the toy, etc.)
4. Pause for a moment until pet seeks more
5. Repeat steps 1-4 several times within a single session
6. Repeat this entire pairing process across several sessions

Confirm

After several sessions, your pet should start to connect the reinforcer with the marker. You can “test” this occasionally as follows: when your pet is not looking at you, present the marker alone. If your pet immediately looks for the reinforcer, they’ve made the connection! If they do not, more pairing is needed. Avoid “testing” this too much. The mark should always be followed by the reinforcer to avoid weakening the connection.

Loading the Marker