

Drop Trap: Detailed Instructions

(quickie directions repeated at bottom)

Customer Service, Repair, Complaints and Suggestions

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Choosing a site and Setup

1. Set up the drop trap where you'll be able to see it well! You'll need to see eartips, etc. A super-bright flashlight (or car headlights) work fine at night to spotlight the trap. Cats don't seem to be concerned by lights.
2. Try not to make multiple trips back and forth with trap, bucket, food, etc. Cause as little commotion as possible.
3. Lay the trap down first, to be sure that when the trap is dropped, that there are no gaps or objects that interfere with its dropping.
4. Place it as close as possible to where they'll expect to find food – saves time. If you can, set it next to a wall or porch railing to restrict entry to one side. This enables you to place the food further away from the available side, which means they'll be farther into the trap when eating. Remember to leave room for placing a box trap in front of the sliding door.
5. Orient the trap, so that the front (the side with the door) is facing you. This means that the cat will have to turn her back on you to eat (won't see your motions). If this is not possible, put the prop-stick on whatever side IS facing you – it may jam otherwise, and not come immediately when you pull on the cord.
6. Put a trap or traps (and covers) near the trap so they're easily accessible when there's a cat or two in the trap. Once the drop trap is covered, the cats will generally be quiet enough for you to go grab another box trap.

Bait

7. Use a deep, unbreakable dish (I like the Gladware Large Rectangle), or a dish familiar to them.
8. Supply enough food for several cats to come and eat their fill (if there's more than one cat in the area). Even if they're not the cats you want, they are useful as decoys to assure the others that it's safe to eat. *You don't want to run out of food before your target kitty enters the trap.*
9. If possible, use their usual food, especially if they're suspicious of anything new. I use Friskies wet food mixed into a good quality dry food, unless they're the suspicious types. Remember, unless there's only one cat in the area, you want to

put down plenty of food. They may associate tuna with trapping if you've trapped their colony a lot.

10. Put the food in the center-back of the trap.

11. If they don't seem to realize that there's food in the container, if they're not used to scavenging for food (because they're so spoiled or they're young kittens), or they are very wary, or if you're using bait that's unfamiliar to them, you may need to leave a sprinkling of food (free samples) around and in the trap.

Dropping the trap

1. WAIT UNTIL THEY'VE SETTLED AT THE BACK OF THE TRAP TO EAT. If you wait too long, or if they're a little nervous and they leave quickly, they'll COME BACK sooner or later. – they know there's food there. Don't make the mistake of dropping it before they're settled at the back of the trap, and have them squeeze out! Then they may not come back. If there are 2 eating 1 and 1 is waiting (but inside the trap), wait until they've ALL started eating, or one leaves, or you're taking a chance that you'll lose one. If other cats are watching when you drop the trap, they'll scatter when the trap comes down (or when you approach). Don't worry, they'll be back. They won't understand that you've taken the cats inside, away.

Transferring a cat from the drop trap to a box trap

Tell observers to STAY BACK unless you call them for assistance -- avoid getting distracted. Sometimes the transfer from the drop trap to the box trap takes a minute or two. Don't panic, be patient. It takes a few seconds in most cases, but it can take longer (or seem longer).

1. Take the time to cover the gap between the traps with the towel and cover. Put your foot on the box trap to keep it from shifting. Focus yourself, then open the two doors, together.

2. The cat may not notice the open door right away. Give him 20 seconds or so to see the open door. He should calm down slightly (or not). You might try closing and re-opening the wooden door, and that may get his attention. Sometimes it helps to twitch the cover slowly towards you and away from the back of the trap; the cat may move towards the front as he attempts to stay under cover. (Don't let him see you and realize he's also moving towards you). But, sometimes he redoubles his effort to get out of the back of the trap when the back is uncovered.

3. If the cat is determined to get out one of the far sides of the trap, it helps to have a helper (any observer). Ask them to get DOWN, face to face with the cat (not hover overhead which just frightens them and doesn't give them direction.) Assuming that the cat can't see where you are standing at the front of the trap because of the trap cover, the cat will turn away from the helper and run toward the "exit".

4. If you don't have a helper, just re-cover the trap and try again. He'll go in eventually. Just be patient, stay calm and quiet. I don't talk to them generally – I want them to forget that I'm standing there, since I want them to come towards me and into the box trap.

5. You'll see him pass into the box trap between the two covers. He may hurl himself with a lot of force at the end of the box trap thinking he can get out that way – be sure that he doesn't shift the trap to the side, which would increase the gap between the two traps. Quickly drop the cover now and use your free hand to push down the WOODEN DOOR completely, it works more smoothly than the box trap door. As long as the trap doesn't shift position, he can't get out (and he'll be at the far end of the trap anyway). If there's a second cat in the drop trap, you must close the wooden door before you move the box trap away, or the second cat will escape. Keep the trap from shifting to the side (helper or foot), until you can also get the box trap door down. Now arrange the towel to cover the trap and take him away.

If you blow it

If the cat escapes at some point in the process, it's not necessarily a fatal error. I've had cats that wiggled out of the trap, only to come back the same day, within an hour or two, to try again. You'll need to expose the cat to the trap for some period of time (short or long) until she regains confidence. Remember, she'll see her friends eating from the trap, without incident. In this case, I would not drop the trap again, until you get the cat that escaped.

Strategy

If there's a cat that's particularly jumpy, or wary, or pregnant, I like to catch her first, and not do anything that will confirm her suspicions, until she's safely out of the way. Cats that eat safely from the trap will return and you can get them another day. If there's a momcat and kittens, I try to get them first. However, don't get too fancy with this – today's happy chow hound is tomorrow's momcat. When one cat finishes eating, there's a delicate moment when one of the other cats who've been waiting, will suddenly make up their mind to try out this new thing. If you've been waiting for one of these cats, you don't want her to discover that the dish is empty, or you don't want to have to run in at that point to adjust something. If you need to adjust the drop trap somehow, or get a better look at the cat who's in it, it's better to approach the trap casually when the first cat is still in there, they'll scatter, but they'll be back as soon as you leave and will generally take up where they left off. Try to have a good view of the general area around the trap, so that you don't drop it just when a second cat is lurking nearby, thinking about entering.

Quickie Directions

(For more in-depth instruction, open the "Detailed Instructions" download located in the lefthand margin.)

1. Set up in a good location (where you can see, and the ground is level), door facing your position (the spot where you will be watching from), if possible.
2. Place a plentiful amount of food in the center-back of the trap.
3. Leave some wire box traps and covers where you can reach them from the drop trap.
4. Stand back a good distance (depends on the cats) with an unfolded blanket, holding the cord. Ask observers to stay back unless you call them.
5. When cat or cats ****have settled down**** to eat at back of trap, give the cord a good yank
6. Run or walk up to the trap and **COVER COMPLETELY**. This is important if they're very wild! If you're alone, hold the trap down firmly and wait for them to settle before you attempt the transfer.
7. You want to get the cat(s) out as quickly and quietly as possible, and reset the trap.
8. Line up the box trap to receive cat, cover it with a towel. **DON'T** cover the far end of the trap - you want it to look like an exit. **CAREFULLY** arrange towel and blanket to cover gaps between the two traps, place your foot on the box trap to keep it from shifting -- and open both doors. Stand very still.
9. If he doesn't move into the box trap in 15 seconds, twitch the cover or call a helper, to motivate the cat to enter the box trap. Keep the cover between you and the cat.
10. Close **BOTH** doors when cat has entered box trap. If there are other cats remaining in the drop trap, you'll transfer them one at a time, generally.
11. Cover and remove cat to some distance if he's the only one. If there are others, just put him aside while you transfer the others. Then reset the trap and get them away.
12. Inspect the cat in the box trap at your leisure to be sure he/she is not eartipped or nursing.