



The Trained Cat

Is your cat more independent than you would like? Is your cat affectionate but only pays attention to you when he decides? A common misperception about cats is that they aren't affectionate, or only give affection on their terms. Another misperception is that you can't train a cat—but you can! When you teach your cat to perform behaviors on cue, you'll reap many benefits, including having a closer, more affectionate relationship. You will have a cat that comes when called, doesn't wake you up in the middle of the night, has fewer behavior issues and is less stressed.

A Trained Cat...

- Allows you to handle every part of his body to check for injury or illness and to give him medication.
- Is responsive to you, so you'll enjoy spending time with him, and he'll be less likely to want to go outside. The more time you spend with your cat, the more likely you will be to notice when something is wrong with him, such as a limp, a cough, a sensitive area or loss of appetite. By recognizing such irregularities early, you can seek medical attention immediately and, hopefully, prevent more serious problems.
- Wants to stay near you, listening for instructions (and praise). This means he will have fewer opportunities to get into trouble or become anxious.
- Will walk on a leash, so you and your cat can get more exercise and spend more time together.
- Knows that "come" and "sit" are cues that earn him attention or treats. He also can be taught what things and places are out of bounds, such as hot stoves, counter tops or baby's room. However, you will still need to limit his access to dangerous places when you cannot supervise or instruct him.
- Has fewer anxieties. Less stress means a healthier cat.

By training your cat, you develop a better relationship with him. Keep in mind, however, that even intelligent cats need supervision, instruction and boundaries – sometimes even physical boundaries. Allowing your cat, no matter how educated he may be, to walk, run or roam outside off of a leash can put him in danger.

Cats Can Be Trained

- Cats can learn to come when called, walk on a leash, sit, lie down and do tricks on command. And once they understand the training “game,” they often learn faster than dogs.
- Good training methods focus primarily on reinforcing good behavior and don’t use correction. Use of squirt bottles, nose flicking and loud noisemakers can cause fear or aggressive behaviors.
- Quality training with cats is about building a strong positive relationship between you and your cat. Clicker training is a great tool to advancing that relationship and reducing anxiety in cats.
- Specific problems you may have with your cat may not be addressed in basic training. If you’re seeking help with house soiling, aggression or destruction, find a behaviorist who is knowledgeable about cats and uses management and positive reinforcement as methods to resolve the behavior.
- Avoid training methods that focus on punishment.