

Grooming training: To assist with teeth brushing, nail trimming, bathing, etcetera.

Place your cat on your lap and gently:

- massage and note sensitive areas (often on the tummy)
- press on the toe pads to extend the claws
- open the mouth and peek inside, including playing with gums.

Do this daily, and once your cat becomes comfortable letting you touch her all over, try introducing grooming tools such as brushes, nail clippers and tooth brushes, making sure you first let her sniff them (for a day or so) before using them.



Programs and services provided by the Ottawa Humane Society are made possible thanks to your financial support.

Please support the animals in our community.



Ottawa Humane Society

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Cats should exercise daily to maintain a healthy weight and release pent up energy.

Aerobic conditioning: Like a dog, a cat should exercise daily to maintain a healthy weight and release pent up energy. Each day put aside at least 15 minutes to “play” with your cat — use pull toys, feather toys on a piece of string, laser pointers, ping pong balls, crumpled up foil, whatever your cat likes to play with. Experiment until you come to the best way of having fun together.

Training more than one cat at a time: If you have more than one cat, start with the one that likes food the most. Separate this cat from the others at first (in the kitchen, bathroom or crate) until he gets the idea, then let the others join in to play “copy cat” and learn through watching.



SPECIFIC TRAINING TO OVERCOME PROBLEM BEHAVIOURS

Training is a great way to overcome many problem cat behaviours. To address these, the Ottawa Humane Society has developed a series of brochures that specifically deal with common behaviour problems and solutions. Please check out the OHS website (www.ottawahumane.ca) or contact the OHS directly for information on any of the following:

- Litterbox challenges/house soiling
- Destructive scratching
- Aggression — with you or other cats
- Pets and babies
- Multi-pet households

YOU AND YOUR CAT

Cats may have a reputation for being aloof, but they typically love playing and spending time with their human companions.



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HOW DO YOU PLAY WITH A CAT?

Cats, especially indoor cats, need exercise and play to stay happy and healthy. Not only is this fun for felines and owners alike, but with a little effort, you might even be able to train your cat to understand and obey a few common commands. This will greatly reduce the chance of unwanted behaviours in your cat.

Playing with and training your cat from the beginning is a fun way to get to know your cat and sets the stage for a successful lifelong relationship.

WHAT ARE GOOD CAT TOYS?

There is an abundance of great cat toys on the market these days, but you don't have to spend a fortune keeping kitty amused! From paper bags to crumpled balls of paper and empty toilet paper rolls, many small, lightweight household objects make fun toys for your cat. You should avoid plastic bags and anything stringy, sharp or pointy, which could harm your cat and lead to expensive surgery. Your pet store will also feature a wide range of toys sure to please the most finicky feline, but make sure you check over all toys in advance to make sure they are safe for your cat. Some toys are also great interactive toys but should be used only with supervision.



HOW CAN YOU START TRAINING A CAT?

- Cats respond well to food as a reward, so select something your cat really likes for training, such as tuna, small pieces of chicken or store-bought treats.
- Schedule sessions prior to your cat's meal times — a hungry cat is more likely to be interested in food rewards.
- Use your cat's name along with the command (for example, "Rudy, sit"), then provide a food reward and praise your cat when he performs the desired behaviour.
- Teach your cat only one command at a time, and repeat the lesson daily until your cat responds reliably. Once your cat has learned one command, you can move on to another.
- Remember that food rewards are still food, so reduce food portions accordingly during regular training sessions to prevent your cat from gaining excess weight.

WHAT CAN YOU TRAIN A CAT TO DO?

The following types of training can be used with cats.

Leash training:

- Purchase a lightweight (nylon or cotton) harness and leash (6 to 8 feet long). Do not use a collar, as cats can easily slip out of them.
- Place the harness on the floor and allow your cat to smell it for a few days.



- Pick up the harness and touch your cat with it. If the cat seems comfortable, slip it on and let the cat wear it around the house. Progress to 10–15 minutes a day for a week and provide food rewards and praise for wearing it.
- After a week, attach the leash to the harness and hide treats around the house so your cat can walk around trying to find them with the leash dangling. After a week, progress to holding the leash while your cat hunts for treats.
- Progress to walking on the leash outside, five minutes at first, and carry food rewards.
- Remember to be patient if your cat just wants to sit in his harness. Once he's comfortable, you can increase the time you spend outdoors and the activities you do together.



Obedience: Sit, Come, Stay

SIT (to get your cat to sit on command):

- Place the cat on a clean surface.
- Hold food reward over the cat's head.
- Say the cat's name and "sit."
- Move the food back over the cat's head—as the cat's head follows the food it will naturally sit down. If not, press down—very lightly—on the cat's hind quarters.
- As soon as the cat sits, say name, "sit," give food and repeat.

COME (to get your cat to come on command):

- When the cat comes to the feeding area, say name, "come," and give some food.
- Do this in other locations around the house, saying name, "come," and providing food when the cat comes.
- Continue until the cat comes regularly on command with or without the use of food.

STAY (to get your cat to stay, or freeze, on command):

- Place food on the floor about ten feet away from the cat.
- As the cat approaches put your hand out, say cat's name and "stay."
- If the cat stops, reward with food.
- If the cat keeps coming, hold your hand out again saying name and "stay" again, rewarding with food and praise only if the cat stops.
- Repeat the process until the cat knows that "stay" means freeze in your tracks.