



# Cat Manners

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Before you get a new kitten or adopt an adult cat, make sure you complete your education about kitty education. If you are already living with an untrained cat with existing problems, simply designate today as the first day at Kitty College for both of you. Kitten training techniques work perfectly well with adult cats.

## **Adopting a New Kitten**

Check that the kitten was raised indoors, around human companionship and influence. Ask the breeder how many strangers, especially including men and children, have handled and gentled the kittens. Spend at least an hour observing, playing with, and hugging and handling (restraining and examining), your prospective kitten. At eight weeks of age, kitten activity recycles every 40 minutes so. To get a representative feel for your kitten's overall demeanor, make sure that you observe her while she sleeps, when she plays, and when she is wild. Check that the kitten already uses a litter box and plays with her scratching post.

## **Adopting an Adult Cat**

Choosing an adult cat is a very personal choice: choose the one that likes all family members best, and choose the one you all like best. The secret to adopting the perfect cat is patience, patience, patience, and selection, selection, selection. The perfect cat is waiting for you somewhere, and so take your time to choose with your head as well as your heart.

## **Teaching Household Manners**

The first week your kitten or cat spends in your home is the most important week of her life. From the very first day, start an errorless housetraining and scratching post training program so that you prevent any housesoiling and destructive clawing or chewing problems.

When you are not at home, leave your kittycat in a long-term confinement area (cat playroom), which has a comfortable bed, fresh water, a litterbox, and a scratching post with several cat toys and chewtoys (stuffed with food) hanging from the top. Long-term confinement prevents mistakes around the house and maximizes the likelihood your kittycat will learn to use her toilet and learn to play with her toys and scratching post.

When you are at home but cannot pay full attention to your kittycat, confine her to a small, short-term confinement area (cat carrying crate) with a couple of stuffed chewtoys and dangly cat toys. Confining your kittycat prevents any mistakes around the house, maximizes the likelihood she will learn to play with her toys, and allows you to predict when she would like to relieve herself. Knowing when your kittycat wants to go makes litterbox training easy, because all you have to do is show her where to go and reward her for going. Closely confining a kittycat temporarily inhibits elimination. Give her hourly access to the litterbox, and she will promptly pee (and sometimes poop). Then voice gentle appreciation and give her three liver treats as a reward.

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## **Strengthening the Bond Between Pets and People**

Confinement is a temporary management and training measure. Once your kittycat has learned where to eliminate and what to scratch, she may enjoy full-run of your house for the rest of her life.

Until she is trained, do not feed your kittycat from a food bowl. Set aside some kibble to use for safety training, and stuff some of her food into hollow Kong chewtoys with the odd piece of freeze-dried liver. Moisten dry kibble, squish it into the Kong cavity, and place it in the freezer overnight. In the morning suspend the stuffed Kongs from the top of her scratching post. Your kittycat will spend a long time eating, and in the process will be automatically rewarded for playing with her toys and scratching post.

If eventually you would like your kittycat to eliminate outdoors, use soil in her litterbox instead of commercial litter. Your kittycat will quickly develop strong substrate and olfactory preferences for eliminating on soil and will naturally want to eliminate outside.

### **Safety Training**

When cats are scared, they run and hide; sometimes remain in hiding for several days. Indoor cats are especially scared if they escape outdoors (usually when strangers visit the house). Whether you intend your cat to be allowed outdoors or not, safety training is essential. At the very least you should teach your cat to come when called. The process is simple.

Before every mealtime, call your cat and have him follow you from room to room before putting his stuffed Kongs (and the following cat) in his confinement area. From time to time, call your cat and handfeed a piece of kibble or freeze-dried liver when he comes. Back up and repeat the process several times. If you like, you can use a silent dog whistle instead of calling your cat.

Indoor cats have a longer life expectancy than indoor-outdoor cats. If you intend to let your cat outside, you must teach him to remain in the yard, otherwise you will take several years off his life expectancy. First, neuter your cat and he or she will be less likely to roam. (Circulating sex hormones fragment normal brain function.) Second, make sure your fence is cat-proof. Third, convert a section of your yard into a cat activity center—hang a number of stuffed Kongs and dangly cat toys from a tree, for example. Fourth, you must teach your cat a "freeway" escape-route back into the safety of your house. For the first few weeks your cat begins to investigate your yard, reserve all food for this exercise.

Open the yard door and let your cat poke his nose out and then immediately call him back inside for a piece of cheese. Next time call him back for a freeze-dried liver treat after he has gone just one yard outside. Repeat this over and over, each time letting your cat venture a little further outside.

To learn more, read our cat Behavior Booklets. To raise and train your cat, you will need a cat-carrying crate, a very comfortable cat bed, water bowl, litter box, scratching post, hollow chewtoys, catnip toys, and freeze-dried liver.

*Doctor Dunbar's Behavior Blueprints*  
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