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Cat Training Tips Report 1:

Training Your Cat



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- Training Your Cat -

When most people think about animal obedience work, cats aren't usually the first candidates to spring to mind.

We tend to associate cats with words like aloof, independent, and laid back – they seem to focus on doing what they want, pretty much as and when they feel like it.

You might be excused for thinking that this isn't really ideal training material!

However – there's an ever-increasing number of people who are deriving a great deal of pleasure from training their cats in basic and advanced obedience work and tricks (from sit, stay, come to jumping through hoops, twirling, and high-fiving) - and what's more, they're convinced that their cats enjoy it, too!

The benefits of training your cat

Just because cats typically lead solitary, individual lives doesn't mean that they necessarily want to do so.

In fact, many cats are incredibly affectionate and loving by nature – they just need you to demonstrate your leadership and initiate the rapport-building process.

Cats are often underestimated when it comes to the training process, simply because the average owner has very little need to attempt any sort of training at all. Unlike with dogs (whose ability to learn is very well documented) there's no need to train cats in the basics of pet protocol like house training and bathing.

Consequently, relatively few people are aware of their cat's abilities in this area.

Training your cat is a fantastic way to enrich your cat's life:

- It builds a strong rapport between you and your cat
- Because training underlines your authority (your cat has to do what you want to get what he wants), it helps to curb dominant behavior
- It keeps your cat's mind active and stimulated
- It's great interactive play, and teaches good social skills
- Anxious and highly-strung cats are reassured and soothed by the repetition and routine of training

So how do I train my cat?

There are two popular methods of training a cat: target training and clicker training. A brief rundown of each:

- Target training is where you attract your cat's attention and then obtain desired behaviors through the use of a designated tool. For example, during the 'beg' command, a particular target training tool called a training wand is used to attract the cat's attention upwards, and to encourage the cat to rise up on his haunches and 'beg'.
- Clicker training is a form of operant conditioning (which is where the animal is taught to form a conscious association between a specific behavior and a result.) A small mechanical noise-maker (the 'clicker') is used by the trainer to create a short, distinct noise. The clicker is clicked at the precise moment that the cat performs a desired behavior – for example, during 'sit', the clicker

is clicked at the very instant that the cat's bottom touches the ground. Directly after the click, the cat is fed a small and tasty treat. With repetition, the cat grows to associate the click with the food, and recognizes his own ability to earn treats by performing the desired action on command. The clicker is a particularly valued training tool because it allows the trainer to pinpoint the exact behavior that's being rewarded: without the clicker, it's too easy for the cat to form associations between the treat and a completely unrelated behavior (since it's impossible to feed the cat a treat at the precise moment that he's performing a trick.)

Practical tips for training your cat

- Remember to be patient. Your cat is an individual, with his own abilities and preferences. He will pick up some tricks quickly, but may struggle with others. Make allowances for his personality, and don't lose your temper if it doesn't go exactly according to schedule.
- If you're free-feeding your cat (leaving food out at all times for him to eat as and when he feels like it), stop doing this. Enforcing a feeding schedule has two main benefits: it increases the reward-value of food treats as training devices, and also introduces a semblance of routine into your cat's life (which, believe it or not, most cats actually prefer.)
- Train smart. If you're using food treats (which is highly recommended to achieve the desired results) then schedule training sessions for just before mealtimes: your cat's natural desire for food at his regular mealtime will sharpen his focus and increase his desire to obey you (so he can get a treat.)

- Take baby steps. When training your cat, it's best to build up a solid foundation of the basics before attempting to expand his repertoire.
- Cats have pretty short attention spans, and low boredom thresholds. Keep lessons short and interesting – and always try to end on a positive note.

An example of successful cat training in action

Training your cat to 'sit' on command

'Sit' is a great basic command for your cat to know, because it serves as the foundation for a number of other, more advanced tricks and commands (for example, 'stay', 'beg', and 'high five'.)

- Make your training wand extra-effective by smearing the tip in a little tuna oil, and use it to attract your cat's attention (wave it around, trail it past his face, etc.)
- Once he's come over to you, place the wand just over his head, so that it's slightly behind the crown of his head.
- He will tilt his head back to keep his eyes on it. When he does this, he will naturally sit down (since otherwise, his neck can't bend back far enough to allow him to keep watching the training wand.)
- As he sits down, say the word 'Sit', which will be the verbal cue for this command (your cat will grow to associate the command with the act of sitting, and eventually will learn to sit down whenever you ask him to.)

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- As soon as his bottom touches the ground, click the clicker. It's important that you time this precisely.
- Directly after clicking, give him a small food treat. Make sure it's cut up very small – if it takes him more than two seconds to eat it, he'll forget why you gave it to him.
- Repeat this process a few more times, and over the next few weeks, keep doing so until he's comfortable with what's expected of him. When he's able to sit down on command, you can phase the clicker out – but still give treats sporadically (interestingly, if you treat every single time that he performs a command, he's actually less likely to reliably obey that command. Keeping him on his toes seems to increase the likelihood of obedience!)

Further training

For step-by-step advice on how to train your cat in a huge variety of other obedience commands and tricks (from 'stay' to 'play dead' to 'fetch'), check out the Complete Cat Training book – it's full of training how-to's, as well as a huge amount of detailed information on solving problem behaviors, cat psychology, and how to develop a more rewarding relationship with your cat.

To visit the Complete Cat Training website, click the link below:
<http://www.cattrainingtips.info/guide.html>