



## FACTSHEET

### Teaching your cat good manners

Cats are just like children and need to be given guidelines and boundaries to learn good manners. As every person has their own rules for their house, it is important we let our cats know what we expect, otherwise they won't know whether they are doing something wrong.

When you first bring your cat or kitten home you should immediately start setting the guidelines or boundaries for what you will expect from the cat for the rest of their life. For example, if you don't mind your new kitten sleeping on your bed and let them do so from the first few days of coming home they won't understand if you suddenly decide you don't want them to do this when they get bigger and shut the bedroom door. Think about the long-term effects of what you are telling your cat. Jumping on the bench might be cute when the cat is a kitten, but a 6kg adult cat jumping on the bench isn't. Be consistent with your rules and as much as possible don't sway from them. Changing your mind all the time about what you expect from your cat or kitten will confuse them and cause behavioural problems which are not the cat's fault but your own for confusing the cat.

Be prepared when you bring your new cat or kitten home. Provide them with areas to display 'normal' cat behaviours. Scratch posts and toys are a must for every cat. Even if your cat has outdoor access you should provide them with a litter tray for those times when they may not be able to make it outside, or at night when they should always be indoors.

Familiarise yourself with behaviours that cats naturally display so you don't discipline your cat for doing something they instinctively do. **NEVER** smack or hit your cat if you feel they are displaying an unwanted behaviour. Jingle toys are great for distracting a cat from doing an unwanted behaviour, and time out in a small area with lots of toys is a more effective way of training your cat than any physical punishment.

**When training your cat you ALWAYS need to use positive reinforcement.** Cats do not respond well to negative reinforcement and you can actually make your cat display unwanted behaviours more by using negative reinforcement.

Cats are creatures of habit so try to feed your cat at the same time each day to set a routine. This will help them settle in and feel comfortable.

#### **What is positive reinforcement?**

Positive reinforcement is rewarding a behaviour you want your cat to do with something positive, and not rewarding unwanted behaviours. It's important to look at what your cat enjoys the most and use that as the reward. This might be food, a certain toy, or just attention from you. This is where some people make a **big** mistake. Some cats just want your attention, so may do an unwanted behaviour because they know you will pay attention to them. This is where positive reinforcement comes into play.

Try to ignore unwanted behaviours altogether; do not yell at your cat or even look at them. Then when they stop the unwanted behaviour, praise them and play with them, or give them a treat. An example of this would be if your cat is jumping on the bench. When the cat jumps up, gently take them off the bench and place them on the floor and walk away. Do not talk to them when you do this or make a fuss, just place them on the floor. Do this every time your cat jumps on the bench. If your cat follows you, give them a treat or a pat or whatever you know they like the best. This will show the cat they get what they like most when they aren't on the bench and they will learn not to be on the bench.

As with all training, don't expect the unwanted behaviours to stop immediately. It takes time and lots of patience to train a cat, but it can be done!

Make training fun for your cat; the more pleasant the experience, the more they will want to do it. Always ensure your cat has lots to do. Treat balls and food mazes are great, as well as interactive toys. Bored cats are usually the ones who end up showing unwanted behaviours. See our factsheet on [Indoor cats](#) for some great ideas for environmental enrichment for your cat.

Clicker training is a great way to train your cat. See our factsheet on [Clicker Training](#) or for more information visit <http://www.clickertraining.com/cat-training>

Please see our factsheets on behaviours such as [Unwanted furniture scratching](#) and [Unwanted toileting behaviour](#) for tips on curbing these specific unwanted behaviours. Please feel free to call Cat Protection on 9519 7201 if you have any questions about training your cat.

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