

## How To Teach Your Cat To Sit

The Eagle Valley Humane Society receives many phone calls from people whose cat has behavioral issues. These issues range from destroying the couch and attacking your feet, to using the whole house as a litter box. Why should house cats have these problems?

Could it be that we have taken the world's number one predator and turned him into a member of the family? The domestic cat is the most successful predator. Cats kill more species than any other predator. We cannot take away their predatory instincts. Our lovely little lap kitty that is so sweet and affectionate still needs to use its predatory skills. If these instincts are suppressed you could have problems like destructive behavior or litter box issues.

Dogs are bred for different jobs like hunting, pulling sleds, or herding sheep. Cats also need the "job" of using their incredible skills, especially cats that are indoor only. How do you accomplish this, other than letting a bunch of mice loose in your house?

There are many interactive toys available to amuse your cat. A popular one is a flashlight or a pointer. Cats find the beam of light irresistible. They will chase it all over. Just try not to make them climb too far up the wall. Cats also enjoy chasing toys attached to sticks with strings. Other favorites to bat around are fake mice, balls with bells, and crumbled up paper. Some cats will chase motorized remote control cars. But beware; if your cat catches the car he can do some damage! A crumbled up piece of paper is easier to place. Experiment and find out what captures your cat's imagination.

Providing mental stimulation for your cat is so important. While the majority of cats are very independent we can still teach our cats to do basic obedience. This helps to stimulate their minds and creates an opportunity for you to build a stronger relationship with your cat.

My favorite is teaching a cat to sit on command. You will be the hit with all your friends who did not think this was possible and you will be surprised at how fast you can accomplish this. First, you need to find out what your cat's favorite treat is; an ordinary cat treat, a piece of tuna, beef, bison or what? Then hold the treat to the cat's nose and while keeping it by his nose move your hand with the treat towards the cat's tail keeping the treat always by his nose so his nose goes in the air. Very slowly keep moving your hand back towards his tail and the further his head goes back, his bottom will go down. When his bottom goes all the way down say "sit" and give him the treat. If in this process, he gets up or moves around just start over again.

The cat is trying to figure out what behavior you are looking for. After you have gotten a few "sits" out of him, you will find he will sit a lot quicker. Do not say sit before his bottom is down on the floor. Practice this for a few days, a few minutes a day, and you will have your cat sitting when you tell him to! Do not give him too many treats in a short time period. Your cat must remain interested in the treat. Try making the treats smaller than usual so he doesn't grow tired of them or get a tummy ache. There are so many things you can train your cat to do that will be fun for both of you; coming when called, laying down, high fives, fetch, stay, speak and many more.

Playing games and training with your cat will meet many instinctual and mental needs he has. You will be building a healthier relationship with your cat and possible behavioral problems that arise out of boredom and lack of stimulation will be avoided. Have fun with your cat!