

Cat Guide



Naperville Area Humane Society

A better home. A better life. A better future.

Congratulations on your new family member!

In order to provide you with support and set both you and your pet up for success, we have compiled some quick-reference information for you based on our most frequently asked questions!

Of course, we also have an abundance of resources on our website... but if we don't have what you're looking for, we can tell you who does!



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Bringing Your Cat Home

Top Tips from NAHS

Make their world small first, and expand later!

Since moving into a new home is a lot to take in at once, let your new cat decompress for a day or two in a small room with a door (like a bathroom). Have all their resources in with them, including food and water, litter box, scratching post, toys, etc. (Try not to put their food/water next to their litterbox!) Once they have had time to adjust, allow them access to another room as well. Again, once they are accustomed to the second room, allow them access to another, and so on.

It's better to go too slow than too fast!

Cats can be sensitive to stress. It's always better to let them set the pace for settling in at home and interacting with people and any other pets at home. Let your cat take their time! The more you respect their space in the beginning, the better the trust they will have in your relationship later on. Rushing the process can cause undue stress and may make further interactions more difficult. It's easier to go slow and steady than go too fast and try to work backwards with training!



Introducing a cat to a new home can be very stressful for the cat because cats do not like change. To help ease some of this stress, follow these few suggestions:

1. When you bring your new cat home, place the carrier in the room and open the door. Do not force the cat to come out, let her take her time. Your new cat needs time to adjust to her new surroundings.
2. Be available to your new cat but do not force interaction. Let the cat come to you. Have some food treats with you to make a positive association.
3. If your cat hides - leave her/him alone. She/he will come out when she/he feels safe. This could take a few days. Make sure she/he always has access to food, water and a litterbox.

Why Your Cat Is Hiding and How to Help Her Feel Safe

Anyone who has shared their home with a cat knows that cats love to hide. They love to tuck themselves into small spaces in your closet, under your bed, or in a cardboard box or paper bag left lying on the floor. Sometimes it can take a long time and a keen eye to find your cat when she is hiding.



By Kelley Bollen

There are many reasons why cats hide but mostly it's because they feel safe and secure when hidden. Part of this stems from the fact that cats are not only predators, they are also prey animals. So hiding is a behavior that keeps cats safe from being discovered by a predator while sleeping.

You will also notice that your cat often curls up in places where there are soft things to snuggle into like a pile of bedding or clothing. This is because cats like to be warm so curling up in a soft blanket helps cats conserve body heat.

Hiding is also the best coping strategy cats have when they are afraid or anxious. Cats will often run and hide when visitors come over, especially if there are little kids involved. When you bring a new cat home from an animal shelter, they often hide for the first few days. Cats will hide in new situations until they feel safe – so if you bring a new kitty home, let her hide for as long as it takes. It's very important to have food, water, and a litterbox available for the cat in the room where she is hiding. It's also nice to sit in the room with the kitty for a while everyday, read a book out loud, toss some treats, or toss a toy. Whatever you do – do not pull the cat out from her hiding place. She will come out when she feels safe. This period of hiding is very important so let your new cat do what she needs to do to get accustomed to you and your home.

Lastly, cats instinctively hide when they are sick – a behavior that reduces their vulnerability when they don't feel well. So if your cat suddenly starts hiding and it's not normal for your cat to do so, you might consider getting a medical exam to be sure there isn't a health issue.

Kelley Bollen, MS, CABC is a Certified Animal Behavior Consultant with a master's degree in Animal Behavior who has worked in the field of companion animal behavior for 20 years. As a shelter behavior specialist, Kelley consults with animal shelters in the design and implementation of comprehensive behavior programs to address the behavioral health of the shelter animals.



Adopting a New Cat? Here Are Tips for a Smooth Transition

Cats, like some people, find change – even positive change – to be stressful. So if you're thinking of adopting a new cat, here are some tips for making a smooth transition into your home. (Next week will be tips for bringing home a new dog.)



By Mark Robison

- **Safe place:** People generally know cats are predators but may not know they are also a prey species, so they need a safe place (a bedroom or bathroom) to hide for the first few days because that is their best coping strategy when in a new place. Some newly adopted cats will be outgoing and instantly join in family activities, while others will need time to get their bearings. Because you may not know how your new cat will react, setting up a room for the new cat is recommended – complete with everything they need, including water and a litter box. Visit the cat regularly but don't force him or her out of hiding. Just sit quietly in the room. Talking or reading to the cat may be helpful. Maybe bring in a little tuna or cat treats. When the cat is comfortable, the door can be opened.
- **Food:** A separate room for a few days also enables you to keep an eye on food consumption. It's important adult cats eat within three days and kittens within 24 hours.
- **Initiate play:** Provide a few cat toys and a cardboard cat scratching pad or sturdy scratching post. Initiating play with a wand or fishing-pole-type cat toy can help some cats come out of their shell.
- **Scents:** Putting a piece of your clothing, and bedding from any other cats in the house, in the safe place gets the new cat used to these scents. Some cats enjoy silvertone, which can have a calming effect.
- **Inside only:** While it's generally best to keep cats indoors because of predators and cars, it is especially important in the first few weeks in a new home that there is no access to the outside world. This is the time when a cat is most likely to run off – something they may be inclined to do until they learn this is really their new home.
- **Vet visit:** If your new cat seems happy and healthy, there may be no need for an immediate vet visit as it adds stress for the cat. If you have any concerns, though, many vets will waive the exam fee for a newly adopted pet. Be sure to bring any paperwork from the group adopting out the cat so the vet can see what vaccinations or other treatments the cat may have received.

Mark Robison is Senior Consultant at Humane Network. He was an award-winning senior editor at the Reno Gazette-Journal daily newspaper for many years, and he has been President of CockadoodleMoo Farm Animal Sanctuary since 2007.

New Cat Supply List

BARE NECESSITIES

- plastic, hard-sided carrier
- items for scratching (scratch post)
- “breakaway” collar with ID tag
- 1+ litter box per cat and litter
- dry and/or wet food

GROOMING

- brushes and steel comb
- cat-safe shampoo
- cat nail trimmers
- cat-safe grooming wipes
- toothbrush and cat toothpaste

BASIC SUPPLIES

- cat tree or other perching space
- hide boxes or “cat houses”
- cat-safe toys
- cat-safe treats
- enrichment items
- cat bed and/or blankets
- bowls or other enrichment feeding mechanisms
- Feliway Pheromone diffuser

CAT TOYS

Select toys that are:

- too big to swallow
- without little bits to break off

Bonus if they are easy to disinfect!

Some of the most popular types of cat toys include play wands, cloth mice, and plastic springs!

ENRICHMENT ITEMS

- slow-feeder or puzzle bowls
- snuffle and lick mats
- puzzle food toys
- “hide ‘n’ seek” toys

Some cats like toys more than others! Cats are individuals and preferences for types of toys will vary. Some cats just like other forms of enrichment like watching out the window.

ITEMS TO AVOID

- yarn, string, feathers, or other toys with ingestible bits
- spray bottles, noise makers, or other punishment items
- treats or chews that you can’t dent with your fingernail



Updated on 10 March 2021

WSAVA Global Nutrition Committee: Guidelines on Selecting Pet Foods



Pet food labels include a lot of required and useful information for veterinary teams and pet owners. They may also include marketing images and phrases that are designed to promote product sales rather than relay nutritional information. This means that some of the information, including unregulated terms such as 'holistic' or 'premium', is of little practical value for nutritional assessment. The veterinary team has a vital role in helping pet owners make informed decisions on the optimal diet for their dog or cat.

What to look for in a brand

1. Do they employ a Nutritionist?

- Appropriate qualifications are either a PhD in Animal Nutrition or Board Certification by the American College of Veterinary Nutrition (ACVN) or the European College of Veterinary Comparative Nutrition (ECVCN).
- What are the Nutritionist's name, qualifications and employment status? Consultants may have limited influence compared to a staff Nutritionist.

2. Who formulates the diet?

- Is the recipe developed by an experienced pet food formulator (MS or PhD in Animal Nutrition), a veterinarian, or a pet owner/breeder/trainer?
- Recipe development is a complex process requiring knowledge of nutrition, raw materials, and processing not taught in veterinary school programs.
- Trained and experienced formulators may have a degree (MS/PhD) in food science and technology to help guide ingredient selection and nutrient levels for health or disease management.
- An individual with Board Certification by ACVN or ECVCN may also be cross-trained in pet food formulation or work in collaboration with experienced pet food formulators to help guide ingredient selection and nutrient levels.

3. What is the quality control process for ingredients and finished products?

- Diets formulated to meet Association of American Feed Control Officials (AAFCO) or European Pet Food Industry Federation (FEDIAF) guidelines should meet their nutrient profiles. Does the diet meet the profile based on analysis using a nutrient database or on chemical analysis of the finished product?
- Manufacturers and pet food providers should have adequate quality control to ensure companion animal and owner safety. This should include ingredient (food and supplement) validation, final diet nutrient analysis, toxicology, bacteriology, and packaging/shelf-life screenings prior to, during, and after manufacturing.

4. What kind of product research or nutrition studies have been conducted? Is it published in peer-reviewed journals?

- Pet food companies are not required to conduct or sponsor nutritional research in order to produce and sell a food, but when they do, it indicates a commitment to animal health and wellness.

What to look for on a label

1. Nutrition Adequacy Statement?

- Is it a complete diet? Foods should be labeled to indicate if they provide a "complete" diet with all required nutrients. The label might also specify if this was determined via life stage feeding trials vs formulation to meet requirements. Those labeled as intended for "short-term", "intermittent", or "complementary" feeding should only be fed as a small portion of the diet (10% or less), or under veterinarian supervision if feeding a therapeutic diet.
- Does the food match the nutritional needs of the individual dog or cat? AAFCO and FEDIAF provide pet food manufacturers with recommended nutrient levels for different life-stages (reproduction, growth, and adult) for healthy dogs or cats. Diets labeled "for all life-stages" are formulated for reproduction and growth.

2. How many calories per gram or serving of food?

- Obesity prevalence is increasing in pets in many areas of the world. Having access to accurate pet food caloric content can help prevent unintended overfeeding. Calorie information is only required on pet food labels in the US. Where it is not provided on the label it should be available by contacting the manufacturer or calculating from label nutrient analysis.

3. Does the company provide immediate contact information such as a phone number or email address?

- Company representatives should be easily accessible for additional questions, such as the level of specific nutrients not on the label. Pet food companies should be able to provide an "average" or "typical" analysis for all essential nutrients in their food.

4. Who makes the food?

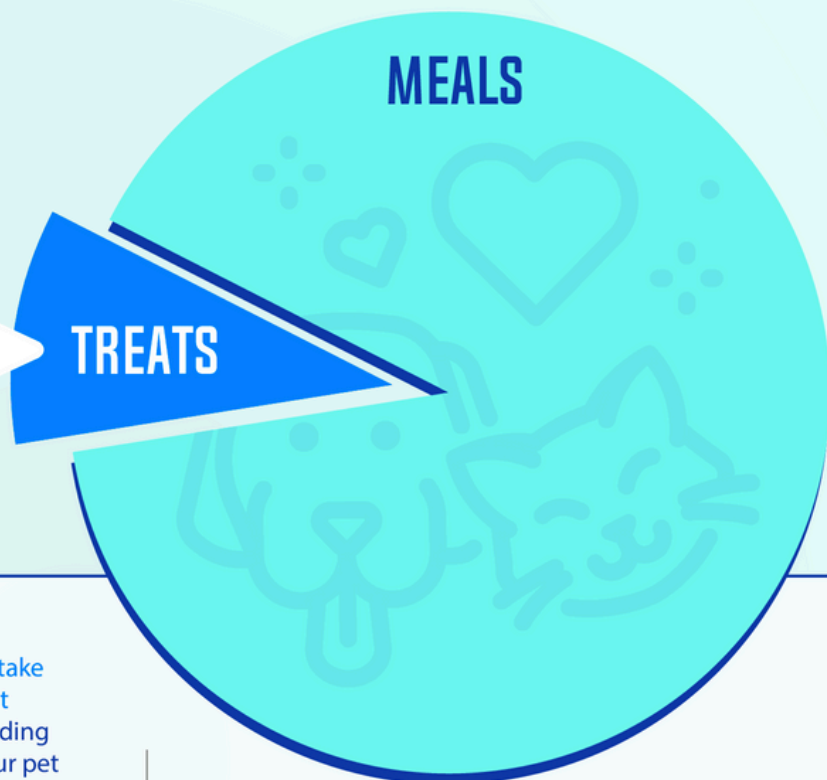
- Companies may make their own food (i.e., "Made by") or use a third-party manufacturer (i.e., "Made for" or "Distributed by").

If the manufacturer cannot or will not provide any of this information, veterinarians and owners should be cautious about feeding that brand.



MAKE THE MOST OF THE 10%

DID YOU KNOW TREATS SHOULD ONLY MAKE UP ABOUT 10% OF YOUR PET'S DAILY NUTRITIONAL INTAKE? FOLLOW THESE TIPS TO KEEP YOUR PETS HEALTHY, HAPPY, AND WELL "TREAT"-ED!



Treats are great **motivators**, though it might take trial and error to find out which treats your pet prefers. Offer your pet a variety of treats, including different textures and flavors, to see which your pet responds best to.



Sometimes, timing is everything! Treats can be given to reinforce desirable behaviors rather than just any old time. For example, wait until the pet is giving you eye contact, sitting, lying down, resting quietly, etc. Be careful not to give while your pet is begging at the counter or table.



Consider using higher value treats for more stressful situations. For example, if you typically feed your pet biscuit-type treats for everyday training, like BLUE™ Health Bars for dogs or BLUE Wilderness™ Cat Treats, you might reach for a higher value treat such as BLUE™ Sizzlers for dogs or BLUE™ Bursts for cats when it comes to a more stressful situation, like nail trim time.



Get creative! Sometimes daily food can be used as a "treat" in low-stress environments. One trick is to use regular kibbles soaked in warm water to make them more aromatic and palatable. If you are using larger treats, such as Blue Buffalo Health Bars, try breaking into small pieces (8-10) to dole out strategically rather than handing over the whole bar.



It's important to know the calories associated with each type of treat. Because each type of treat varies in caloric density, make sure to read the nutrition label of the treats you are feeding to figure out how many extra calories you are offering. Unsure about how many calories your pet needs? Ask your veterinarian for help calculating your pet's nutritional needs.



If you are concerned about treats contributing to weight gain, then try highly palatable, smaller training treats, like BLUE™ Bits for dogs. If you are using larger treats with your pet, try breaking them up to make their reward go further as well!



Daily Care

FOOD & WATER

- Feed your cat at least twice per day (amounts on bag label are an overestimate, talk to your vet!)
- Feed an AAFCO-compliant food
- Refer to our website for tips on how to pick the best food
- Clean water available 24/7

EXERCISE AND REST

Playtime is great physical exercise for your cat. Quality of play is always more important than the time spent! Find out what toys or activities get your cat moving.

Providing your cat a comfortable place to rest, nap, and wind down during the day is important. Offering puzzle toys, frozen treats, or lick mats are great during these quieter times.

BRUSHING

For all cats, brushing daily removes dead and loose fur. This lowers the amount of shedding around the house and chance of developing hairballs!

Especially for longer-haired cats, the coat should be brushed daily with a slicker brush and/or a comb. Many cats even enjoy brushing!

LITTER BOX CARE

- Scoop waste out of each litter box at least once per day
- Replace litter to refill if needed
- Keep an eye on litter box contents for any abnormalities

LOVE & AFFECTION

While cats may have a reputation of being aloof, they actually need and want your attention and affection. However, cats are individuals and might express that in different ways!

ENRICHMENT

Enrichment, or mental exercise, is just as important to your cat's health as physical exercise. Providing toys, training sessions, and other species-appropriate activities like scratching, sniffing, and "hunting" are all good examples. Just make sure they aren't ingesting any toy bits!

DENTAL CARE

Ideally, brushing teeth should be done every day, or multiple times weekly as tolerated. Dental chews or treats with a VOHC stamp may also be provided to help clean teeth, but are not a replacement for brushing!

Basic Additional Care

MEDICAL CARE

Monthly

- Flea/Tick/Parasite preventative medication (especially for cats with “cacios” or that go out on leashes!)
- Body Condition Score check

Yearly

- Wellness Exam
- Rabies, FVRCP Vaccinations
 - FeLV and BordetellaVaccinations may be optional
- Bloodwork, Parasite and Disease Testing, and Urinalysis
- Dental Procedures if needed



If possible, finding a **Fear Free Certified veterinarian** can help make your cat’s experience with these tasks so much more positive. This is important for both ease of care and your cat’s emotional wellness. Refer to our website or the Fear Free website to locate a nearby certified professional!

If your veterinarian says they “weren’t able” to do or finish something, this is actually a good sign! They are respecting your cat’s emotions and handling tolerance.

GROOMING

Baths and Trims

- Cats typically don’t need a bath unless visibly dirty or smelly
 - if you are bathing your cat, use a cat-safe shampoo (conditioner is optional, but should be cat-safe too)
- hair trims are only necessary if the cat’s coat becomes matted

Nail Trims

- At least every three weeks or as often as needed to keep the nail from touching the ground
- Using cat-sized nail trimmers can make the process easier

Hygiene

- Cleaning ears, wiping face/eyes, and other hygiene tasks should be done monthly or more frequently with environmental allergies or veterinarian direction



LITTER BOX CARE

- Empty, disinfect, and dry each litter box at least once per week
 - use a low-odor cat-safe disinfectant such as “Rescue”
- Refill litter as needed

CAT VACCINE AND PARASITE PREVENTION TIMELINE

The two core vaccinations for cats are...

FVRCP

Feline Viral Rhinotracheitis
Calicivirus
Panleukopenia

The FVRCP vaccine is a combination vaccine that covers three of the most common preventable viral diseases in cats.

Cats receive this vaccine
ONCE every year
or
ONCE every 3 years
after the initial booster series, which typically starts at 6-8 weeks old!

RABIES

The Rabies vaccine is a vaccine that protects against the fatal rabies virus. Because of the extremely high fatality of the disease and transmissibility to humans and other animals, having a Rabies vaccine documented with your county is mandated by law in Illinois.

Cats receive this vaccine
ONCE every year
or
ONCE every 3 years
depending on the vaccine type!

Other “non-core” vaccinations like Bordetella and FeLV may be available depending on your veterinarian and location!



PARASITE PREVENTION

Cats should receive preventative medication for *fleas, ticks, and intestinal parasites*. These preventative medications require an examination from your veterinarian and a prescription. However, if your cat is an adult at a stable weight, you can order up to 6 months or a year's supply at once! You can also order it to auto-ship on some websites!

Even though your cat isn't going on outdoor adventures (unless it's in a harness or catio!) you can still track in these parasites on your shoes or clothes. It's important for your cat to be protected! Preventatives are much less expensive than the treatments for these illnesses!


Helpful tips to help protect your pet and family.

- + Pick up and dispose of your pet's stool regularly.
- + Wash your hands after exposure to your pet's urine, stool, soil (gardening), and sandboxes.
- + Cover sandboxes and play areas to prevent wild-life and strays from contaminating these areas.
- + Remind children not to put dirt or dirty hands in their mouths.
- + Check your pet and your family for ticks regularly. If you find a tick, remove it right away.

What are parasites and why do they matter?

- + Parasites are organisms that survive by feeding on animals and sometimes people.
- + Parasites can live in a dog's or cat's blood, organs, or on their skin.
- + They can also spread diseases that can threaten the health of your pet and family.
- + Exposure to infection is possible wherever ticks, mosquitoes, and other blood-sucking insects are found.
- + Intestinal parasites can easily be contracted through contaminated dirt or sometimes through other parasites like fleas.
- + Prevention may not be 100% effective.
- + It's important to have your pet tested regularly as recommended by your veterinarian.

Causes of infection	Infectious diseases	Most common signs of infection	Disease progression if not treated	Diagnostics
 Exposure to contaminated soil or stool that contains eggs or worm larvae, transmission from mother to offspring during pregnancy, or ingestion of infected fleas can lead to worm infections.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hookworm• Roundworm• Whipworm• Flea tapeworm	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Diarrhea• Loose stool or blood in stool• Pale gums• Poor hair quality• Poor health• Pot-bellied appearance• Vomiting• Or may not show any signs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Failure to grow/thrive• Severe anemia• Weight loss• Death	<p>Stool sample and tests, including the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fecal antigen testing• Fecal ova and parasites testing
 Infected mosquitoes spread worm larvae from infected animals to your pet.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Heartworm	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mild cough• Reduced appetite• Reluctance to move or exercise• Weight loss	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Heart failure• Lung disease• Death	<p>Blood tests:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Comprehensive vector-borne diseases screen• Chemistry profile• Complete blood count <p>A urine test</p> <p>Other (depending on initial findings and clinical signs)</p>

 Infected ticks carry bacteria and bite your pet, spreading infection. Ticks spread many diseases.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Borrelia burgdorferi</i> (Lyme)• <i>Ehrlichia</i> spp.• <i>Anaplasma</i> spp.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bloody nose• Fever• Lack of energy• Lameness• Loss of appetite• Painful joints• Pale gums• Or may not show any signs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Autoimmune diseases• Bleeding complications• Chronic joint pain• Damaged joints• Death• Kidney disease• Low platelet count• Low white blood cell count	<p>Blood tests:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Comprehensive vector-borne diseases screen• Chemistry profile• Complete blood count <p>A urine test</p> <p>Other (depending on initial findings and clinical signs)</p>
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Ask your veterinarian about:



Fecal antigen testing:
finds intestinal parasite infections that other types of testing may miss.



Blood tests, including a comprehensive vector-borne disease screen:
testing your dog's blood reveals diseases spread by ticks and mosquitoes.



Effective treatments and prevention:
your veterinarian will recommend the best approach for your dog or cat.

AAFP CAT FRIENDLY CERTIFIED VETERINARIANS

INDIAN PRAIRIE ANIMAL HOSPITAL

Aurora
1195 S. Frontenac St.
(630) 820 -6999



LOYAL COMPANIONS

St. Charles
2312 W. Main St.
(630) 524 - 2125
Vicki Petsche, DVM

VCA BOONE

Western Springs
4720 Commonwealth Ave
(708) 246 - 5445
Alicia Hines, DVM

ABBNEYWOOD CAT HOSPITAL

Westmont
6323 Fairview Ave
info@abbneywoodcathospital.com
(630) 969 - 5432
*feline only practice

SANDWICH VETERINARY HOSPITAL

Sandwich
1214 E. Church St.
(815) 786 - 2103
Dr. Kate St. John, MDVM

VCA CAT HOSPITAL OF CHICAGO

Chicago
2851 W. Irving Park Rd
(773) 539 - 9080
*feline only practice

MEDICAL DISTRICT VETERINARY CLINIC

Chicago
2242 W. Harrison St.
(312) 226 - 2588
Drew Sullivan, DVM

MID NORTH ANIMAL HOSPITAL

Chicago
2201 N. Halsted
(773) 929 - 0777
Laura Schnoor, DVM



www.catfriendly.com/find-a-veterinary-professional/

Tips for Trimming Your Cat's Nails

Trimming your cat's nails in a Fear Free manner is definitely possible, but it takes patience and time to teach properly. Nail trim stress often stems from trying to do too much at once. Breaking down the process into several components and working on each one individually makes for faster, less-stressful progress.

Approach and setup

- Approach the cat in a nonthreatening and friendly way. Avoid head-on approaches and leaning over top. Instead, find ways to get close to the cat's level such as having the cat in an elevated area where she already hangs out (e.g., a cat tree, a perch, or the couch).
- Ensure the cat is on a nonslip surface that provides balance and stability. If using a countertop, be sure to add a cat bed, thick towel, or yoga mat underneath the cat.

Find the right treats

- Some cats will do better being allowed to continuously lick at a spreadable treat, while other cats will do better with you handling/clipping a nail first, then immediately feeding a treat afterwards. Experiment beforehand (and re-evaluate during) to see which your cat prefers.
- Have treats ready beforehand. These could be the cat's favorite bite-sized treats, or soft, lickable treats such as Churu, canned cat food, pureed tuna, or whipped cream.
 - 🐾 If using lickable treats, you'll need something such as a spoon, spatula, small plate, or a lick mat for the cat to lick the treat off of.

Don't rush the process

- 🐾 The following steps should be considered separate in the process of introducing your pet to nail trims.
- 🐾 Only progress to the next step if your pet is comfortable with the previous step and is not showing signs of stress such as: pinned ears, tail flicking, tucking tail and legs tightly to or beneath their body, rounded and darkened eyes, looking away, leaning away/pulling foot away, trembling, struggling, swatting, hissing, etc.
- 🐾 Each cat will progress at a different pace, so take things slowly and watch your cat carefully.
- 🐾 Don't rush the process. Even after you have completed all the below steps, don't feel compelled to trim all nails in one sitting. If you trim only one nail per session, that's a huge step.

Accustom your cat to:

1. The environment

Take your cat to the nonslip or elevated surface and allow her to be in the position of her choice (standing, sitting, or lying down). Feed a treat.

2. The Sensation of a nail being touched

Initiate touch first where the cat is most comfortable being touched, like their cheek, head, chin, or neck. Then, while maintaining gentle touch, slide a finger or hand down to their shoulder or hip, down a leg to a paw and nail. Give a treat. Repeat several times.

3. The Sight of the nail clippers

Place the nail clipper on the ground or surface the cat is on and let the cat investigate or sniff it on her own. Give a treat. Bring the tool close to your cat. Give a treat.

4. The Sound of clipping

Clip a piece of dry pasta at a distance away from your cat's nail to simulate the sound of a nail being clipped. Give a treat. Repeat, and gradually move closer to the cat's nail.

5. The Sensation of a toe being gently squeezed

Again, starting where the cat is most comfortable being touched, gently slide the finger or hand to the shoulder/hip, glide down the leg, and work toward handling the cat's paws and nails while feeding treats. Progress to gently squeezing a toe to isolate the pet's nail for clipping. Give a treat. Repeat several times.

6. The feel of the clippers against a nail

Again, starting where the cat is most comfortable being touched and moving toward the shoulder/hip, glide gently down the leg to the foot and touch the clippers to the pet's nail. Give a treat. Repeat several times.

7. The Sensation of a nail being clipped

Finally, if your cat is comfortable with all previous steps, try clipping one nail. Immediately feed a treat afterwards. Proceed only if your cat is not showing signs of stress, and feed a treat after each clip.



Additional notes

Encourage regular use of scratching posts to maintain shorter front claw length. Positive draws like wand toys, catnip, and treats can encourage paw placement on scratching posts and reinforce the desirable action of scratching.

If your pet shows moderate to severe signs of stress with nail trims, or you are unable to make progress despite taking things slowly and using high-value treats, consider consulting with one or more of the following:

- 🐾 A Fear Free Certified® animal trainer or other certified positive reinforcement trainer or certified animal behaviorist
- 🐾 A Fear Free Certified® veterinarian or a veterinary behaviorist who could prescribe a medication to give your pet before nail trims to decrease the cat's fear
- 🐾 A Fear Free Certified® groomer

How To Stop Your Cat From Scratching Furniture

One of the most common complaints about cats is that they scratch the furniture with their claws resulting in a shredded mess. Why do they insist on ruining your stuff?



By Kelley Bollen

Well, the first thing you need to understand is that scratching is a normal and important behavior for cats. It's not just a behavior they like to do, it's a behavior they have to do. Every two to three months, the outer sheath of the cat's nail comes off to make room for the newer nail to grow in. Scratching helps cats remove that dead nail sheath. In addition to this necessary function, scratching is also an important marking behavior for cats. Cats are very territorial animals, and scratching is one way that they mark their territory. The visual mark that they leave behind (the shredded substrate) tells everyone that this area is theirs. In addition to the visual marks, cats also leave an olfactory mark on the scratched surface. You see, cats have scent glands in the pads of their feet and, when they scratch on something, they also deposit the substance in those glands onto the surface. Because a cat's sense of smell is their most important sense, leaving behind a scent mark is a powerful message to other cats.

Since scratching is such a normal and important behavior for cats, there is no way to stop them from doing it. The goal is to get them to scratch on a more suitable item like a scratching post so that they stop damaging your furniture. There are many different kinds of scratching posts so it's important to purchase the ones that cats prefer. The first thing to consider is the substrate covering the post. Although many of the scratching posts you find in stores are covered in loop carpeting, cats do not prefer this substrate because their claws get caught in the carpet loops when they scratch. If you purchase a carpeted post, make sure it's covered with low pile berber carpeting. The posts that most cats prefer, however, are the ones covered with sisal rope or those made of natural wood. You can even make your own natural wood post using a tree branch or log from the woodpile.

The second important component is the height of the post. A vertical scratching post needs to be tall and stable. Cats love to stretch their whole body when they scratch so the short posts are not preferred. And if the post is not stable and falls over when the cat scratches on it, they will stop using it. Some cats also enjoy horizontal posts. Many of the horizontal scratching boards are made of corrugated cardboard and are quite inexpensive. My recommendation is to purchase a variety of scratching posts so your cat has a choice.

The last bit of advice is the location of the posts. It is important to place the posts in prominent areas of your house. This is where your cat feels he needs to advertise his presence – not in the back bedroom or the basement. If your cat is scratching on the sofa in your living room, put a scratching post near the sofa. While you may not want a scratching post in your living room, it's way better to have one there than to replace your expensive sofa every few years.

Living peacefully with your cat takes understanding of their kitty ways and providing an environment where they can do cat things without it causing human grief and frustration.

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HOW TO PILL YOUR PET WITH KINDNESS



FEAR FREE
HAPPY
HOMES®
Helping pets live happy, healthy, full lives



You can teach your pet to tolerate and even enjoy taking a pill. This is an important skill for young puppies and kittens to learn, and adult dogs and cats can benefit as well. Avoid this training if your pet is apprehensive or aggressive about being touched near the face. Here's how to get started.

- 🐾 Set up a comfortable treatment station with a nonslip surface in a quiet area of the home.
- 🐾 Take your pet to the treatment station routinely and give a special treat (something super-tasty that he doesn't get all the time) or meal there without doing a treatment. You are putting money in the treatment bank and creating a positive association with the location. Some treatments may be slightly uncomfortable, resulting in a small withdrawal from the bank of positive experiences. Create enough reserves to minimize impact.
- 🐾 Once your pet loves going to the treatment station, start practicing the pilling process there. Reach toward your pet's face, give a small treat, and let the pet eat the treat, repeating several times.
- 🐾 As long as the pet is not showing any avoidance or fear, progress to touching your pet's face by creating a 'C' with your thumb and index finger and placing your fingers over your pet's nose or, for small dogs and cats, over their forehead with your fingers behind their whiskers and lips. Give your pet a treat for accepting this handling. Repeat several times.
- 🐾 Begin to tip your pet's head back, and follow the action with a treat.
- 🐾 Next, with one hand stabilizing the nose/head and tilting it back, use your middle finger on your other hand to touch the front of your pet's lower jaw. Give a treat.
- 🐾 Holding a pea-size treat between your thumb and index finger, tilt the head back, and place your middle finger on the lower jaw. When your pet opens his mouth, place the treat in.
- 🐾 Continue to practice, opening the mouth wider for longer periods. Always follow with a treat. When a pill does have to be given, your pet will be relaxed with the process. Make sure to always follow pilling with a treat if medically appropriate.

You can use similar steps to teach your pet to accept procedures, such as ear cleaning or eye drops given. Consider incorporating the assistance of a skilled animal trainer dedicated to Fear Free and positive training methods to learn this skill with your pet. Contact your Fear Free Certified® Veterinary Professional for their recommendations.



Monitoring Cats for Signs of Social Stress and Incompatibility

Careful observation is required in the context of groups of cats because signs of social stress may appear deceptively subtle, despite high levels of FAS and poor welfare. Passive signs of stress and subtle posturing are especially common. Observers must carefully observe and take note of each cat on a daily basis. Recognize when social behavior is healthy and appropriate and when it is not, and act quickly to reassign cats when there are signs of conflicts and FAS.

Look for relaxed body postures (especially when cats are near one other) and displays of normal behaviors (comfortably moving about at will, changing locations, eating, sleeping restfully, grooming, playing, and affiliating with other cats). When cats are bonded, they often sleep together. And, they may rub and groom one another or play together. These behaviors indicate of social harmony.

Examples of passive signs of stress include social withdrawal, constant hiding, remaining sequestered in one place, feigning sleep, hypervigilance, poor appetite, and lack of grooming. Always remember to look for the “absence of behavior” as well as for behavior. Ask yourself, what should the cats be doing, and why might they not be doing it?

Below is a list of “red flag” behaviors: these behaviors may indicate unacceptable levels of social tension, conflict, and FAS among cats.

- Bullying (i.e., repeatedly staring at another cat, bothering another cat that clearly does not want to interact, ignoring avoidance signals)
 - Passive or covert aggression is common (assertive posturing, intense staring, blocking access to food, litter, and preferred resting areas)
- Spraying/ and other forms of territorial marking
- Inappropriate elimination (urinating or defecating out of the litter box)
- High ranking cats may control access to food/resources
 - Usually through intimidation, staring, posturing, threatening
 - Occasionally, through overt aggression (growling, hissing, combat)
- Low ranking cats may be sequestered on perches or on the floor and may display:
 - Signs of anxiety (facial and body tension, hypervigilance, fear-related postures)
 - Activity and social withdrawal, avoidance
 - Constant hiding
 - Feigning sleep
 - Reduction of normal maintenance behaviors such as eating, grooming or restful sleeping
 - Only coming out of hiding when people enter the room; while more assertive members of the group are preoccupied with human attention, a subordinate cat may discover this is a safe time to use the litter box or eat