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The Best Way To Give A Cat A Bath

Toys For Mental Health

Myth Buster: Cats Need Punishment

Training Tips: Pros And Cons Of Positive Reinforcement

Next Issue: Training Tips: How To Stop Destructive Behaviors



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Next Issue: Training Tips: How To Stop Destructive Behaviors

Toys For Mental Health



If you've ever met a cat that didn't have any toys, you'd know how mopey they can get. The simple fact is that cats not only enjoy toys, but they also like to have their own possessions. This is so ingrained in them. In fact, when my cat, Riley, was first let inside after being a stray, the very first thing he did was steal a toy from my other cat. Five years later, that toy is still special to him.

Sadly, there are still some owners who don't understand why their kitty needs toys. But if you want them to have the best possible mental health, they absolutely NEED to have stimulating objects that they feel free to go wild with – and on. Much like how a human child uses playtime to learn, your cat needs to have this outlet, too.

It is important to note, however, that all toys are not created equally. And, of course, not all cats will be drawn to the same types of toys. It may take a bit of trial and error to get it right, but it's definitely worth the effort!

Why Does My Cat Need Toys?

If you're still wondering what the point of giving them toys is, it's to offer them and you an enhanced experience. There are many important things that toys can provide for your kitty, including:

- Keeping your cat mentally stimulated throughout the day.
- Helping you bond with your cat.
- Promoting hygiene and physical health for your cat.

Most importantly, your cat's overall health will be directly tied to how often you play with them. To give you a guideline, The Anti-Cruelty Society says that the average adult cat needs a MINIMUM of 30 minutes of playtime. Kittens need even more, with at LEAST 45–60 minutes of playtime per day. These play sessions should be broken up so that you play with your cat a few times throughout the day.

Using an interactive toy works best because it can be there for them even if you're not. After all, humans get really busy sometimes, but this doesn't mean your cat's needs will disappear. During these periods, be sure to provide them with an electronic toy that simulates human interaction. Doing this is the best way to ensure that your cat's brain stays happy and healthy.

The Best Interactive Cat Toy Types For Mental Health/Stimulation

Because we're looking for ways to stimulate their mind even when we can't be home, we're going to take a look at electronic and/or fully interactive options. We'll also designate certain toys by cats' age group.

Robotic Feather Chaser



Almost the entire basis for playtime is to simulate a cat's natural predator-and-prey relationship. By providing him or her with a robotic feather chaser, you've provided them with a role and set very clear guidelines for their engagement with the prey. This will bring their hunting instincts to the forefront; in fact, it's going to be difficult to find another toy that simulates the natural behavior of a cat's prey quite like this one.

So, what exactly is a robotic feather chaser? It'll look similar to the nearby image, but all of them have some unique features. It works in a similar

manner to a remote-control car, although there isn't a remote. Because of this toy's fully interactive nature, it actually responds to your cat's actions, including how they chase after it. The feather attached to the top will jump and dance around on its wire, which will bring out your kitty's instincts to go after this toy as if it were a small animal or bird.

One thing we absolutely love about robotic feather chasers is that most of them come equipped with multiple speed settings. Therefore, if your cat is a bit slower moving, you can turn it down. But if your kitten wants to go wild, you can turn the speed up! Another nice touch is that some of these toys even come with several feather attachments, so you can cycle through them to prevent your cat from getting bored.

If the toy you purchase offers it, you could pre-program the robotic feather chaser to go through an entire series of its offerings. You might even have the option to have it automatically turn on for 20 minutes at multiple points during the day. This definitely makes these more than worthwhile, and your cat will thank you for it!

Interactive Laser Toy



Interactive lasers can drive your cat up the wall (sometimes literally!), which can make them fun for short bursts. Most cats enjoy chasing the laser because it helps them build confidence, lose weight, and remain mentally stimulated. However, there are a few tips for using the laser appropriately.

- Be aware of where you're pointing the laser. NEVER point it into their eyes or allow it to go too high up the wall, as your cat could get injured.
- Be sure to let them 'catch' the light occasionally. This will build their confidence and, also, who wants to play with an object they can't ever catch?
- Be careful not to let your cat hurt themselves or get overworked. For instance, start slow with a cat that usually sleeps on the couch all day.

The point of having an interactive laser is that you don't have to move it around by hand. The laser takes care of all of that for you! For more connective play, though, you should take control of the laser pointer. Try the following to make your cat happy:

1. Aim it at the ground, a few feet away from your cat.
2. Use small, prey-like movements to capture your kitty's attention. Think about what a rodent would do if it were running through your home. Imitate their behavior, and your cat will absolutely love it!
3. When your cat moves in for the 'kill,' move the light away by a few feet. Keep repeating this process, but allow your cat to 'catch' the light occasionally.
4. When you let your cat catch the light, give her a bit of time to study it. Then, you can begin to slowly move it away again. This will give them the sensation of their prey getting away, and they'll leap back into action.

It's going to take a moment or two to get your cat to go after the laser. This is because cats naturally take their time when hunting. As long as your cat is looking at the laser, they're at least somewhat engaged, and you should continue to play with them.

Whether you use an interactive laser pointer or one you hold by hand, it's critically important not to allow this type of play to go on for too long. What

begins as a fun game could end up causing your cat massive frustration if you're not careful. Keep laser playtime to a few quick bursts of between 5 to 10 minutes.

Which Interactive Toys Work Best For Young Kittens And/Or Small Cats?



Your kitten is going to need a more intensive playtime than an adult cat. As far as small adult cats go, they're going to need a toy they can actually work their paws or mouth around. For either, we recommend the following toys.

Rollerbball Cat Toy



Whether you get a multi-tiered rollerball or one that simply has one ball on a single track, your kittens are almost guaranteed to lose it over this toy type. And the best part is that it's entirely interactive, which means your kitten won't need your help to play!

If you happen to have a very clever cat, they might remove one or more of the balls and go chasing after it! As long as you keep a good enough eye on this toy to know where the ball(s) end up, you can retrieve them after playtime and plop them back inside the track.

On a side note, these toys may be best suited for smaller cats, but my ginormous 21-pound feline also loves them. He does have a bit of difficulty getting down to their level, though, especially if it only has one track.

Treat-Dispensing Puzzle Toy



Is your cat food motivated? Then they're going to love this toy type! You load it up with treats or food to reward your kitten's intelligence. This is going to make them happy, and it's also going to build their confidence.

Be sure to choose an appropriate size and build for your cat. After all, some cats will want to chase a ball, while others will prefer to dig out treats and toys from a rectangular box.

Windmill Toy

Want to give your kitten a simple toy that seems like it's anything but? Windmill toys offer a portable option, and they have two arms that will spin around. Even better, if your cat shows even the slightest interest in this toy, it will start spinning.



The two arms hold a clear ball each. You can shove whatever you'd like into the balls, including food. Adding small bells to the balls is another great way to introduce additional sound. Perhaps the best part is that windmill toys are made from a soft silicone-like material, which is ideal for keeping your cat's chompers looking pearly white.

Which Interactive Toys Work Best For Large Cats?



Size matters, at least to cats. If you've got a big cat, you're going to need to offer them larger toys. Not only will this keep them mentally stimulated, but a large toy is better constructed to hold up as your huge kitty plays with it!

Bergan Turbo Scratcher



This toy provides your cat with two important outlets: keeping her claws healthy and trimmed and giving her a roller ball to play with! Most owners sprinkle catnip onto the cardboard section to encourage their cat to scratch it.

What's the best part, though? That the cardboard center is replaceable! In other words, your cat can tear it up with abandon, and you'll just need to slip in new cardboard from time to time.

Interestingly, some cats who love tearing apart cardboard boxes may be unwilling to give this toy a try. This is a sensory issue, so pay close attention to how your cat chooses to use – or not use – this toy. If your cat is one of the rare ones that doesn't like this particular toy, then don't try to replace it with another cardboard scratcher because it's only going to gather dust.

Kong Figure Eight Track



Want to offer your large cat a toy that will keep them entertained for hours? They'll be completely drawn in, thanks to the Kong Figure Eight Track's unique design. With a variety of toys and playful compartments, the only question will be, what area do they attack first? They can choose from the two roller balls, a furry tail that can be filled with catnip, or the feather topper. This toy is approximately 18" long, which makes it well-suited to larger cats.

Teaching Your Cat To Use Interactive Toys

Although the interactive toy you've purchased is probably simple to figure out, your cat may need a bit of coaxing to use it. The good news is that this provides you both with the added experience of bonding time. Try the following tips to get and keep your cat engaged:

- Demonstrate to your cat how they're expected to play with the toy.
- Change out their toys on a regular basis (NOTE: This doesn't mean throwing them away. You can reintroduce toys over time, and this should work again and again).
- Be sure you closely monitor how your cat plays with a new toy before you leave them alone with it.
- If all else fails, use catnip or treats! This should entice your cat to play.

Additional Items Your Cat May Love

Now that you've chosen a cat toy or two, how about we look at some other items your beloved feline may love?

Collapsible Cat Tunnel

Purchase a tunnel that's appropriately sized for your cat. If you've got a Maine Coon or another large cat breed, consider purchasing a child's play tunnel instead. Either way, cats love to duck in and out of these toys!



There are a ton of different styles, but one of the more traditional cat tunnels will provide two or three exit/entry points on the top, the two normal openings, and perhaps even a fuzzy toy. Plus, they'll receive different sensory input than they would if they simply walked on your carpet.

Outdoor Cat Tent



Would you like to let your cat go outside but don't want him to get lost? You've got to get an outdoor cat tent! Once you've set this up in your yard, porch or deck, your cat will have tons of room to move around. The one pictured has more than 15 square feet of room, and that's just in the tent part alone!

This tent can also be used indoors, but we can almost guarantee you that your feline will enjoy it more as they bask in the warm glow of sunlight. Just be sure to check that your cat isn't strong enough to somehow burst out of the high-quality mesh and four tent pegs.

Most cats will play in this for a bit, and then they'll settle down and watch all the little critters and birds. Giving them this up close and personal look at the wildlife they usually stalk from behind a window will absolutely delight them!

Pet Playpen



These playpens work for cats and dogs, and they can be used indoors or outside. And luckily for you, a playpen is also lightweight and very portable. You can take your cat on the road with you and set them up in their playpen once you arrive at your destination. This will make them feel more secure, and the playpen will also protect them.

With just one purchase, you've got a place for them to play, hide, rest, and isolate themselves a bit. In other words, this is ideal for most cats.

Final Thoughts

Cats need to have toys, and they also need to play with them. Even my oldest cat – who was 18 – still needed toys from time to time. She might have laid down with them more often than she got wild with them, but she still had her moments. And your cat will, too!

Provide at least one appropriate item from the lists above to make your cat feel safer, happier, and less frustrated with their living environment. Take the time to play with them, and they'll become even happier. And remember, most cats are pranksters. If your cat taps your feet or legs and runs away, it's because they want you to chase them!

What way do you prefer to learn? From praise and positive reinforcement or from being punished? We're guessing you said praise since that's the way that everyone learns best – including your cat!

What exactly is positive reinforcement when it comes to a cat? It means that you should give your cat something that they'll consider a reward whenever they do what you've asked of them. The best part is that this is the number one way to get a cat's attention. Once you praise them for doing something positive, they're much more likely to repeat the desired behavior. If you praise them enough times, the behavior will become almost like second nature to them.

Teach What You Want Them To Do And Ignore The Rest

When it comes to direct interaction between you and your kitty, the absolute best way to get them to respond is through positive reinforcement. Just make sure you also use the correct timing. Otherwise, your feline friend will be confused about what behavior you're rewarding. In fact, they must receive their reward within seconds, or else they won't associate the proper behavior with the reward.

Let's say that you want to encourage your cat to use their scratching post more often. The next time they use it, toss a piece of kibble or a treat to them. Make sure you do this WHILE they're scratching the post. Otherwise, they might believe that you actually rewarded them for stopping.

If there are multiple people in your household who interact with your cat, be sure that everyone is on the same page. The most important thing you can remember about your kitty is that he or she thrives on consistency. The second most important thing is that ignoring your cat's bad behavior is a proven way to teach them that you don't like what they just did.

Why does ignoring them work better than punishing them for their wrongdoing? Contrary to popular belief, your cat is a social creature. He or she wants you to notice what they're doing, and they definitely want to receive praise. If you ignore them instead, they're going to eventually get the hint. Remember: Do NOT make eye contact with them if you're 8 purposely trying to ignore them.



Training Tips: Pros And Cons Of Positive Reinforcement

Positive Reinforcement Tips

There are numerous things that count as positive reinforcement. For instance, you can give them a piece of kibble or a treat, but you can also use petting, praise, and their favorite game or toy. The important thing is to make sure that the experience you give them is positive.

Let's return to our example of the scratching post. Naturally, you want them to use their post instead of your furniture. Therefore, you should begin by providing positive reinforcement each time they scratch their post. You can take this a step further by either dangling a toy on the post or spraying it with catnip.

What if you were to take your cat over to their post and position their paws on it? What if you took this even further by moving their paws up and down on the post? You'd think this would work like gangbusters, but that's because you're only thinking about things from the human perspective. If you could climb inside your cat's mind, you'd most likely find that your actions were uncomfortable and confusing. They might even become frightening.

Instead of unintentionally freaking your cat out, do what they like best: offer praise and/or treats when they get it right on their own. It's vital that you

remember not to offer positive reinforcement only once. A cat learns by repetition, so that's exactly what you've got to do. This doesn't mean that you'll be giving your cat a treat every single time she gets it right, however.

What you should do is provide treats/praise each time until it seems like they've picked up on the behavior. You may then slowly phase out giving them treats/praise. For example, you may give them a treat three out of four times, then two out of four times, etc., until the behavior is basically set in stone. Of course, surprising your kitty with a treat or some praise sporadically is always appreciated and will help ensure that your cat doesn't backslide.

Does Punishment Ever Have Its Place?



Punishing your cat for a behavior you don't like – such as climbing on the kitchen counter – can be delivered in the form of a postural, verbal, or physical interaction. If you are bound and determined to punish your cat, you **MUST** do it while your kitty is actually doing the negative act. If you wait even two seconds too long, your cat won't have any context for why you're punishing them.

Cats have a different mental framework than humans and even dogs. While a dog may know that he's done something wrong and even feel guilty about it, your cat doesn't have a sense of what's right and wrong. They also never act out of spite or for revenge. In other words, they're already at a disadvantage because they truly can't understand why you've decided to correct them. Therefore, use punishments very sparingly, if at all.

Do **NOT** use any type of physical punishment that involves pain or even discomfort. For instance, let's

say you get really frustrated and lash out by grabbing your cat by the scruff of her neck and giving her a shake. Do you really expect her to not scratch or bite you? Again, a cat doesn't understand why you're acting this way, so the most likely result is that you'll get hurt, and your cat won't trust you anymore.

Even worse is the fact that anyone else in the room may also become associated with the punishment. Want to know what this can lead to? Let's say you have a baby that was in the same room. If your cat suddenly becomes aggressive or fearful of the baby – or perhaps of **ANY** baby – it will lead to a whole new list of problems. And, despite what you may think, these new problems are your fault.

Therefore, the best plan of action is to **NOT** punish your cat. You should ignore them when they do something bad instead. This will get your point across much more quickly – and much more effectively – than a punishment. After all, your cat is constantly angling to receive praise from you, so he will change tactics soon enough from being ignored.

Attempting to punish your cat can bring about many negative feelings, including frightening them and/or eroding their trust in you. This means that the best way to provide 'punishment' is for it to seem like it didn't come from you. A good example would be to use double-sided tape to make it difficult for your cat to claw the couch. This will give them tacky paws, which they won't like. At the same time, it'll make your couch the enemy, not you.

One thing you do need to do, however, is help them understand what types of behaviors are more appropriate for each situation. Therefore, if they try to claw your couch and get turned away by their tacky paws, you should help lure them to their scratching post instead. One proven way to do this is by offering them a treat, then tossing it to their post. This will literally redirect them in a more appropriate way.

Step-By-Step Guide To Positive Reinforcement

Now that you have a good overview of the importance of positive reinforcement, let's go over each step individually.

Reward Good Behavior



To put it as simply as possible, reward wanted behaviors. Just make sure that you always reward them immediately, so that they don't associate the positive behavior with something else they've done.

Do you want a cat that chats with you all day? Reward her for talking. Would you rather have a quiet cat? Reward him for staying quiet. Do you want your cat to join you on the couch? Reward her for doing so. Would you prefer that your kitty stay off the furniture? Reward him for not jumping up onto the couch.

As you can see, you can have a major impact on what your cat does and does not do. This will help shape him for the rest of his life, so be absolutely certain that you want the behaviors you reward because he'll definitely remember them.

Teach New Behaviors With Rewards

If you want your cat to pick up a new behavior, using rewards should get you there. Let's say, for instance, that you really want your cat to come to you whenever you call her. Cats don't do that, though – right? Well, if you offer a reward each time your cat listens to you, she will learn to do so pretty fast.

Find The Right Motivation

Motivation is the key, and it's really easy to find what motivates your cat. Without even meeting him or her, we can pretty much guarantee you that food provides their major motivation in life. The only difficult part is determining what type of food will motivate her the most.

Some ideas include treats, kibble, a bit of tuna, etc. You may need to go through a bit of trial and error to find out which one motivates your cat the most, but once you've figured it out, you'll be sitting pretty. Reward her with her chosen food each time she does something right such as letting you brush her, using her scratching post, letting you trim her nails, etc.

The level of intelligence that your feline friend has will make a difference, with the smartest cats getting it almost immediately. But even if you happen to have a cat that doesn't have two brain cells to rub together, they'll eventually understand, too.

Reward Them Immediately

I can't stress enough how important it is to give them their reward while they're still doing the correct behavior. You may think that rewarding them once they've stopped is the right move, but this will only serve to confuse them. So, if your cat is using their scratching post, toss them a treat WHILE they're scratching. You can say, "good kitty" or give them a gentle scratch on the top of their heads.

Again, just to be clear, any rewards that are given to your cat AFTER it stops the positive behavior WON'T help them learn. Cats have a very short attention span, so do everyone a favor and offer them an immediate reward when they do the right thing.

Reward Them Consistently



If you really want them to learn a specific behavior, you've got to commit to rewarding them – and offering the same reward – every single time they

engage in that behavior. Over time, you can begin giving them fewer and fewer rewards, but it's absolutely vital that rewards are offered the first 10 or so times.

Pick The Right Time For Training

Did you know that there is actually a perfect time to train your cat? Because felines tend to be so food motivated, you can receive excellent results if you train them before mealtime. They'll be at their most motivated to find food, so they'll also be at their most motivated to associate food with their behavior.

One thing that a lot of people don't realize, however, is that no cat is going to have a long enough attention span to be in training for more than 15 minutes at an absolute maximum. When you first begin, you won't want to work on training for more than a couple of minutes at a time. You can gradually work your way up to your cat's limit.

Eventually Move Away From Treats

If you give your kitten too many treats, he's going to become overweight. That's why you'll eventually want to move away from treats and begin giving them emotional rewards instead.

As soon as your cat has shown that he reliably displays the desired behavior, start cutting back on food rewards. As previously stated, you should begin by giving him a treat three out of four times, then move on to about half the time, followed by about a third of the time, and so on. The goal is to reach a point where he'll still demonstrate the behavior, even if all you do is say, "good kitty," toss his favorite ball, or give him a scratch on his chin.

Of course, you'll want to occasionally reward your cat with treats. This will reinforce their positive behavior.

Try Training And Rewards For High-Stress Situations

If your cat gets stressed out when you attempt to pick them up, trim their nails, and/or take them to the vet, you can try to make the experience better by giving them treats.

However, don't be surprised if it doesn't work. While some cats are so food motivated that food will always win, most cats will have their limits, and you should respect them. If this means letting a professional trim their nails so that you and your cat can remain bonded, so be it.

You Shouldn't Punish Your Cat

It's understandable to feel the temptation to yell at your cat. But all it's going to do is confuse and frighten them. Even worse, unless you time it out perfectly, your cat will believe that he's being punished for whatever he happens to be doing at the moment of punishment. It doesn't matter if that's greeting you or taking a nap – either way, it's going to cause confusion. Your cat may even begin avoiding you altogether.

Forcing Your Cat Won't Work

Picking up your cat and moving them to where you want them to be isn't going to work. Instead, you're just going to scare them, which will make it even harder for them to learn.

Be Careful Of Turning Your Cat Into A Beggar

If you plan to use treats to train her, then don't offer treats at any other time. Be aware that if you do, what you're telling your cat is that they can get some treats by pawing at you. Once they learn this behavior, it's really difficult to get them to unlearn it.

Final Thoughts

Positive reinforcement works well for cats, and that's why it's the number one recommended way to train them. By the way, yes, it's definitely possible to train cats, but most people don't put in the proper amount of time and energy to do so. In fact, if your feline friend happens to be intelligent, there is basically no limit to what they can learn.

The truth is that your cat is only limited by your lack of imagination. Therefore, if you want them to walk on a leash or even to go to the toilet instead of using a litter box, always use positive reinforcement!



The Best Way To Give A Cat A Bath

Cats are wonderful creatures for many reasons, one of which is that they can mostly take care of their own bathing needs. However, there will most likely come a time when your feline friend has gotten himself too dirty to tackle the entire issue on his own. When this moment comes, you'll have to decide if you can handle it or if you should take him to a groomer instead.

Of course, running to a groomer every time your cat gets poop stuck to his butt is not sustainable (unless you happen to be rich). Therefore, we're going to teach you everything you need to do to ensure a quick and relatively painless bathing experience – for both of you.

Why Don't Cats Like Water?

For most cats, water is the enemy. If you happen to have one of the following breeds, though, they might take to it without any issues.

- Turkish Van
- Turkish Angora
- Maine Coon
- Bengal
- Highlander
- Egyptian Mau
- Abyssinian
- Japanese Bobtail
- Norwegian Forest Cat
- Kurilian Bobtail
- Siberian
- Savannah

Being on this list isn't a guarantee that they'll enjoy being in water, but it makes it much, much more likely.

For every other breed of cat, it mostly comes down to their biological instinct. That's because most cats' lineage can be traced to the world's desert regions. In other words, they never got used to taking baths with actual water because they were highly unlikely to encounter enough of it to do so.

Interestingly, just like with our list of examples above, there are some big cats that love water (tigers), while others hate it (panthers and lions). What appears to have the most sway over your cat's individual likes? It comes down to the fact that most of them have a moisture-absorbent coat. In other words, rather than deflecting moisture, their fur will soak it up. Therefore, if they get wet, they will stay wet for a long time, seriously messing up their grooming time.

Why Does My Cat Need To Be Bathed?

There are many different reasons that your cat may not be able to keep herself clean. The most prominent reason, however, is that she's picked up some fleas. If you need to treat your kitty with a flea regimen, be sure to bathe her BEFORE doing so.

Skunks are another reason your cat may need a bath, and you'd better hope you have one of the few water-loving cats because it will probably take multiple washes before she smells okay. Cats can also get a stinky butt, and nothing will encourage them to do a better job of grooming than having their butt stuck in some water!

Be aware that cats seem to enjoy rolling in dry, powdery dirt. When they do this, they DON'T need a bath because it's a natural alternative to a powder bath. This is going to clean the oils off their skin and fur. Allow them to do what comes naturally, then use your vacuum to clean it all up.

Getting Your Supplies Prepared

Now that we've explored why your cat doesn't like to take a bath, it's time to get into how to make the process as pleasant as possible. The first thing you should do is gather your supplies BEFORE you bring your kitty into the bathroom. You'll need:

- Cat shampoo
- Rubber gloves
- A gentle spray nozzle or a large pitcher for rinsing
- A large towel
- A small cloth to clean their face
- Cotton balls to clean their ears

Once you've got your supplies together, you can bring your cat into the bathroom. You could also use your kitchen sink to bathe your cat, but the bathroom has an advantage because it's a smaller, confined space. Just be sure to use the sink in your bathroom, if possible, rather than the tub.

The Bathing Process



You should do the first bathing step – filling your sink with approximately two to three inches of warm (never hot) water before you bring your kitty into the bathroom. After that, you'll want to wet your cat from her shoulders to her tail, and apply shampoo.

Next, lather and rinse her fur thoroughly, just as you would for your own hair. Be aware that most cats absolutely detest getting water in their face, so you'll want to avoid it as much as possible. Rather than washing and rinsing their head, you should use a damp washcloth and gently clean their head.

Use a cotton ball to clean the inside of her ears. Don't put any other type of object into her ears, including Q-Tips. Once this is done, ensure that all the shampoo has been thoroughly rinsed, and then lift your cat into a large towel. Fold it around her for her comfort – and your protection! Rub her with the towel, and remove as much water from her fur as possible.

If you've got a long-haired cat, a hair dryer can be useful. Of course, you've got to check whether or not she can stand the loud noise. Try setting your hair dryer to 'low' and see if she can tolerate it. If so, fantastic! If not, don't try to force it.

Buy Supplies Made For Cats

Unless you want to cause stinging and irritation to your cat's eyes or skin, making him even less likely to cooperate with future baths, you must purchase supplies that are actually made for him. If you find yourself in a pinch, you could use a mild baby shampoo but don't reach for any other human products. It's always best to purchase a shampoo that's specially formulated for cats.

Wait...Should I Even Give My Cat A Bath?

For the most part, cats don't need to be bathed. That's why they've got such agile bodies and a tongue like sandpaper. In most instances, they can – and will – clean themselves. Like everything else in life, though, there are some exceptions. For instance, if your cat gets into paint or becomes especially dirty.

Basically, you should be prepared to give your kitty a bath if he steps over the line of cleanliness, but don't be surprised if most of your cat shampoo simply sits in the bottle. From a bonding standpoint, it's actually a good thing if your cat doesn't need help with grooming too often.

How To Prevent Giving Your Cat A Bath



You now know how to give your kitty a bath, but it's really not some type of end game experience. In fact, if your cat stays dry for her entire life, you've probably done something very, very right. Try utilizing the following tips to prevent baths altogether.

Brush Your Kitty Regularly

Generally speaking, there is no reason for your cat to need a bath unless there is something in their fur that you can't easily remove by brushing. You see, while giving a cat a bath isn't a normal, everyday thing to do, you should be brushing their fur on a daily basis.

Speaking of brushing their fur, it may not be as easy as it seems. Some cats will take to any type of cat brush, while others will be quite picky.

For example, my 18-year-old cat liked any and all brushes, but Riley made me go through several brushes before he found one he liked (and, naturally, it's not even made for cats – he picked a small human brush). It may take you some trial and error too, but once your cat finds a brush that he likes, be sure to use it frequently.

Only Bathe What's Necessary

Let's say that your cat's got one really nasty area 14 on their body that you simply have to clean with a

bath. If your cat makes it clear that they do not like water, you should only wash the affected area. This makes the process go much more quickly, and it'll also traumatize your feline friend a little less than a full bath would.

Be Sure You Purchase The Right Shampoo

Some people fall into the trap of assuming that all shampoos act the same. However, if you do this, you could be harming your kitty. In fact, if you choose to use a flea shampoo that's made for dogs, you'll be exposing them to chemicals that are toxic for cats. Human shampoo is also toxic, so make sure you pick up a bottle that's specifically marked for cats.

Trim Their Claws

If it's been a while since she's had her nails trimmed, it's highly important to do so BEFORE you bathe her. Otherwise, you'll be putting your cat into a highly stressful situation while they are equipped with daggers. If you want to avoid getting scratched – perhaps even seriously – take the time to trim her claws before you put her anywhere near the water.

Keep Your Cat Steady While Bathing

One thing that doesn't get talked about nearly enough is the importance of ensuring your cat stays steady when you bathe them. Think about it from your cat's perspective – not only are they getting super wet, but they keep sliding around, too. This is the perfect recipe to make your cat super anxious.

Instead, put down a towel, slip-free mat, or washcloth, then place them on top of it. This will allow them to get a good grip, which should remove at least a bit of their anxiety. You should also remain calm while you bathe them, even if your cat is doing its best impression of a scream queen. By speaking to them calmly and talking them through the process, you can both reach the other side without too many problems.

You've Bathed Your Cat – Now What?

Congratulations! You've now got a freshly bathed cat. But you're not out of the woods quite yet. Although your cat will come to enjoy being gunk-free, he or she is liable to lash out angrily during



the aftermath of their bath. Your absolute best bet is to NOT chase them. Instead, allow them to settle down, and let them come to you on their own terms.

REMEMBER: If you chase your cat or try to force her to interact with you before she's ready, you're going to make the situation worse. Let her take the lead on this one.

Give Them A Reward

Put a special reward in their food dish. That way, even if your cat avoids you for most of the day, they will still get a tasty treat. Also, if they happen to let you catch a glimpse of them, be sure to praise them. Once they come to you, let them know how proud you are of them and how much of a good job they did (even if they didn't). This will begin the re-bonding experience.

Tips For Making The Bathing Process Go More Smoothly

By following these tips, your cat will become clean and probably won't hate you – at least not for too long!

- Make sure you've got everything you need to bathe your cat before you put them in the sink.
- Only use shampoos that are specifically made for cats.
- Be sure to check the water temperature before you put your cat into the water.
- If possible, have a friend or family member help out. They can try to distract the cat while you bathe him or her.
- Make sure you rinse away all the shampoo from your cat's body.

- Use a warm washcloth to wash your cat's face. Do NOT use shampoo near the eyes.
- Never, ever, ever put your cat's head underwater. They will be EXTREMELY unhappy with you, and this will harm your relationship.
- Speak to your cat throughout the entire process. Use a calm, soothing voice.
- Find a warm, draft-free room for your cat to dry off in. You can blow dry your cat, but don't do this unless your cat is okay with it.
- You must display patience to make it through the bath.
- If you introduce a kitten to a bath, it's going to go a lot more smoothly than trying to introduce an older cat to a bath. Therefore, the best time to teach cats about baths is when they're younger.

Let Them Get Comfortable With The Process

Cats feel the need to become acclimated to their surroundings, which includes smells and textures. One of the best ways to ensure that he becomes comfortable with the process is by letting him become acquainted with all his bathing supplies BEFORE you begin.

Allow him to sniff and feel the towel, along with the shampoo bottle. While he's doing this, softly stroke his fur and speak to him in a reassuring voice. This will make him more comfortable with each item, which will make it easier for you to use them on him.

How Can I Calm My Scratching Cat?



No matter what you do to make the process easier, it's possible that your cat will still scratch you. Instead of getting mad at him, you should look at

the situation from his point of view. Remember, as far as he knows, you're basically trying to kill him with the evil water. Therefore, it's critical that you know how to calm him down after he's scratched you.

- Immediately bring the bath to an end. It doesn't matter if you haven't gotten him 100% clean. This will de-escalate the situation and, therefore, prevent additional scratches.
- Be sure to give your kitty room to calm down. Put him in a room where he can hang out alone and feel safe.
- Provide your cat with plenty of affection and comfort. Offer him treats, speak in a soothing voice, and gently pet them.
- Take his mind off of the bath by distracting him with his favorite toy.

What If My Cat Simply Won't Cooperate?

There are some cats that won't cooperate enough to take a bath, and you might just get your eyes scratched out if you try to force them. If this sounds like your kitty, it will be in everyone's best interests to take them to a groomer or their vet.

The thing about letting a professional wash your cat is that they don't have a relationship with your cat. Therefore, they will be a lot less emotional or tentative and will simply get the job done. Plus, your cat is allowed to hate them all he or she wants. When you arrive to pick her up, she might even believe that you've saved her. All in all, this is a very good thing.

Final Thoughts

Giving your cat a bath probably won't be easy, even with all of the tips we've listed above, but it will be much easier than usual, and that's what you're looking for. With any luck, your cat won't need to take more than a couple of baths during his or her lifetime. If they do, at least you now know how to keep them calmer.



Myth Buster: Cats Need Punishment



Although we already touched on this topic in our Positive Reinforcement article, we're going to dig in much more closely to the topic of punishing your cat.

Depending on what personal experiences you've had, you're probably either completely opposed to dishing out punishment or you think that using a punishment is the only way to get results. We're here to tell you that if you've got the second mindset, you're going to have a difficult time getting your cat to learn. That's because using positive reinforcement is, by far, the preferred method.

Still, there will be moments when you'll be tempted to drop positive reinforcement for an old-fashioned punishment. But just as delivering a physical punishment to a human child makes them afraid, rather than respectful, your cat won't understand why you've decided to lash out at them. The only thing that they'll remember is that you DID lash out.

Punish The Behavior, Not The Cat

The first thing you need to know about punishing a cat is that you **MUST** punish the behavior only. This is where most people get stuck because the reason they deliver a punishment is because they're fed up with what their cat is doing. Once you give in to feeling this way, you may develop some negative feelings toward your feline friend. Therefore, you must consciously focus on the behavior and put aside any punitive feelings that have developed.

Let's say, for example, that your cat likes to scratch your living room carpet. Since the carpet was expensive, it's natural for you to become upset. But is it really your cat's fault? Before you blow your top, stop and take a moment to consider all the variables at play.

The very first question you need to answer is this: does your cat have a nearby scratching alternative?

If the answer is no, you must introduce one. After all, it wouldn't be fair to punish your cat for doing what comes naturally if you've failed to meet his or her basic needs. If the answer is yes, you need to figure out why he's decided to scratch at your carpet instead. Does he understand that the scratching post is his? Does he know how to use it? Have you scared him away from the post?

Once you've considered all the variables and put any necessary changes into place, it'll be time to see how your kitty reacts. There are three basic options:

- Scratches at the post
- Scratches at your carpet
- Scratches at the post and your carpet

You want to get your cat to understand that the scratching post is the perfect thing to scratch. Therefore, provide him with effusive praise plus a treat whenever he scratches it. If he returns to the carpet, you should use a firm command. Say "no" in a voice that's not quite your normal speaking

tone. If he still ignores you, say “no” again and VERY LIGHTLY tap him. You can also try tapping his front paws while saying “no.”

Most cats will get the hint, although it may take a while before they completely give up on the negative behavior. As long as you keep repeating “no” and giving them indicators that you don’t want them to claw up your carpet, they will learn to use their claws on their scratching post instead.

REMEMBER: At no point during this process did we have to yell or scream. We also took great care not to hurt them as we physically tapped them. And yet we were still able to get our point across with a very light form of punishment.

Is A Physical Reprimand Ever Appropriate?



When we say physical reprimand, we’re not talking about lightly tapping them. A physical reprimand is the most utilized – and least effective – form of punishment. It involves hitting, smacking, kicking, etc. This is NEVER appropriate, although some humans insist on repeating this abusive behavior.

When you physically reprimand your cat, they won’t take away the lesson you intended. Instead, they’re likely to exhibit hand-shyness going forward, along with fear. This puts you and your cat in a bad position that could cause you to get hurt.

Want to know what happens when you physically punish a cat? Aside from everything listed above, they’ll also find a way to blow off some steam. This will most likely happen when you’re not around, and it won’t be pleasant. The frustration, anxiety, or stress that is brought up by physically punishing them will often make them change their urinating habits. If you’ve got any clothes on the floor – or any hidden spots that your cat can access – they’re probably going to get peed on.

And, of course, once they begin to pee where they shouldn’t, you’re going to be even more tempted to yell, scream, and physically lash out at them. All you’re going to accomplish is making your cat feel insecure, which will continue their negative cycle.

So now, what you’ve done is taken a smaller problem – scratching the carpet – and turned it into something much worse. And, we hate to tell you this, but it’s your own fault. Therefore, if you’re feeling tempted to show your displeasure physically, you should really be doing it to yourself, not your cat.

REMEMBER: A cat has no idea what you’re reprimanding them for (or praising them for) if more than a couple of seconds have passed. When you come home after an eight-hour workday and find that your cat did something wrong, it will do NO good to reprimand them for it. Doing so anyway could make the situation even worse.

How Do I Get My Cat To Stop Roughhousing With Me?

If your cat likes to play too rough with you, it’s been long-recommended that you tap the top of their head or nose. Of course, these areas are sensitive, which could make cats wary of you. That’s the best-case scenario, too, as it can actually cause some cats to experience an increase in aggression, fear, and retaliation (because yes, your cat WILL hit you, despite not wanting to be hit herself).

Again, this is another opportunity to break the negative cycle. Instead of delivering any type of physical reprimand, your best course of action is to get up and walk away when they get too rough.

Some people prefer to use a water sprayer or make a loud hissing sound. These may work temporarily, but your cat is likely to keep pursuing you. He may even think that these actions are you roughhousing back.

Before you try any of these activities, however, you should ensure that you’ve given your kitty ample opportunities for social play. Be sure to give her toys that can be batted, swatted, and chased. In fact, if your cat gets too rough with you, try switching her attention to a toy. If it works, you’ve got a best case scenario!

REMEMBER: If all else fails, using a spray bottle, handheld alarm, or making a hissing noise is highly likely to lead to less fear and retaliation. Also, if you return any of your kitty's actions, they could misconstrue it to mean that you like playing rough.

How Do I Discourage My Cat From Other Negative Behaviors?

The number one key to getting rid of negative behavior is to ensure that your cat comes to associate an unpleasant consequence with doing the behavior in question. You need to be aware, however, that some cats WILL learn to stop the negative behavior, but ONLY when you're present.

Fear not, for there is a way to get your cat to stop acting out all the time, regardless of whether you're there or not. You should use the concept of remotely punishing them – or set up booby traps to prevent them from engaging in negative behavior.

How Does Remote Punishment Work?

Delivering a remote punishment requires you to use two key components.

- Monitor the cat while you're out of sight.
- Punish your cat while he's behaving inappropriately, but stay out of sight.

There are a number of different ways to see what your cat is up to without letting him see you. You could hide behind a piece of furniture, in a nearby closet, or around the corner. You could also monitor your cat using a motion detector, an intercom, or a set of balls that will jingle when she decides to do something wrong.

As soon as she begins to engage in an undesired behavior, chase her away using a noise device, long-range water pistol, or remote control device. The idea is that she won't be able to tell where the punishment originated from, and she'll quickly learn that she can't keep repeating the negative behavior.

As far as commercial remote control devices go, a citronella spray collar that can be attached to the cat – or simply placed in the area – will come to life as soon as you utilize the remote activation. Alternatively, you can use a remote control with a

device you've plugged in near the problem area. As soon as they begin the undesired behavior, activate the remote and turn on the hair dryer, alarm, or water pik. They'll be quite surprised and will run away.

REMEMBER: As long as you keep everything on a remote control, your cat will have no idea who – or what – is punishing them. This should prevent any behavior issues that are caused by being punished.

Use A Booby-Trap To Keep Your Cat In Line



When a remote punishment won't do the trick, it's time to booby-trap the area your cat goes to when it wants to do something 'bad.' Your first line of defense is to simply make their behavior seem less appealing.

For instance, if they keep scratching your couch, why not try draping a large piece of material over it? The reason this works is that your kitty won't be able to work its claws into the loose fabric. Alternatively, you could place a small pyramid of plastic containers or empty tin cans on the arm of the couch. Make sure that the containers are set up so that they'll fall if someone messes with the couch.

You can also make the couch less appealing by putting a piece of plastic carpet runner with the nubs facing upward on it. Using a few pieces of double-sided tape will work because they'll no longer receive the experience they're looking for.

Another good way to booby-trap the area is by using a motion detector. Once the cat moves into the affected area, a spray can of compressed air will spray them. This is going to get him or her moving away from the area at top speed! And, if you need to set up some booby traps outside, you can use a motion detector sprinkler to do the trick.

What if your feline friend's destructive behaviors do not include scratching but rather sucking and/or chewing? You can try using a taste deterrent, but beware that they may get used to it. For example, commonly recommended taste deterrents include Tabasco sauce, bitter lime, or bitter apple. Unfortunately, the majority of cats will simply adjust their tastes to allow these deterrents, which defeats the entire point.

Something else you can try is mixing a little water with oil of eucalyptus, cayenne pepper, and any non-toxic mentholated product. If you prefer not to put this together, you can also purchase a commercially available solution.

Whichever choice you use, you'll need to ensure that it's absolutely repugnant (as much as humanely possible). That way, simply smelling the deterrent again will make them want to avoid it. Continue to use whichever spray you prefer in the area until your cat avoids it altogether.

Supervision Trumps All Forms Of Punishment

Yes, you can use booby traps, remote punishment, etc., to keep your cat in line, but the most vital thing of all is giving them good supervision. Another thing you'll want to engage in is exhibiting the proper behaviors for your kitten.

It's absolutely critical that you set a positive example for any young kittens right away, as it's going to teach them what they can – and cannot – do. One of the best ways to do this is by simple prevention. Confine your kitty to a cat-proofed area, and be sure to give them lots of toys, a scratching post, litter, water, and food.

REMEMBER: Your cat isn't lying around all day coming up with ways to annoy you. Instead, she's simply doing what comes naturally. You may not appreciate some of these behaviors, though, so make sure you take the time to provide lots of supervision. There is **NO SUBSTITUTE** for showing your kitten what's acceptable and what's not.

Keep In Mind That Your Cat Isn't Like Your Dog

Something that comes up time and time again is that someone has already trained a dog, so they should be able to train a cat, right? **WRONG.** Cats and dogs are very different creatures, and they **DON'T** learn the same way. While your dog will engage with the training process by sitting, laying down, etc., your cat won't. Therefore, put aside any misconceptions and see your cat as the unique being she is.

Should I Really Use A Spray Bottle?

There has been a lot of debate about whether or not it's truly okay to use a spray bottle on your cat. After doing much research, what we've discovered is that it can be okay, but only if they can't see that you're doing it. If they can see you, they will associate you with getting wet. This will harm your relationship with your cat, so be careful that you only spray them when they can't see you.

Don't Physically Discipline Your Cat

Our final point for this article is that there is no good reason to ever shake, hit, or hold your cat down. Cats are already intolerant of the way that humans punish them, and if you try to physically dominate him or her, it's going to harm your bond. The only thing you will accomplish is making your cat become withdrawn or lash out.

REMEMBER: You don't want anyone to get physical with you, so why would your cat? The days of brutalizing other beings to get your way are long over. Instead, it's time to learn what works best for each other.

Final Thoughts

Training your cat **IS** possible, but it's going to be quite different from training a dog. No matter how much you decide to train them, though, keeping them from destroying your house is definitely a good idea. Stick with them and make sure they have the proper outlets for whatever they're feeling. And no matter what, don't give in to the urge to physically strike them. All it'll do is make them dislike you.



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