

Training Cats

Research Questions

- Why do dog owners train their dogs?
- Why don't cat owners train their cats?
- Are cats as intelligent as dogs?
- Can cats remember?
- In what ways do cats try to please their owners?
- How is a cat's interaction with its owner different than a dog's interaction with its owner?
- How do cats and dogs interact with their owners in the same way?

Materials

- A cat (a young, active cat is best)
- Treats
- A quiet space
- A table, pushed into a corner

Method

- Train your cat in sessions of only about 20 minutes. After that time the training can become frustrating for both you and the cat. Always end training on a good note, playing with your cat and petting it when you are done.
- Move a square or rectangular table into the corner of a room. This will give you a good training area that you can control.
- Train your cat in a quiet area when there are few distractions.
- Collect some treats to help with the training. Small pieces of tuna or chicken make good training treats.
- Place your cat on the table.
- Start the training by showing the cat you have a treat. The cat should show interest in the treat, but do not give it to the cat yet.
- If the cat is not interested in the treat, try training with a different type of treat.
- Hold the treat in front of the cat, a few inches from its nose.
- Give the treat to the cat after a few seconds.
- Repeat this a few times before moving to the next step. (Make sure you are using only very tiny pieces of treat.)
- Hold the treat in front of the cat's nose and do not let the cat have it. When the cat stops focusing on the treat, give it the treat.
- Repeat this about a dozen times. This training exercise lets the cat know that it cannot get the treat unless you chose to give it the treat. This is the first step when training many animals.
- End your first training session at this time.
- At the start of your next session, review by holding the treat in front of the cat and not releasing it until the cat stops focusing on the treat.
- Begin teaching the trick "sit."
- Tell the cat, "sit."
- Move the treat from the tip of the cat's nose towards the back of the cat's head. This will cause the cat to look up and sit down in the process.
- With your other hand, push down gently on the cat's hips until it sits all the way down.
- As soon as the cat sits, give the food reward.
- Repeat the training until the cat knows to sit on command.
- (optional) If you have time you can teach the cat the trick "shake," just like a dog. With the cat in sit, command, "Shake," and gently pick the cat's paw up. After a time, apply just a little pressure to the back of the cat's wrist and finally just hold out your hand.
- (optional) Try teaching the cat other tricks.
- Remember that training is a process. Don't expect results after the first few tries. Your cat will need time to figure out what you want from it. Stop the training session on a good note and don't continue training if you or the cat starts to feel frustrated.

