



# WELL-MANNERED CATS

## Simple Ways to Get Kitty to Behave

by Sandra Murphy



### THREE MILLION CATS

end up in shelters every year, according to the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. Owners cite landlord restrictions or allergies in the family as leading reasons. Often, the animal is blamed for an easily fixed behavior problem; the Wake County Animal Center, in Raleigh, North Carolina, interprets rationales such as, "Kitty

has a sensitive stomach [throws up] or pees under the bed [likely a urinary tract infection]."

"I prefer to call such things issues, not problems. They're often evidence of natural instincts that need to be redirected," says Anne Moss, owner of *TheCatSite.com*, from Tel Aviv, Israel. "A vet visit will rule out physical concerns so you can move

on to behavioral issues." Once a cat's adapted to living with humans, life becomes more pleasant for everyone.

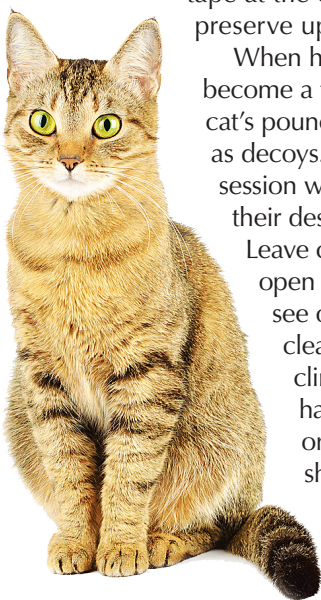
Cats can be trained. Dallas cat owner Bettina Bennett of *WhichBoxMedia.com* advises, "Start early, attach rewards and be consistent. Our four cats don't scratch the furniture, come when called and know when it's bedtime."

Clicker training works well, adds Becky Morrow, a doctor of veterinarian medicine who teaches at Duquesne University, in Pittsburgh. "I have 13 cats living in my home and a sanctuary housing 65 more. They've learned to walk on a leash and obey commands."

Dr. Jeff Werber, a Los Angeles veterinarian, has found that scratching furniture, biting people, nocturnal activity, throwing up and ignoring the litter box are the five most common complaints. Scratching lets Kitty leave her scent, stretch and shed old claws. He suggests, "Get a scratching post, but don't put it in an-out-of-the-way location. Cats like to be where we are. Start with it in the

center of the room and gradually move it to the corner.”

Measure how tall a cat is when standing on her hind legs with front legs fully extended. Get a post that is half again as tall so she can really stretch. Gently rub her paws on the post first, and then dab on a bit of catnip as added enticement. Cats don't like unfamiliar textures, so avoidance training tools can include laying aluminum foil or backing-side-up carpet runners over furniture arms and cushions plus double-sided sticky tape at the corners to preserve upholstery.



When humans become a target for a cat's pounces, use toys as decoys. A short play session will satisfy their desire to hunt.

Leave curtains open so she can see outside, clear shelves for climbing and have a cat tree or window shelf for optimum viewing. A nearby

bird feeder will hold a feline's attention for hours.

Werber advises, "For undisturbed household sleep, get the cat toys out about an hour before your bedtime. Fifteen minutes of play will tire a pet. Let him calm down and then feed him. A full cat is a sleepy cat."

Some cats nibble, while others gulp food and then throw up. The recommended antidote is to feed smaller amounts several times a day. Cats should eat both dry and wet food to get carbohydrates and meat, Werber advises. Throwing up can be a sign of hairballs, even if unseen. Put the cat on a natural hairball remedy once a day for four days, then two times a week, until the vomiting stops. A touch of non-petroleum jelly on the cat's nose or a bit of fish oil or pumpkin in her food will work.

When cats ignore the litter box, note what's changed—the type of litter, location of the box, a lurking stray cat or the pet's health. Arthritic cats find it hard to climb into a tall-sided box. Felines feel vulnerable when using the box, and like to know what's around them — a lidless box makes them feel safer says Werber. The rule is to have one more litter box than there are cats. If the house is more than one story tall, food, water, beds and

litter should be available on every level.

"All cats should be kept indoors, microchipped and wearing a colorful collar and tags," says Werber. Colors give birds fair warning if a cat ever goes outside.

With time and attention, any cat can become an active, well-behaved family member.

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