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CAT TRICKS: MASTERING THE ART OF TEACHING YOUR FELINE
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CAT TRICKS: MASTERING THE ART OF TEACHING YOUR FELINE

Who said you can’t teach a cat tricks? Not us. In fact, teaching your feline friends new skills stimulates them mentally and physically and is the perfect way to nurture your bond.

Nurturing that connection is key to a rewarding and healthy relationship. As you know, your cat is agile and smart, making them capable of learning all sorts of simple or complex skills. And that’s not just our opinion as cat lovers, there’s solid science that shows they can take up new skills easily, too.

All they need is the right tools and treats, alongside regular training sessions, to encourage them. Which is why we’ve got 12 cat tricks your feline can get their claws into. From fetch to sitting to playing dead, there’s bound to be the perfect trick to strengthen your bond. Plus, treats, clicker, or verbal cues - whichever you choose - will help your cat nail those tricks down.

Here’s how you can learn tricks to teach your cat.

Tricks to teach your cat: Getting started

So, which cat tricks should your feline friend learn first?

To give your cat a solid base of skills that serve as steps to more complex techniques, you should start with cat tricks that give a foundation for all other feline skills. And many of these are surprisingly simple to teach and master. Meaning you can fly through these to the more advanced abilities.

The classic, and the first, should be teaching your feline their name, so recalling your cat is a breeze. Other basic cat tricks include the ability to stay when directed, finger targeting, high-fiving, and lying down.

Or, you could challenge your cat by teaching them to sit.

Creating a positive and well-planned learning space is key to trick uptake. From negative reinforcement to an overload of mental stimuli, there's a clutch of cat psychological traits that if the mark is missed, could lead to bad habits or ineffective learning.

Patience and consistent education are crucial in your cat learning each one of our 12 cat tricks.

This is how to teach your cat tricks.

What tricks can a cat learn: 12 cat tricks

When it comes to tricks to teach your cat some skills are easier, with some felines more willing to learn than others, but it's always worth a try.

We know cats thrive on mental stimulation and cherish strengthening their bond with you. Your feline friend is quick, clever, and keen as a bean to learn new stuff.

So, here are 12 of our favourite cat tricks and how to teach them.

Recalling your cat

When it comes to tricks to teach your cat, recalling is a crucial skill and should be your first port of call.

Depending on the environment, your feline friend could learn this quickly or at a medium pace. Teaching this is easier for indoor cats as outdoor spaces bring extra distractions.

Pick your cat's favourite treat and call with a consistent command, like "Here" and their name. Start in a tranquil space and reward them with the treat when they come over to you.

High-pitched voices may help as felines respond well to higher frequencies. But always keep the training consistent and calm.

Fetch

Fetch is for dogs, right? Not at all! Teaching your cat how to bring things to you is a neat

trick that enhances your bond.

As cat tricks go, fetch is a moderately challenging task to nail down, but nothing you and your cat aren’t capable of.

How do you teach your cat this trick? First, choose their favourite toy and get their attention by waving, rolling or tossing it. Then, encourage them to grab the toy. Use their name and “Fetch”. Reward them with a treat when they deliver it.

Food not doing the trick? Then try a clicker. They help positively reinforce the action with a sound that sticks. All you do is click when your cat performs the desired action.

Sit

“Sit!” - a starter pack trick for all feline lovers. Simple to teach and a quick win when you first start teaching your cat tricks.

So, how to teach your cat tricks like sitting? Hold a treat close to your cat’s nose and run it over their head towards their rear. This prompts them to sit.

When they sit, mark that with a “Sit” and reward them with the treat. Stick with short, positive, and consistent sessions to help retention.

Lying down and rolling over

Can you teach your cat tricks? When you break down and combine two tricks that complement each other perfectly, then it definitely makes it easier. Positive reinforcement and regular sessions are key. Let’s start with lying down.

Lying down is at a moderate difficulty level. Get them to sit. Hold a treat close to their nose and pull slowly away until their body touches the floor. At that cue, say “down” and reward with a treat.

Once your cat is lying down on their chest, rolling over should be easy, right?

Mastering rolling over can be a challenge. When your cat is on their chest, slowly move the treat in a circular motion over their shoulder. This should prompt them to roll over on their side or back. When they do, add “roll” or “roll over” and reward with a treat.

Keep both sessions at 2-3 minutes and two to three times a day.

High-fiving

We’re focusing on how to teach your cat tricks, and high-fiving is your classic friendship gesture, so why not teach it to your cat?

The difficulty spindle points towards moderate, with sitting important in your cat's learning of this skill.

Get your cat to sit and hold their treat in the palm of your hand, then clutch the treat with a fist. Your cat should eventually paw at your fist. When they do, positively reinforce with a “High-five” and a treat.

If your cat is unsure and doesn’t lift their paw fully, reward with each micro movement until they completely extend their claw to your closed hand.

Finger targeting

The classic clicker training trick! If you want to know how to teach a cat tricks so they respond to a clicker instead of a treat, this skill is for you both.

And it’s super easy to pick up. To begin, hold a treat between your thumb and forefinger and make sure your cat can see and smell it. They will be naturally drawn to the treat. When they touch your fingers with the treat, mark with a click and reward with a treat.

Repeat three or four times in a row. Always rewarding when they touch your finger. Then, gradually remove the treat so your feline friend responds only to the clicker.

Spin in a circle

Spinning in a circle is another moderate-based technique for your cats to master.

Get your feline’s focus with a treat. Then, slowly move the treat in a circle around their heads and their hind legs. When they spin in a full circle, give them their reward.

When consistently spinning, add verbal cues like “spin” to help them associate the word with the action.

Shake hands

If you want to know how to teach a cat tricks and want instant wins, here’s an easy cat skill for you. Shaking hands is one of the first things you and your feline friend will probably master. It’s simple to learn, too.

Get your cat to sit and hold out one hand palm up. On the other hand, hold a treat. They should naturally lift their paw to your open hand. If they do, reward them. If they don’t, touch your open hand and say “shake”, then reward.

As always, positively reinforce and keep sessions short and regular.

Jumping through a hoop

Can you teach your cat tricks? When it comes to jumping through a hoop, it can seem easy for some felines but tricky for others. This trick requires incremental steps and consistency.

For a few days before, leave the hoop out in the open so your cat can become familiar with it. On training day, lure your cat through the hoop with a treat. Reward them when they pass through. If they don’t completely go through the hoop, reward them with each gradual step they make to walking through.

When confident with walking, lift the hoop slightly off the ground, and lure them through with a treat. Reward them if they jump through.

Gradually raise the hoop to the height you desire. Only do this when your cat is comfortable with the previous height.

Remember to practice often and have fun.

Standing on two feet

One more classic cat trick for your catalogue of feline skills: standing on two feet!

Moderately challenging, hold a treat or toy just out of reach above your cat's head and slowly move up to encourage them to go for it. When they rise on their hind legs, give them the treat and verbal cue of "Stand". Over time, increase the period they stand to help strengthen their hind legs.

Ring a bell

Want to know how to teach a cat tricks that will give you bags of laughter? Ringing a bell is one such skill. Begin by familiarising your cat with the bell, adding a sticky note to it to encourage visual perception. Keep it at paw level and reward your feline with any interaction at the start.

Then, for more robust bell ringing, only treat them with stronger hits. After each ring, give verbal cues of "Yes!" or "Ring". When confidently ringing that bell, remove the sticky note.

Playing dead

We've saved the coolest and probably most challenging cat trick for last - getting your cat to play dead.

This is an advanced technique to teach as the cat tricks of lying down and rolling over need to be mastered. As with all tricks, always remember to positively reinforce with short and consistent sessions.

Get your cat lying down. Run the treat across slowly over their shoulder or head to encourage them to roll over onto their back, exposing their underside. When they're on their back, add a verbal cue "Play dead" and reward.

Can you teach your cat tricks? Yes you can. Always remember that patience is pivotal. Just keep at it and you'll get there.

How to teach your cat tricks: Beginner's guide

How can you teach your cat tricks? When it comes to simple skills like "Sit" or "Stay", there's a standard approach to educating your feline friend.

Pick a space without distractions where your cat is calm and comfortable. Pick a treat or toy, whichever they desire most, as your lure and introduce the trick. If it's "Sit", hold the desired treat or toy above their head and run towards their hind legs until they sit.

When they sit, reward them with the treat. If you're training using clickers or verbal cues, reinforce the positive action with a click or by saying the word when they act.

Clickers are a classic technique for teaching cats skills, with studies showing effective retention as the click sound positively reinforces the action. Your cat remembers to associate their movement, the cat trick, when you sound your clicker.

Same with verbal cues. When they perform the trick or make inroads towards attaining the skill, use a suitable word to reinforce the movement.

Whether you decide to use treats, toys, clickers, verbal cues, or all of them to help your cat learn, it’s best advised to keep sessions short and consistent. So, no longer than 5 minutes and a handful of slots a day.

Plus, make sure your cat is calm, hungry, and in their safe space.

Using treats as rewards

Pick the treat your cat absolutely adores! Whether that's small bits of fish, meat, or specifically formulated cat treats, keep the treats small so you can reward regularly without over-filling.

If you choose the formulated blocks, ensure they’re tasty and healthy. Finally, be sure to use different types of treats. So, for general trick performance, use a bit of fish, but when they learn a new skill, reward them with something special.

Integrating tricks into daily routines

Teach tricks before mealtimes and reward them with a small treat straight after. Keep verbal cues consistent and the practice sessions short and frequent. This type of learning helps your furry friend’s retention.

Importantly, make training a regular part of your and your cat’s day. Positively reinforce and always end on a happy note, even if that means using a skill they’ve already mastered and rewarding them with that performance.

Keep treats handy, too. So when you want your cat to learn, they are ready and easily accessible.

Overcoming common training challenges

A calm environment without distractions is a solid start. So, remove other food sources or forms of entertainment so your feline’s focus is squarely on you.

Keep sessions short and consistent and don’t negatively reinforce by pushing your cat towards a desired action or using an angry or frustrated tone in your verbal cue. This can potentially damage your bond.

Positively reinforce all movement and be patient.

Plus, don’t feed them before if they’re treat-motivated. If they aren’t motivated by food, find their motivator, which might be a toy.

How to teach a cat tricks effectively: Advanced tricks

If you’re looking for techniques for tricks to teach your cat that are more advanced, then you’re at the right place.

Let’s start with luring, which is holding a treat above their nose and moving it to the desired position of movement. If it’s rolling over, slowly move the treat in a circular motion over

their shoulder to encourage them to roll.

Another is shaping. Simply put, shaping is rewarding your cat for making gradual steps towards your end goal. If they roll to their side but not fully over, reward them for that movement. Keep rewarding for each increment forward.

Breaking down challenging tricks into blocks helps. For ‘playing dead’, an advanced trick, teach them to lie down first then move on to rolling over until you make it to them rolled on their back, playing dead.

Also, reward your cat when they perform the trick through their natural behaviours, like sitting or rolling.

Obstacles course feed into those natural behaviors as well as your cat’s need for physical exercise and mental stimulation. They also act as a teacher of skills, too, with hoops and tubes building skills like hoop jumping and crawling on their chest.

We’ve got tons of fun ideas to turn your home into an activity centre for your cat, too.

Can you teach your cat tricks that impress?

Can you teach your cat tricks that really impress your guests? Of course you can!

“Playing dead” is one of our favourites, as is “Ringing a bell”, and both are guaranteed to get guests laughing and admiring. Let’s not forget “Jumping through a hoop”, a crowd pleaser and one that draws on classic circus-themed performances.

But there’s also “Spinning in a circle” and weaving through obstacle courses, with the latter spurring natural behaviours so your friends and family can see the impressive action of your furry friend at full throttle.

The more complex the trick, the more challenging it will be, but it will engage and stimulate your furry friend, both physically and mentally. That’s not all, because you’ll spend more time practising, your relationship will be more robust and rewarding, creating a brilliant bond between you two.

Going beyond the home

How do you teach a cat tricks when they’ve mastered everything indoors? You take them outdoors. Letting your cat outside vs keeping them inside is a choice you’ll start to consider when you find your cat disinterested in learning, even if you follow the standard methods of education.

So, how do you stimulate your indoor cat safely outdoors so they still take on new skills without being distracted? First, ensure you have a clutch of basic skills nailed down and introduce a harness or leash.

Begin with concentrated time in a safe outdoor space, like your garden, and increase little by little to encourage confidence. Use positive reinforcement, via your clicker, verbal cue, or in the form of a treat, and practise familiar tricks outside.

When confident, include natural obstacles like logs or rocks to practise tricks like jumping

and crawling on their chest. Always be sure to keep an eye on your cat’s stress as you move them to busier areas, too.

If they become agitated, take them to their safe space.

Ultimately, this should be fun and a healthy bonding experience between you and your cat. Prioritise safety. Keep treats at hand. And remove your cat from the outdoors if they start to be skittish or scared.

Tricks cats can do that dogs can't

Dogs may be a man’s best friend but cats are better at tricks. Paws down.

Their agility and balance and need for regular mental stimulation mean they can take on techniques their canine counterparts could only dream of.

- Cats can use your body as an obstacle course to jump and run along.
- They can clutch to a tightrope and walk along it - upside down!
- Felines know how to jump. And they can go above 8 feet high.
- They can sit on your shoulders like a pirate’s parrot!

Arguably our favourite and possibly the most fun, are records of cats flushing the toilet! Imagine that.

Tricks are grounded in core natural behaviors, and the ones above are no different. Be sure to create a space where there are ledges and layers for your cat to explore that encourage jumping, climbing, crawling, and sitting.

When they perform your desired movement, positively reward them with a treat, clicker or verbal cue so as to help cement retention and strengthen your bond.

Cat tricks - FAQs

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1. **What is the easiest trick to teach cats?**

   Probably the easiest tricks are “Sit” and “Finger targeting”, as they lean heavily into your cat’s natural behaviours.

   Both are simple gestures. “Sit” is running a treat towards their hind legs until the bottom touches the ground, and “Finger targeting” requires your cat paw at your hand.

2. **What cat is most trainable?**

   There are a few cat breeds that are great trainers. Here’s a list.

- American Shorthair
- Japanese Bobtail
- Egyptian Mau
- Russian Blue
- Maine Coon
- Cornish Rex
- Turkish Van
- Abysinnian
- Tonkinese
- Savannah
- Burmese
- Siamese
- Pixiebob
- Bombay
- Persian
- Bengal
- Somali
- Ocicat

All are social, intelligent, and keen to learn new tricks whilst forging a healthy bond with their owner.

3. **What is the easiest thing to train a cat?**

   The easiest trick to teach a cat is usually “Sit”, followed by “Recalling” and “Finger targeting”.

   Other simple but satisfying skills to easily learn are “Shaking hands” and “High-fiving”.

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