



For The Love Of Cats!

Making Sure Your Feline Friend Feels Like One Of The Family

By: MustLoveCats.net



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Chapter 1

Loving Your Cat

Are you a novel cat owner? If so, there'll be a point in time when your cat becomes “just like one of the kids.” However, till that time arrives, it's up to you to be aware of your cat and the small signals that he or she may be sharing with you.

As essential as it is to hear that it will be your responsibility to comprehend your cat and decipher the signals that he or she may be sending you, you may be wondering why. Many pet owners often react with something like “what the heck?” If you are a new pet owner or a first-time cat owner, you may not understand just how much your cat relies and depends on you.

As for why it is important to understand your cat, doing so can be imperative to his or her health. We humans are able to speak and seek medical attention when we develop a cold or suffer a debilitating illness. Pets, on the other hand, cannot do so. Just because your cat doesn't outright tell you that she needs to go the vet, it doesn't mean that a visit isn't in order.

If you think that your cat is suffering from a medical problem, whether it is an injury or an illness, you should seek professional help right away. Schedule a visit with your veterinarian. The sooner you do so, the faster you can understand what's bothering your cat. In some cases, emergency appointment is necessary, especially if he or she seems to be suffering.

Speaking of suffering, several new cat owners wonder how they can tell when their pet is feeling ill or has suffered an injury that may not be noticeable to the human eye. Whether you have only had your cat a week or five years, you should already start to notice habits that he or she has. These habits may include greeting you when you walk into a room or sleeping in the same spot. If these habits change, it may be due to an injury that is difficult to see or a medical illness.

In addition to perceiving when your cat may be ill, understanding when your cat is hungry is also important. Some pet owners will always leave food out for their pets. This is possible; however, there may be some negative consequences. For instance, your cat may eat too much and develop an obesity problem. Bug and other rodents can be attracted to your pet's food, especially wet canned food, regardless of how clean your home is.

Many cats will approach their empty food bowl and start to cry out. Others may take steps to get human food, or the food of other pets in the home. The best approach is to create a set feeding schedule for your cat.

Despite the fact that deciphering your cats every move may seem like an impossible task, it really isn't. Although your cat will have his or her own distinctive personalities, you may be surprised just how similar cats occasionally respond like humans. When upset or frustrated, your



cat may retreat to their own special spot. When hungry, your cat may call out for food. When your cat is excited, you should be able to tell right away, as he or she will likely be more active than usual.

These are just a few of the many reasons why it is important for you to learn how to understand your cat. If you are looking for helpful tips, consider speaking to your veterinarian. Also, there are multiple book and online websites (including ours – <http://www.MustLoveCats.net>) that are designed to help new pet owners develop a close and healthy relationship with their cats. Having a caring and close relationship with your cat is the first step in understanding their wants and needs.

The mystery that surrounds cats has as much to do with myths and superstitions about the feline as it do with the self-sufficient and sometimes difficult to comprehend personality of the cat.

Early Domestication

Cats, unlike any other domestic animal, actually chose to be associated with people on its own; it was not selectively domesticated by humans like other wild animals. The first cats were likely drawn to villages and human camps from their forest homes due to the number of rodents and other small prey animals that were attracted to human dwellings. These wild cats would gradually become more relaxed and calm around humans, and kittens born in the villages would accept human contact or at least to human presence. Once people learned how cats controlled the rodents and other pests, they were here to stay.

There are several different archeological indications that humans-cat relationship has been ongoing for thousands of years. In remote burial sites in the Mediterranean Islands there have been skeletons of cats, mice and humans all found in the same area, and while the mice may have got to the island by hiding in food and supply packages, the only way cats would have been on islands is if they were brought there by the sailors and settlers. It is highly likely that the remote islands would have quickly been overrun with mice and rodents if not for the imported cats.

The first society to domesticate and shift cats indoors to the position of companion was the Egyptians. This process began roughly 4000 years ago, with the Egyptian farmers and merchants. They actually started feeding cats to keep them close by, controlling the rodent population in food storage areas. From this humble start cats soon reached a peak of importance in the Egyptian culture, to actually been worshiped as the representation of gods and goddesses of the hunt and of fertility. Cats were free walk through the residences and there was even a sacred burial site. The Temple at Bubastis, cats were mummified and preserved as per the ritual at the time. The death of a cat in a family sent the whole household into mourning. Laws forbidding the killing of cats by punishment of death were in place for many hundreds of years in Egyptian cities. African cats were also domesticated and were treated with reverence and respect as symbols of fertility and as of a hunter.



Cats were traded between different cultures and were initially only found as pets and companions of only the wealthiest of merchants. Due to the reproductive ability of cats, this didn't last for long, as the number of cats simply increased in many port and inland cities, until they became a nuisance to the human population. Even today most cities worldwide have an ongoing issue with huge populations of wild or feral cats that live within the city limits.

Selective breeding of cats to produce different, recognizable breeds became popular in more modern times, however the great majority of domestic cats on our society today are not purebreds, only about 5% of the total domestic population is a recognized breed. All other domestic and feral cats are generally lumped into two categories, domestic shorthair and domestic longhair for general identification.

The Cat Personality

There have been poems, articles, books, plays, short stories and even research papers completed on the personality of the cat. There are also several different expressions regarding to the cat's personality such as "the cat's meow", being "catty", or even the old "cat people should only marry cat people and dog people should only marry dog people" expression. While cats do have a different and unique personality, they also have general traits that are ordinary within the species.

Like dogs and other pets, cats tend to have more similarities to their breed than differences. However, each cat is a unique individual and even kittens from the same litter may grow and develop into very different individuals. As a general rule most cats are affectionate and loving with people they know, and hardly tolerate people they don't. Of course some cats are also very social and outgoing and are welcoming to new people in their environment. In addition, cats might be very accepting of other pets, such as dogs and may get along very well with children and other cats.

A lot of the cat's personality has to do with the type of socialization and interaction they have with people when they are kittens. The more attention they get at young age, the more likely they will be when they mature.

Generally the cat's personality is defined as aloof, which may be a bit negative in connotation. In reality, cats are just more independent than dogs and other pets, however they do enjoy spending time with people, it just happens on their own terms.

Cat- Human Relationships

There are people that are very attracted to cats and their personality traits, just like there are some people that are more attracted to dogs, birds or even more unusual pets. Regardless, if you are a



cat person or not, it is hard to not admire their stealthy way of getting around, their athletic ability, as well as their beauty and elegance.

The cat-human or human-cat relationship has been going on for literally centuries. Currently, domestic cats are the most popular pet around the world and they are found in almost any part of the globe. It is estimated by the United States Department of Agriculture that there are over 100 million cats in the country, mostly in feral populations, living in small and large urban centers.

As more and more exotic cats are created for specific characteristics, coat colors and even temperaments are developed through breeding programs the trend towards cats as pets continues to increase. In addition, the smaller size of the cat and their easy of maintenance continue to make them a popular pet for both apartments and homes in both the city and in the country.



Chapter 2

The Truth About Cats

Throughout our history there have been many myths developed about cats in virtually every culture where cats were domesticated and kept as pets. In some cases, society modified myths and superstitions about cats, which tended to lead to more negative and sinister ideas about the typical cat behavior.

Cats And The Weather

In ancient times, seafarers believed that watching the way cats behaved could actually predict the weather in advance. Many sailors believed that black cats were unlucky and would cause bad weather while others held tortoiseshell cats in high regard because they thought these cats brought them good luck. A widely dispersed belief was that if the ship's cat started to play boisterously, it meant that a gale was approaching. On a calm sea, the small surface ripples were referred to as 'cat's paws' because sailors believed that cats' ghosts from ships were dancing on the water ahead of the wind. Japanese sailors believed that a bi-colored cat carried aboard a ship would give them an early warning if any storms were approaching the ship, giving the sailors enough time to make it back to port before the storm hit.

In ancient times in Egypt, people believed that when a cat started washing behind its ears, this indicated that good weather was on the way. However, in China, this or a cat winking signaled rain, or bad weather. Other myths about cats and weather include:

- Many people thought that cats could predict the weather and believed a cat washing its face or ears predicted rain and if it scratched the curtains and carpets, this forecast wind.
- Cats predict bad weather when they tuck their paws underneath them when sleeping.
- Sailors' thought that rain would follow if a cat sneezed once and a cat licking its fur against instead of with the direction of growth indicated a hailstorm on the way.
- Early American settlers believed that if their cat sat by the fire with its back turned towards the flames, there would soon be a cold snap.
- It was very common for seafarers to use cats before embarking upon a voyage to forecast the weather, with a playful cat meaning gusty winds and a good trip, while a loudly meowing, noisy cat meant a very stormy, difficult trip.



Another popular belief of sailors was that cats stored magic in their tails, which they had the power to use to begin storms. Seafarers made sure that the cats were always contented and well fed so they did not use this magic.

Cats And Witchcraft

For some reason, cats, black magic and witches have always been associated, especially around the fourteen hundreds or the Middle Ages onward. Throughout the middle Ages in Europe, the fate or destiny of cats changed radically, they were associated with evil and objects of superstition. In Europe, the Christian church began a huge campaign hunting witches and cats. During this time, they slaughtered cats almost to the point of extinction because they believed that cats were associates of witches, had the powers of black magic and the devils embodiment. People hunted down cats, tortured and then killed them, often along with the person keeping a cat or cats.

Along with slaughtering cats almost to the point of extinction, the church accused many innocent women and men of witchcraft, tortured and burned them alive at the stake. Simply owning a cat or helping an injured or sick animal was cause enough to torture or kill a person. The number of disease carrying rats increased as the cat population decreased, which contributed an astonishing extent to epidemics and the spread of plagues throughout Europe. It was during the seventeenth century when cats came back into favor becoming a loved companion once again and a controller of rats and other rodents.

For the most part, it was in the Middle Ages when evil and black cats became associated. Many people believed that cats were witches or witches supernatural servants because they were nocturnal, wandering during the night with their glowing eyes and sleek movements. Cats were alleged to be the personification of evil, mystery and darkness and believed to possess terrifying powers. While some believed that black cats were companions of witches, others believed that black cats were actually witches disguised as black cats.

Cats And The Future

There are quite a few common myths about cats and the future. Some people believe that if a cat washes its paw and then places the same paw over its left ear, the cat is actually predicting that a stranger will come to visit. If the cat is in the living area of the house and washes its paws and face, company is on their way. The first single person a cat looks at after cleaning itself will marry shortly afterward. Other myths about cats and the future include:

- In ancient Egypt in sanctuaries, priests carefully tended sacred cats. Watched night and day, priests translated the cats every movement, such as a stretch, yawn or even the twitch of a whisker and used this to predict an event in the future.



- When two people marry and there is a cat at the wedding, they will experience good luck in the future.
- The prophecy of future wealth is a sneezing cat. It also predicts a happy married life for a bride if, on her wedding day, a black cat sneezes close to her.
- Many alleged that tortoiseshell cats had a gift that allowed them to look into the future and that they had the ability to pass this gift to a lucky child in their human family.
- If a person had a dream about a cat, some regarded this as a bad luck sign regarding the future.

Some believe that if a cat chooses and adopts you, even after death the cat will always remain with you.



Chapter 3

CATS Are Lovely

Cats are independent, mystifying and loving animals that make a wonderful addition to any household. Just like dogs and other domestic animals, cats require love and companionship. Every cat has its own distinctive individual personality and disposition. Some cats are very social and outgoing, with bold personalities, love being around people, other animals and adjust quickly to various lifestyles and spaces. Social cats take pleasure in exploring, are very confident and love physical contact and interactive play with their human family and other family pets.

Timid or shy cats favor to be in well-known surroundings with people and other pets that they are familiar and comfortable with. It generally takes them longer to adjust to change, such as moving or bringing another pet into the house. Whether the cat is confident and outgoing or shy and timid, there are several outstanding ways to introduce the cat to new family pets or children that help your cat adjust to the changes as easily as possible.

Cats And Dogs

Many people and families feel that their lives are incomplete if they do not have at least a cat and a dog. However, introducing them may be challenging at the beginning, it is certainly worth the effort. There are a number of steps you can follow that help the dog and cat adjust to each other but never just throw them together figuring they will work it out. This could be very stressful on the animals and in a few cases dangerous for the cat because some dogs consider cats prey and will chase or attack them instinctively. Unfortunately, other dogs such as some terriers and sight hounds think of a cat as small game and will chase and possibly injure the cat. Note, there are some breeds of dogs are just not suited to homes with cats – and vice-versa.

When introducing a cat to a new dog or dog to a new cat, be sure to have a safe zone, such as a spare room complete with the cat's food, water, toys, bed and other necessities. Keep the new cat in this room, allowing the dog and cat to smell each other under the door. This way the cat becomes used to the new smells and sounds of the dog, while feeling safe. Be sure that human family members visit the cat frequently. After a day or two, place a baby gate in the door, which keeps the dog out, but lets the animals become familiar with each other. Never allow the dog to chase the cat and always keep the dog leashed in the cat's presence until they adjust to each other. Use lots of praise and treats to reward both animals for good behavior and it will not be long before the cat and dog tolerate each other. This is a slow process, it will take a little while, but in many cases, the cat and dog will become wonderful buddies and have a lasting friendship.



Cats And Kids

Deciding to bring a cat or kitten into a home with a child or children is a big decision. Although, many parents believe that the wonderful companionship of a cat coupled with the responsibility of caring for an animal is very beneficial. A cat is a wonderful household addition and often becomes a cherished and loved best friend to a child. When talking with your child about getting a cat or kitten, most kids will be enthusiastic and thrilled with the idea. However, it is the parent's responsibility to make sure the new pet is fed and treated properly, children that are old enough need to learn to accept some of the responsibility for the cat's care. It is important to teach your child to treat the cat with respect, care, and gentleness - as cat is not a toy. Introduce the cat and child to each other slowly, making sure that the child is gentle and does not make a lot of noise or sudden movements. Allow the child to pet the cat and feed him a couple of treats while talking in a soothing voice. Do this daily until the child understands how to handle and treat his or her pet. Over time, the cat and child form a bond with each other.

Cats And Other Pets

Natural predators, cats cannot be completely trusted with other pets, such as small furry animals or feathered friends. Be sure to keep the little pets safe by having your bird, hamster or other small animals in cat proof enclosures that agile paws cannot open, in a supervised area. Have little boxes or places inside your rodent's cage where it can hide if it feels stressed or fearful of the cat. Keep your bird's cage out of reach of your cat.

Cats And Feline Companions

Introducing cats to other feline companions is very similar to introducing a cat to a dog. Confine your new cat to a room while it becomes familiar with the other cat under the door. After a day or two, open the door slightly and give your resident cat and the newcomer a treat each, making this a positive, pleasant experience. Next, prop open the door enough for them to see each other but not to get into or out of the room. Once your new cat is comfortable, eating and using its litter box, switch living areas so you confine your resident cat to the room and your new cat has free run of the house and becomes familiar with its new home. In instances where they are not getting along, talk to your vet, as there may be other issues involved, especially if both cats are of the same sex and are not neutered or spayed. In addition, there are some anti-anxiety medications that can help the stressed cat calm down enough to become familiar with the other cat.



Chapter 4

COMMUNICATION & CATS

Unlike humans that use facial expressions and words to communicate, cats have other social behaviors such as sounds, actions, and body expressions to convey their message to other cats, animals and people. However, it would be virtually impossible to notice or understand all cat social behaviors or language; owners can learn to understand some of their vocal sounds, tactile contact, and body postures. Cats are extremely intelligent and it certainly does not take them long to know exactly how to manipulate their owners into doing or giving the cat whatever it wants. The primary ways cats show different types of social behavior is through verbal noises, tail movements, ear positions and other body language.

Cat Sounds

Anyone that owns or has ever owned a cat knows that cats use vocalization when it wants something from the owners, such as treats, food or attention. A loud, demanding meow could mean the cat is hungry and ready for dinner, he wants attention, or that it has a dirty litter box that requires changing. Tiny little meows or sweet, soft meows are often a cat's way of asking for attention, petting sessions, play time, treats, or just saying thank you for loving them. Purring is an easily recognized sound that most people associate with a happy, peaceful, contented cat. Cats often purr when their owner makes a fuss or talks to them, while nursing their young and when cats greet each other. Some cats purr when they are injured and in pain, which many believe is a way for the cat to comfort itself but scientists are still unsure of the behavioral reason behind this behavior. Cats that are afraid make a throaty yowling sound often accompanied by hissing and spitting while a cat in pain makes a distinctive screaming sound.

Cat Actions

Cats are very territorial, and can be very aloof with other cats or humans and hiss, bite or scratch anyone that tries to get close are unsocial animals. Social behavior teaches cat's life lessons that include skills such as:

- Attacking and fighting prey
- Becoming calm, outgoing and comfortable with other cats, humans and accept and interact with no scratching or biting their owner



- Balance and coordination
- Intellectual growth

Between eight and twelve weeks of age, kittens begin learning social behavior from their littermates, mother and from human contact. When people adopt kittens that are anywhere from eight to ten weeks of age they often find the kitten is not well behaved or socialized. Many of the kittens that are up for adoption in animal shelters are less than twelve weeks of age, but make wonderful pets when you act as their surrogate mom and do a little extra work when you first adopt them. Even if you get a well-socialized cat or kitten but spend little or no time playing, paying attention to, or loving and cuddling it, there is a very good possibility that the animal will regress back to anti-social behavior. When not properly socialized, cats have no idea how to play properly and are too rough, scratching and biting their owner, so their owners must teach them that this is not acceptable behavior.

Cat Physical Clues and Cues

Cats have several physical ways to communicate and using body language and their tail to transmit their feelings. A cat's tail often lets you know its mood. When a cat arches its back with its fur standing on end and the tail becomes puffed or bristled, this usually means the cat is surprised or frightened. It makes the cat appear larger, creating a defense mechanism used to intimidate the enemy. When you see the tail of a cat swaying or flicking, this is normally a sign they are watching something very intriguing and are studying, thinking about or getting ready to pounce on an unsuspecting animal, bird, toy, piece of paper or even a fly, or it could also be an aggressive motion. If the cat's tail is lashing back and forth quickly, this is normally the sign of an angry or aggressive cat. You should never try to pick up, comfort or cuddle him at that particular time or you could end up scratched or bitten, as the cat's adrenaline will be flowing. If a cat greets you or greets another cat with its tail held straight up in the air or slightly curled, that is a good indication that the cat is happy, relaxed and content.

When a cat kneads or paws you or turns on its back, stomach up for you to rub its tummy, this means your pet is very happy, content and well adjusted. When it comes to actions, the ears often express the cat's intentions or feelings. If the cat's ears are pinned or pulled back against its head, this normally expresses fear, dislike or stress. Twitching ears that are straight up indicate the cat hears or is listening to something and ears pointed upward and slightly forward indicate a content, happy, relaxed animal.

Understanding what your cat is indicating to you by his or her body cues and clues can really help you understand what is going on for the cat and if they are in a friendly and affectionate or a more detached and independent frame of mind.



Chapter 5

CATS Aggression

Understanding your cat can help you both understand aggression and help you to work with your cat to avoid situations where the cat may become aggressive. Neutering/Spaying cats before they reach maturity is definitely a must in lowering aggression.

What Triggers Aggression

There is a actual difference between play aggression, which is a normal behavior in kittens over about five weeks of age as they become independent hunters and work towards being able to exist on their own in the world and aggression that can become problematic. In domestic cats this stage of aggression in development still occurs, even though your cat will never have to hunt its own dinner. In addition to the play aggression stage, at about the age of 14 weeks kittens will start to learn about social fighting, which is again a survival of the fittest learning skill that will determine which males will successfully mate with females, passing on their physical characteristics.

A kitten that is involved in either play social fighting or play hunting aggression will hide or couch down, leap out at you and swat at your feet or ankles or bite, then immediately run off. If not stopped, this behavior will continue to escalate over time until it becomes a serious problem with a full grown cat attacking your feet when you walk past.

Aggression can be triggered by specific situations that may occur in the home. In their wild state cats respond to sudden noises and feeling trapped or cornered in one of two ways - fight or flight. In most cases a cat will run away if they feel threatened, however if they can't escape, they will resort to aggression. Usually this type of aggression can be avoided by simply stepping away and giving the cat time and space to become comfortable again.

Finally, there are some cats that are just more aggressive by nature. These may be cats that have been mistreated, feral cats that have the only partially tamed or domesticated after they matured, cats that have an illness or injury or those that need to feel that they are the "top cat". This behavior is known as status-related aggression and can cause serious injury to people, other pets and even other cats in the house.



Signs And Signals Of Aggression

Cats sometimes seem to truly have multiple personalities. One second they may be sitting contentedly on your lap and purring and the next second they have your thumb between their teeth and their claws firmly lodged in your leg. This type of an instantaneous change from calm to aggressive is more likely in the status-related aggression, where the cat is letting you know he or she is the boss.

For most cats the signs of aggression include their body movements, vocalizations and general behavior. As mentioned above, most cats will try to get away from trouble, not actively pick a fight with another animal or a person. If a cat feels trapped or cornered, watch for signs of the ears pulled back along the head, hissing and spitting, broadly dilated pupils, arched back and the tail standing straight up and bushed out like an old fashioned bottle brush.

Cats may also indicate discontent and potential aggressive behavior by their tail movements. A gently swaying tail tends to indicate a happy, relaxed and pleased cat, whereas a wildly twitching or just the tip of the tail jerking back and forth will indicate that the cat has had enough of whatever is going on. Purring cats that suddenly stop purring or switch from purring to a more high-pitched vocalization like a growling or yowling sound may also be indicating that they are about at the end of their tolerance range. A happy purr is a very deep, rumbling sound that appears to be coming from their chest or the center of their body, a growl or hiss of displeasure is from the back of the throat.

Aggression towards other cats or animals is very similar to aggression from being startled. The cat will try to arch his or her back, puff out their hair and look as fierce as possible, to hopefully get the other cat or animal to back down and go away. Once cats move into the attack mode, it can be very damaging and it is not a wise idea to stick your hands in between two fighting cats or a cat and a dog. If at all possible distract the animals with a loud noise or a spray of water and then move between them. Sticking your hands on or between animals that are fighting each other is a potential risk that can result in very serious injuries, even though the animals would never hurt you under normal circumstances.

Correcting Aggressive Behavior

Kittens learn from playing with their mothers and littermates that if they are too rough they will be corrected, or they will be left without anyone to play with. Adjusting aggressive behavior in kittens is quite simple; you just need to follow the same rules. When a kitten first starts to show any aggressive type of play, simply stop playing. You may also want to indicate a sharp "Ouch" or "No" when the kitten bites or uses their claws. Immediately give the kitten a toy and allow him or her to understand that rough play is for the toys, not for the people. Don't hit or spank the



kitten and don't pick it up by the scruff of the neck and give it a shake, no matter what you might read. This will only increase the kittens struggling and reinforce that aggression is the way to handle human interactions. If the kitten doesn't respond to the sharp "No" and ignoring, consider carrying a small misting bottle filled with clean water and direct a small shot of water at the kitten's nose when he or she becomes aggressive. Don't use water as a toy or to tease or play with the kitten and only use when necessary.

Older cats are more likely aggressive either because they are frightened or because they feel that they are the boss of the house. If your cat is scared, increasing socialization, such as regular petting, grooming and attention may help to solve the problem. If your cat's behavior has changed due to a move or change in the house, you may need to provide a private, quiet place and give the cat time to adjust.

When your cat shows signs of aggression, immediately move away from the cat, don't push or hit at the cat, as it will attack at this point. A water bottle can be valuable in getting the cat off your lap or out of your space. Once he or she is calm again, give them a treat and avoid petting until he or she comes to you. Always keep your petting time short and be in control of the contact.



Chapter 6

Cats And Destructive Behavior

Most cats don't intentionally engage in destructive behavior; however some cats seem to have the ability to get into everything. Whether this is your cat's nature or whether they are just bored and looking for something to keep them busy and entertained when you are gone, there are some strategies and techniques that you can use to help curb the problem.

Types Of Destructive Behavior

Normally, most of what humans consider destructive behavior is just normal cat behavior that ends up in our furniture developing that fringed, loose-weave appearance and our plants being chewed down to nothing but the stem. Occasionally, cats will also start to chew like dogs, typically on the corners of area rugs, on the legs of your coffee or end tables or even on your shoes, cords or a cell phone that was just left lying on the table. Chewing is potentially dangerous to your cat as they can swallow pieces of objects that can either cause choking or can block their intestinal tract.

Sometime cats, especially toms, will engage in a behavior known as spraying. This is a really terrible behavior, since it is hard to curb once it gets started. Marking or spraying involves backing up to an object, typically your favorite chair, couch or your bed, and spraying a fine mist of urine. You will notice the cat immediately if he, and occasionally she, is doing this because their tails will be straight up and will twitch or vibrate in a very distinctive motion.

Some cats, often those that are pure or part Siamese or Persian, will engage in sucking behavior. This may or may not be a result of being removed from the mother too soon, but cats that do this are usually very calm and well adjusted, except for this one little quirk. Cats that engage in a sucking habit will find a favorite item, usually the corner of a rug or a pillow and just hold it in their mouth and move their mouths as if they were nursing. Usually all the damage that occurs is a wet spot on the corner of the favorite item.

What Causes Bad Behavior?

As mentioned above most cat behavior is natural and perfectly normal, except within the confines of your house. Sporadically cats may engage in certain behaviors such as eating plants or chewing or licking a particular item because they have some sort of nutritional deficiency, however if they appear healthy and are eating a high quality cat kibble or other food, this is not



likely to be the problem. To confirm any health concerns, take your cat to your vet and they can complete blood test to check for deficiencies and imbalances.

Cats that chew on plants, furniture, shoes, or other objects are likely bored and looking for something fun to do. Thankfully there is a wide range of possible chew toys, balls, fluffy toys and even mechanical toys to keep your cat occupied when they have to stay by themselves. Another great option is to find a suitable companion pet such as a cat friendly dog or another cat.

Cats will often become more difficult and challenging with their behavior if they are not spayed or neutered. The spraying behavior described above is almost always eliminated in males that are neutered early, around the three to six month mark is the best time, however even males neutered as late as nine months will not usually develop the behavior. Toms that are neutered after that time may still spray; however it is much less of a problem. Common mating behaviors of males include territorial aggression and fighting, both which can cause an increase in the risk of being injured or contracting a disease through contact with a feral, unvaccinated cat.

Keeping Your Cat Happy

Keeping your cat happy is not as difficult as one may think. Spending some one on one time in grooming, feeding and playing with your cat as well as ensuring that they have companionship in the form of another animal or human when you are gone can really help. Most cats are very comfortable being alone for the day and accept that you are going to leave them in the house or apartment. If they can see outside, sit on a window ledge or at a patio door this can also help them stay mentally occupied.

Keeping your cat happy also includes ensuring that they have clean litter box, toys, food and water when you are gone. Provide a good variety of toys from balls they can bat around with their paws to small toys they can carry in their mouths. Cats that explore cupboards and shelves are likely in search of a treat, and with food and water easily available they are less likely to go hunting.

Cat play towers or condos that have scratching posts, ropes, boxes and lots of areas to jump and move about in are a great way to provide exercise in a controlled space. This can also help to prevent scratching on furniture and digging in plants. Adding some crumpled aluminum foil or rocks to your planters can also help in preventing digging and sprinkling some hot sauce on the leaves will prevent any chewing.



Chapter 7

Is Your Cat healthy?

Knowing if your cat is healthy is an important way to understand behaviors that your pet might be exhibiting. Normally, cats have a relatively high pain tolerance, which frequently means that they can be quietly ill before they actually start showing any outward signs. Carefully checking your cats skin, mouth, ears, eyes and nose when petting or grooming is a great routine to start and will help you note any changes in their physical health.

Behavioral Changes That Signal Problem

Any time that your cat's behavior suddenly changes for no apparent reason you should anticipate that it might be a health related issue. Behavioral changes are normal if there is a new addition to the home, be it a person, pet or even new furniture, if someone the cat was affectionate towards has left, or if you have changed the cats food, sleeping area or other space. These environmental changes may result in your cat hiding and not coming out for attention or a lot of crying, yowling and the need for constant attention and contact with you, even if they have not been overly affectionate in the past.

Behavioral changes that indicate serious problems typically include behaviors such as:

- Vomiting
- Excessive drinking or a dramatic increase in food consumption
- Excessive or very frequent urination
- Diarrhea
- Constipation or straining to go to the bathroom
- Frequent trips to the litter box without eliminating anything
- Blood in the urine or feces
- Discharge from the eyes or ears
- Discharge from the genitals
- Hair loss
- Excessive scratching or licking
- Lesions or rough, irritated areas of the skin that don't heal or spread
- Wounds with a foul smell or discharge
- Food refusal
- Refusing to drink water
- Seizures or times when the cat just seems to stare off into space and is unaware of their surroundings



Getting your cat to the vet right away upon noticing any of these physical signs with or without a change in behavior with regards to attention or affection is very important. Early treatment is essential to helping your pet to recover.

Common Illnesses In Cats

Cats that are routinely vaccinated and treated for worms and fleas will typically be very healthy, so routine, yearly vet visits and vaccinations are absolutely essential. Many pet owners that keep their cats indoors don't regard vaccination as important, but there is always the chance your cat may get out or may be exposed to a virus from another pet, a human or even through an insect bite. There are always health risks that cannot be prevented such as neurological problems due to bacterial infections or parasites, cancers and blood disorders and other accident and injury conditions so why not take every precaution to avoid those that are preventable.

Common health problems seen in cat populations include:

- **Bites, scratches and lesions**

Cats tend to be very aggressive and dangerous when fighting, so most cats at some point will be scratched, bit or wounded and the hair will usually cover the areas unless there is some type of a complication such as an infection. The area that is infected will be swollen and hot to the touch; typically there will also be a bloody or puss-like discharge. When this happens the vet can surgically clean the wound of any destroyed and dead skin, leaving the area open to dry and heal without any infection. Antibiotics and a topical application that is sprayed or washed on the area may be required to help with preventing the infection from flaring back up.

- **Eye discharge or squinting**

This can be a sign of a scratch or lesion on the surface of the eye that has become infected, or it can also be caused by a foreign object lodged on the surface of the eye or under the lid. A vet needs to anesthetize the area, examine the cornea and the eye structure, then repair any damage or remove the object. In some cases the vet may also require drops to be put in the eye to assist with lubrication and healing.

- **Ears**

Ear mites are common in cats and kittens are treated with drops that are rubbed into the ear on a routine schedule. Cats that are constantly scratching their ears, rubbing with their paws and even removing the hair from in front of the ear with their scratching likely have ear mites.

- **Digestive Problems**

Most digestive problems in cats are caused by sudden changes in the type of food they are eating or by the cat getting into garbage or other materials that make it sick.



Vomiting, diarrhea, blood in the feces or a discharge from the anus is all signs of digestive problems. Cats that refuse to eat; look bloated or distended in the abdominal area may have intestinal blockages, hernias or even severe worm infestations, especially if they are kittens or young cats. Cats can also be poisoned by eating mouse or rat poison, eating certain plants or even eating certain foods such as raisins, grapes, onions, garlic, tomatoes or chocolate. Immediately consult with your vet and have the cat checked for potential digestive problems if you notice any of the symptoms listed above that last more than 24 hours.

- **Urinary problems**

Cats, especially males, are prone to urinary tract infections and blockages, cystitis and bladder stones due to calcium build up. Changing your cats diet, using antibiotics to treat the infection and encouraging your cat to drink as much liquid as possible is important. A couple of drops of canned tuna liquid in a small amount of water will really make a tasty treat that will help keep fluid moving through the kidney and bladder.

- **Cancers**

Cats, like humans and all other animals, may develop different malignant and benign tumors and cancers throughout their bodies. These may be located on the skin and seen as lumps and swelling, or may be in the skeleton or internal organs. Watch for changes in eating, sudden weight gains or losses or any signs of pain and sensitivity over the body.

While this is not a comprehensive list of conditions that are seen in cats, it does give you an idea of the types of health issues that cats can develop.

Feeding Your Cat For Life

Taking the time to start your cat and kitten off with the best possible nutritional diet is really the best decision. Cats are carnivores by nature, which means that they need meat to stay healthy. Although advertisements may talk about vegetables, whole grains and other "healthy" ingredients, they are largely not required by a cat.

In most homes, cats will not be hunting for their meals so it is important that their food contain the protein, minerals and vitamins that cats need to stay healthy. Vets will usually recommend a premium dry kibble food for your cat or kitten as this helps keep the teeth and gums clean and free from plaque and tartar. A dry kibble is also important as it encourages your cat to drink lots of water, which helps with urinary tract blockages and infections. If you are not sure what type of food to feed your cat, talk with your vet. He or she will have a balanced dry food product that they will either sell or recommend.



In some cases, senior cats, cats recovering from surgery or cats with dental or jaw problems may do better on a completely canned food diet for easy chewing and digestion. Again, your vet will be able to provide recommended brands or types of food that can be provided and are easily available in your area.



Chapter 8

Training Your Cat

Once you understand your cat and will be able to determine what mood they are in and if they are willing and ready to spend some time interacting with you, the next step is to boldly go where few cat owners have gone before and start with a basic training program.

Can You Train A Cat?

In short, yes you can. It is important to not believe of training a cat the same as you would train a dog. You naturally will not get the same level of cooperation and response to your commands, however social cats that love human attention and interaction are actually rather easy to train with a bit of patience, good sense of humor and big supply of tasty cat treats.

Essentially, cat training is a lot like teaching a very young child. You don't expect kids to instantly know how to tie their shoes; instead, you praise them for finding their shoes, putting them on and then work up towards the lacing. Training a cat by rewarding successive approximations is also the best method and in reality you are exactly shaping the behavior to get closer and closer to exactly what you want. You also don't ask cats to repeat the behavior several times in one session. Unlike dogs, cats will typically do a trick once, get a treat, and then they are ready to do something else of their choosing. So, repetitive training is not a good choice in working with your cat.

Cats can be trained to follow more than a few basic commands with the easiest being the "Come" command. Cats will quickly learn the sound of their name and will come on call to you, even if they are busy doing something else. Training your cat to sit, lie down and even fetch is also not difficult, however you have to take your individual cat's personality and natural behavior into consideration. Cats can be trained to walk on a leash or even to be tethered in your yard, although they should never be left on a tether unsupervised, as there is always a safety risk. Often in cities with restrictions on cats off of the property this is a better option than hoping they won't climb your fence or keeping them in a small runs in a yard. In addition, cats are very intelligent and will quickly learn a variety of words including "treat", "dinner" and "outside".



Positive Reward Training

There is only one way that you can successfully train your cat and that is by focusing on what he or she is doing right and simply ignoring when they do make mistakes. If you use any type of negative training or punishment your cat will simply disengage from the training session and you will be left with a full pocket of treats and a cat that won't come near you.

Positive reward training, using the basic NILF principles, is the very best option in working with your cat. NILF or Nothing In Life is Free training is used in working with almost any type of animal and it also works well with people. This positive training method requires that the trainer ask the animal, in this case the cat, to do something before they get what they want, which is the treat. The key component to this training is that the reward or treat must be something that the cat really, really loves and is restricted from the cat's diet except for training times. Often small pieces of boiled chicken, tuna flavored cat treats or other commercially prepared treats are the best option since they are very small and easy to keep with you.

Simple Commands For Your Cat

Starting in training your cat means that you need to be observant of your pets behavior. If he or she runs to greet you at the door, be sure to have small treat when you walk through the door and call "Come Tiger", (assuming of course your cat is named Tiger) as you walk in, then give the cat the treat when he gets to you and spend some time petting and playing with her. At this point you have not really "taught" anything, the cat would have done the same behavior even if you didn't call or give a treat. However, he will start to associate a word pattern "Come Tiger" with an action on his part that results in a tasty reward. Once you have repeated this process several days in a row, try using the same command when you are in another room, have a treat ready and be prepared with the reward and attention when your cat arrives. If you also call him at meal times or when you are ready to curl up and watch a movie with your pet, you will be amazed at how quickly he or she learns the command. When he or she starts coming every time to your call, you can make the treats more random and don't provide one every time.

Once your cat is coming on command, it is quite simple to teach them to sit on command. The first step is to call the cat, but at this time do not provide a treat immediately, hold it in your hand, just above and in front of your cat's nose. When they stretch out their neck to get the treat, move your hand in a straight line back towards the center of the cat's head, just between the ears. This will cause your cat to automatically move their head up and back, which will compel their hind end to crouch into the sitting position. As soon as you see the head tilt up and back say "Sit Tiger" and as soon as the rump touches the ground, give the treat. Keep working at this until the cat is fully seated; keep in mind this may take several days. Only do this once or twice in a row, repetition will just cause the cat to jump up with their front paws at the treat.



In just a few days your cat will be running to you and sitting down automatically. You can then ask him or her to sit in other rooms and at other times, just be sure to have treat ready and give her lots of praise when she does the right thing. To move to sitting up have the cat sit, then hold a treat just above his head. When he reaches up with his front paws you can give the command "Up" or "Beg" and give the treat.

To instruct the lie down command, start from the sitting position, and then put a treat in your fingers just in front of the cat on the floor. He or she will slide down to the ground, give them the treat and then, if they enjoy it, rub their sides and stomach. With good association with the stomach rub and the treat you may even get your cat to roll over!

Teaching your cat is a rewarding experience, but keep in mind training needs to be done when everything is calm and both you and your cat are in the mood for it.



Chapter 9

Litter Box Problems

One of the benefits of owning a cat is that they are in nature very clean animals, and can be easily trained to use a litter box, preventing the need for keeping them outside or dashing home over your lunch to let them out. It is essential to establish with your cat the litter box routine to ensure that you get off to right from the start.

Litter Box Training Kittens

Ideally the best time to start litter box training your kitten is when you first bring him or her home. Keep the kitten in a small area such as a bathroom or other smaller room where there is nothing to crawl under or hide. This will essentially restrict your kitten to having to use the litter box, as it will be the only area where he or she can dig, which is a natural cat behavior before relieving themselves. Once he or she has used the box a couple of times, it is then safe to allow them to come out into the rest of the house when you are there to keep an eye on them. Note that a young kitten may not think about going all the way into the bathroom to find the litter box if he or she can find a nice planter, a pile of papers or even a loose rug or a deep carpet they can dig in. When you are first training, take your kitten at least once every hour into the bathroom and place them beside the litter box or in the box. If they don't use the box in a few minutes, bring them back out and try again in another 30 minutes or so.

The first few times your kitten uses the litter box he or she may not cover their waste and it is important to leave some waste material in the box, as the kitten will be alerted by the scent of their own waste that this is where they are supposed to go. If you remove all the waste they are less likely to return to the same spot. After a few days with using the box correctly, you can start cleaning as often as you would like.

Keep in mind that very small kittens will not be able to get in and out of a full sized litter box. You may consider using a cut down cardboard box with a very low edge on at least one side to make it easy for the kitten to get in and out of.

If he or she messes somewhere else in the house do not punish or yell at the kitten, they simply didn't know where to go when they had the urge. Clean the area really well with a special pet urine compound that uses active enzymes to remove the odor. **Do not** use ammonia based cleaning products as they can act to actually trigger the kitten to use the area as a toilet due to the chemicals in the cleaning compound.



Common Problems

The biggest problems with cats or kittens messing in random areas of the house and not using the litter box are often due to human error and misunderstanding, and not due to the cat. If your cat has started going to the bathroom outside of the litter box consider the following:

- Is the litter box clean? A dirty litter box will not be attractive to a naturally clean cat, so they will avoid using it and find somewhere else. Some cats will not use a litter box if there a little bit of waste while others cats may be more tolerant.
- Placing the litter box in a new area or an area that doesn't offer privacy. Cats are very private when doing their business and need to be out of sight and in a low traffic area.
- Changing litter. Some cats are very particular about the feel and smell of the litter. Highly scented litter may be repulsive to the cat, so try using an unscented litter.
- Multiple cats using the same box can be a problem. Some cats won't use a box after another cat, especially if a new cat has used the box. It is recommended that you have one litter box per cat plus an additional litter box.
- Outdoor cats that become indoor cats may only want to dig in dirt and will use you plants exclusively. If this is the case, try adding a layer of dirt over the litter, then gradually cutting down on the dirt while the cat adjusts. It will be a bit messing in the beginning to clean, but will be worth the effort over time.
- Mechanical litter boxes. These new self-cleaning litter boxes can really frighten some cats, while other will show no problems. If you have just started with one of these boxes, consider providing another box close by to help your cat adjust.

Solutions For Indoor And Outdoor Cats

There are a lot more options for litter boxes for indoor cats than there used to be. There are covered boxes that provide privacy plus prevent litter from being spayed all over the room, mats to collect litter outside the box and even the self-cleaning boxes mentioned above. If you have an active or energetic digger you may also want to consider the extra deep litter boxes that help stop some of the litter from being redistributed around the room.

New litter includes fully biodegradable litters which can be flushed down the toilet, clumping litters and odor controlling litters that make cleaning the box easy, as well as natural wood litters that are odor and wetness absorbing.



Outdoor cats can also be trained to only use certain areas of the yard as the toilet area, rather than your flower beds and the neighbor's planters. One simple way is to keep an area of the yard tilled so that it is soft and easy to dig in, and clean the waste material out of the dirt every week.



Chapter 10

Thinking Like A Cat

One of the best ways to get to understand your cat is put yourself into your cat's paws. If you master this art, you are well on your way to being an empathetic and enlightened cat owner, able to respond to your cat's needs and behaviors without any hesitation.

Get Into Your Cat's Head

The best way to learn about your cat and what he or she is all about is to spend time in quiet observation. Watch what your cat does, what are they interested in and how do they respond to changes in their environment. Once you have a good idea of how they respond and interact, it is easier to decide or foresee how they will respond to you and your behavior. It is also easier to anticipate what may be potential issues within your environment for your cat.

While you are trying to think like a cat, keep in mind that a cat is by nature a hunter, and even though you may want your cat to be friendly and playful, they do have the instincts of their ancestors. Don't assume that a cat will not be aggressive, rather watch and try to learn what triggers aggression, fear or playfulness in your cat. If you have multiple cats, watching them interact is an interesting study. Through their play or lack of play, you will soon learn which cat is dominant, which is more submissive and how compatible they really are with each other.

Keep in mind that cats need to be active, and while they may be able to spend an amazing amount of time sleeping in their favorite spot they do need to climb, run and play to stay happy and healthy. Giving the opportunity to do this through playing, providing climbing and scratching areas, or having other pets in the house, is all a part of ensuring that your cat is both mentally and physically content and healthy. If your cat is going to be outdoors, it is also important to think about safety and how to keep your cat within the confines of your property or living area.

If your cat is engaging in negative or bad behaviors, don't punish the cat; rather look at the environment from a cat's perspective. What is missing or what needs to change? What is different from what used to be? Usually if we humans can identify the answers to these two questions, once the problem behaviors is correct, the cat will discontinue the negative or bad behavior. Unfortunately, tens of thousands of cats and kittens are turned into animal shelters and ultimately destroyed because their human owners didn't take the time to just consider what the cat needed to be happy in their environment.



Looking For Solutions and Getting Help

With the convenience of looking up information on the web and the number of articles, websites and forums (including ours – <http://www.MustLoveCats.net>) on cats available on the internet finding ideas or looking for help and assistance with understanding your cat has never been easier. If you are using an internet site make sure it is reputable, has informed and knowledgeable contributors, and is concerned with the safety and well being of your pet. Websites that advocate any type of punishment or negative based trainings should be avoided..

In addition to online help, there are always books on cats that can be very helpful in all aspects of caring for your cat and understanding his or her behavior. Again, keep in mind that the book is only as good as the author's credentials and experience, so do a bit of research before you choose which book is best for you.

If you have purchased a purebred kitten, the breeder is a great source of help and assistance, as are members of different cat breed associations. Shelter or rescue workers if you have adopted a cat or kitten are also a valuable resource in understanding your pet. Your vet is another individual that can give you both insight and practical information on how to raise, manage and care for your cat. In some cases a vet may recommend an animal behavior expert that can help in determining what is going on with your cat's behavior and help with changes in the environment that will help the cat to adjust.

Caring for a cat or cats is a truly wonderful experience. These small but highly independent animals will give you years of companionship, fun, entertainment and an amazing sense of what it means to think like a cat. If you take the time to really understand your cat, you will find that you do have a special perspective on the world and may even gain a better understanding of yourself in the process.