



Paw Prints

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Columnist

You CAN train your cat

So many folks are fixated on training dogs that they forget about their feline friend — or figure that their cat just is too independent to train.

Most people believe that cats can't be trained because they don't seem responsive to the many methods used to train dogs.

But cats *do* respond to training! In fact one of the first scientific studies highlighting the importance of reinforcement in animal behavior was done with cats.

The first step to training Kitty is to understand her. Cats aren't as social as dogs. Dogs were domesticated first and have been bred specifically to work together with

people. Plus, dogs evolved as pack hunters. Cats were domesticated to kill vermin, and evolved into solitary ambush hunters.

Felines are naturally independent, and aren't naturally inclined to work for praise, as dogs are. Cats are not as easy to motivate.

Training Kitty has important benefits. You're stimulating her body and her mind, which keeps your cat healthy. And spending time together means you're strengthening the bond you share. Besides teaching Kitty fun tricks like high five and fetch, you can also teach her a range of useful behaviors like sit, stay and to come when called. You could even teach your cat to use the toilet instead of the litter box.

Cats should only be taught new behaviors with positive, reward-based training.

Find an extra-special treat that your feline friend is crazy about. Maybe fresh chicken diced into cubes, bits of tuna or her favorite commercial cat treats are all good choices. Cats can also be clicker-trained just like dogs and other animals.

A clicker can make training easier and faster. The instant your cat does the correct behavior, click and then offer a treat. The click

lets Kitty know the instant she does the right thing, so it helps her catch on faster. Since cats learn through repetition, you'll need to practice a few times in a row.

Here are some examples of training your cat with positive reinforcement. With encouragement and plenty of treats, you and your feline friend can accomplish great things.

Let's say you'd like your cat to sit and stay while you prepare her dinner: First, make sure you have your cat's attention. Hold the tasty treat in your fingers right at your cat's nose. When your cat begins to sniff the treat, slowly move it in an arc from her nose up just over her head between her ears. (Don't raise it straight up, or you'll be teaching your cat to stand on her rear legs rather than sit.) Many cats will follow this arc motion with their eyes and nose, and as their chin raises up and back, their butt will go down.

Next, the instant your cat's bottom hits the floor, praise her and offer the treat. If her bottom doesn't go all the way down on the first try, give her the treat anyway. Over several repetitions of practice, give Kitty a treat each time her rear gets slightly closer, until she gets into a complete sit with her



PHOTO BY JODI SCHNEIDER MCNAMEE

Smoke is ready to learn a trick with a favorite treat

rear all the way down.

Motivation is the key to training. For most cats, it's food. They care less about "good kitty" than good kitty treats.

So think about it; if you can train Kitty to do tricks for treats, you can even train your cat to scratch her scratching post instead of your couch arm using the same techniques.

To motivate your cat, you're going to reward her with a treat every time she uses the scratching post, lets you brush her, or uses the litter box appropriately. Praise her at the same time, but

make sure you give her that favorite treat.

Timing is everything in training your cat. Cats have short attention spans, so the reward must come immediately after the behavior or Kitty may not know what it's for. For example, if you see Kitty use her scratching post, give her a treat while she's scratching and praise her.

Rewarding consistently is an important part of training. Give the same kind of reward each time your cat behaves the way you want her to, and make sure everyone in the family does the same.

Wags, Woofs & Mews THANK YOU to all who donated!

With your food and cash donations, **362** animals will enjoy a very full holiday ... including **130** cats/kittens, **176** dogs/puppies, **1** parakeet, **2** doves, **2** cockatiels, **1** hamster, **2** guinea pigs, **44** chickens/geese/peacocks/ducks and **4** rabbits, plus spay/neuter sponsorships for many cats and dogs through the Bend Spay & Neuter Project.

A huge thank-you to **Katy Rodrigues** and **Ron Cook** of **American Nutrition/Atta Boy** for securing the donation of **7 pallets** of dog and cat food. Thank you to **Eileen Knoud** of **Nylabone** for the large donation of dog chews. Many thanks to **Sisters-Camp Sherman RFPD** who stored the food for us this year and helped distribute it.

Thank you to **Sisters Chamber** and the many volunteers who helped with Pet Photos with Santa, including "Sam"ta Claus, **Sam Hernandez** from **Central Bark**, and to photographer **Jodi Schneider McNamee**. Special thanks to **Fred McCaulou** at **Sisters Feed & Supply** for holding their annual food drive. Thank you to **Kurt** for also holding a food drive at **CardioStart ReSale**. Huge thanks go to **Naomi Rowe** and **Shirley Lalli** our **Kiwanis** food drive coordinators. Thank you to the volunteers who helped distribute the food, **Valerie Fercho-Tillery**, **Vern & Monica Rendon**, **Sally Blust**, **Leslee Bangs**, **Jim & Ceili Cornelius**, **Carolyn Davis**, **Teresa Mahnken**, **KC & Sabitri Dolson** and **Wally Hathaway**. Special thanks to all **The Nugget Newspaper** employees who help during the month of December as Furry Friends takes over **The Nugget** office. Through your generosity an estimated **4 tons** of food was distributed this holiday season. Thank you and happy holidays! — Kiki Dolson, "Top Dog," Furry Friends Foundation

