

The Kitten Training Crash Course

Yes, you can train a cat — sit, come, scratching posts instead of sofas, calm carrier rides. A practical schedule, not a theory lecture, built on the same reward-based principles vets and behaviorists actually endorse.



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CHAPTER 01

The Position Behind Everything Here

Start with the myth this whole guide exists to correct: "you can't train a cat." The American Veterinary Society of Animal Behavior (AVSAB) says otherwise, in exactly those words — "and in case you're wondering, yes of course you can train cats... cats should also only be trained with reward-based methods."¹ The American Association of Feline Practitioners' (AAFP) own position statement on the topic is just as direct: "positive reinforcement is defined as giving a reward — something that is desirable for the individual — to increase the likelihood of that behavior recurring. Cats learn best through positive reinforcement."²

The mechanics are simple and apply to everything in this guide: reward immediately after the behavior you want — AAFP specifies within three seconds, "so that we don't inadvertently reward other behavior that may happen after the desired one."² Want a cat to scratch the post instead of the sofa? "Entice it to do so and, when the cat scratches in the desired location, immediately reward."² That single mechanism — timing the reward to the behavior — is doing almost all of the work in this book.

WHY PUNISHMENT DOESN'T BELONG HERE

AAFP is unambiguous: "punishment can be deleterious, leading to fear and possible fear aggression, stress and stress-associated health and behavior problems, inhibition of learning the desired new behavior, and breakdown of the human–animal bond. Physical punishment should never be used with cats or other animals."² Even verbal scolding backfires — it "can also increase fear and possibly fear aggression" and "focuses attention on the undesired behavior of the cat," which can accidentally reward the very thing you're trying to stop.²

PAWFESSOR MOCHI'S TIP

Ever catch yourself thinking a cat "just won't listen"? Ask instead: was the reward good enough, was the timing off, or did the criteria jump too far too fast? Every chapter after this one comes back to that same troubleshooting question instead of a verdict on the cat.