

For My Next Trick

With consistency, caring and patience, you can teach your cat new tricks.

Arden Moore

Don't let feline history deter you from teaching your feline friend a trick or two or three. You don't have to be a professional trainer or enroll in a special cat-training school to achieve success. Just follow a simple strategy: Be consistent, caring and patient, says Tammy Dekens, a professional dog and cat trainer and animal-behavior consultant in Calgary, Alberta, Canada. I've found positive reinforcement works no matter the animal, Dekens says. I've worked with cats for six years and food seems their primary motivation, more so than toys.

Make your training sessions seem like a fun game, not a chore, adds Silverman, noted for training animals for Universal Studios, television shows and commercials. He also hosted Good Dog U on Animal Planet cable television network.

Silverman recently shared his trick-training talents with the makers of Arm & Hammer and their Coolest Cat Trick Contest. The national contest called for cat owners to submit videotapes of their cats performing tricks with the winner earned \$10,000 and a trophy.

Finally, acknowledge the mutual benefits you and your cat will gain from spending time together learning tricks. Anything positive you can do to enrich your relationship with your cat is worth the effort, says Jacque Lynn Schultz, an animal-behavior consultant and director of special projects for the animal-sciences division of the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals in New York City. The need is even greater than ever because of the trend toward keeping cats indoors. They still need to explore, hunt and chase. Life indoors can be quite boring if there is nothing to challenge them.

Schultz says trick training helps stimulate your cats mind, hone physical skills and bolster self-confidence. Cats with plenty of tricks in their repertoire also display fewer behavioral problems, often triggered by boredom or the inability to unleash energy.

Ready to become your tabbys training tutor? Grab some treats and try teaching your cat these tricks. Lets start with the No. 1 trick: coming when called.

1. Come A popular saying goes, Dogs come when they're called. Cats take a message and get back to you later. It doesn't have to be that way.