

For My Next Trick

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

Arden Moore

Select a cat harness that fits the barrel of your cats torso and a lightweight cat leash. Introduce these items by placing them near your cats scratching post or favorite napping spot for a week to allow for investigation.

Put your cat in the harness without the leash and let it walk around the house for a minute or so. Make this a positive experience by offering food treats and praise. Gradually increase the time your cat wears the harness indoors.

Once your cat seems comfortable with the harness, add the leash, and let your cat walk around indoors. Remember to give praise and treats.

Hook the leash to your harnessed cat and lead your cat around the house by holding a small food treat in front of your cats nose. Once your cat appears comfortable and confident walking indoors, cradle your leashed cat in your arms and walk around outside. Speak calmly and point out cool sights for a few minutes before heading back indoors and giving a treat.

Once your cat masters these steps, take it outside and gently lower your cat to the ground. Kneel down beside your cat and speak calmly as it explores with you holding the leash. Spend a few minutes outdoors before going back inside and giving your cat a treat.

Time the outdoor walk for a quiet time of day and a safe, dog-free area such as a fenced backyard or other location to make this a pleasant experience for your cat.

Silverman says much of a cats trick-training success depends on the willingness - and consistency - of the owner.

If you are going to work with your cat, you need to decide what your cat will do, and you need to follow through, he says. Take advantage of that fact that cats are motivated by food. If a cat consistently knows it will get rewarded for doing a specific behavior with a food treat, it will be motivated to perform that action.