

Treats and Behavior

Want to change your cat's behavior? Use treats to reward good behavior and encourage your cat to adopt new habits.

Treats can help during playtime, but try to limit their use as positive rewards for behavior modification. While there are circumstances when treats can be beneficial in accelerating a modification plan, they can also upset your cat's nutritional balance. If your cat has any ongoing medical condition or is on a specific diet, check with your veterinarian before using any treats.

The most effective use of treats is for distraction during new cat introductions or in hostile multicat households. If the cats seem obsessed with staring each other down, place a small treat next to each one. Discovering a treat can distract the cats long enough to break the tension. Giving small treats when both cats are in the same room can help each one begin to associate positive things with the other cat.

Treats can be helpful in desensitizing a cat to an insecure area within your home. If your cat dislikes being near the front door, leave a treat there for it to discover. Combine this with slowly moving playtime to that area.

Don't get into a treat-giving routine, or your cat will expect rewards. Use them sparingly and not at the same time each day.

If your cat is terrified whenever it sees its carrier, line it with a towel to create a cozy hideaway, then place a treat at the carrier's entrance. Do it a few times, then start leaving the treat deeper in the carrier. Don't trick your cat by putting the treat in the carrier before you slam the door on it. The treat should be placed there when your cat can move in and out freely.

Remember that treats are not meals. As behavior modification progresses, wean the cat off the treat by substituting praise.