



Cat Behavior Sample Documents

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Play Time: More than just Games- Sample

What is play therapy?

Play therapy is a method of interactive play which is a very powerful tool used to help your cat in a variety of situations. It can help nurture bonding between cat and owner, creating and repairing relationships between cohabitating pets, acclimation to new situations and places, exercise, stress relief, and more.

Why is it important?

Play is more than just waving a wand style toy around which can frustrate your cat and make behaviors and relationships *worse*. All cats are programmed to stalk, hunt, catch and consume prey. Domestic cats do not have the need or opportunity to hunt which can lead to heightened levels of stress which can show in a variety of ways including behavior problems and illness.

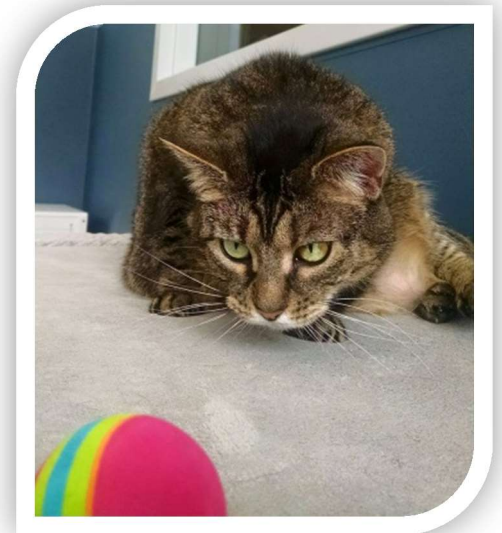
How do I do it?

Find out what really gets your cat excited in terms of his hunting style – ground, aerial or a combination? A wand toy with a small mouse at the end is great at simulating ground prey while a toy mimicking aerial prey can really get your cat moving. While your cat may enjoy fetching toys you throw, when they stop moving they are considered dead prey that is inedible and no cat wants that!

Remember, the goal is to work your cat physically *and* mentally. To be effective you must become one with the 'prey' and be in tune to what prey does including hiding, sudden movements and stops and playing dead. Drag the toy around corners of walls and furniture to watch the suspense build within your cat as he stalks and pounces on his 'catch'.

The movement of your cat will match the speed and intensity of his prey. Slowing down the movements towards the end of the 'hunt' will mimic an injured or dying prey and allow him to enter a calm, confident and satisfied state. Cats gain confidence with each capture which is one of the reasons play therapy can aid in resolving a multitude of behavioral issues.

Reward your cat with a tasty catch he can actually consume, such as his dinner or a few tasty treats. Using play therapy before meals triggers the natural cycle of stalk, hunt, catch and eat which engages his natural hunting instinct – fulfilling his role as a cat.



Fun for a short amount of time

While no two cats are the same the majority cats will benefit from one or two 10-15 minute sessions a day. Tailor your play sessions to meet your schedule and your cats needs and you will see an improvement in behavior, relationships and happiness of everyone within the home!

Living with Allergies and Pets- Sample

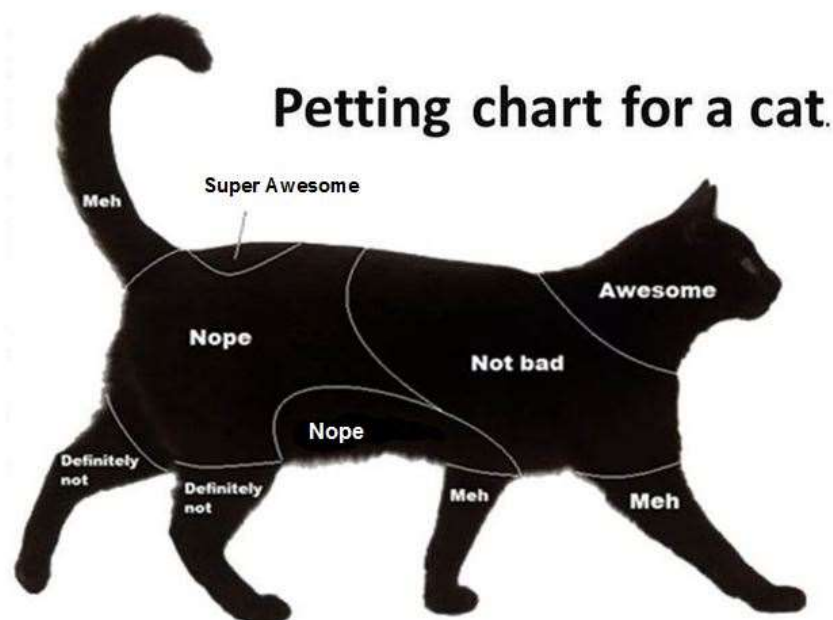
If reaction(s) are difficult to deal with but not life threatening, try these steps before considering surrendering:

Often ones allergies are triggered by the total cumulative allergen load, or a combination of all allergens in the air so by reducing the total allergen load pet dander may no longer pose a threat!

- **Purchase an air purifier (or multiple)** – HEPA air filters can make a huge difference in air quality by reducing the allergen load in the home
- **Let some fresh air in** –energy efficient homes/windows can lock air in that contains allergens. If possible let fresh air in by opening a window and use an air purifier
- **Create an allergy free zone**
 - Consider pillow and mattress/box spring covers and easily washable bedding materials
 - Use an air purifier in this room
 - Limit rugs, drapes or curtains to materials that are easily washed, wash twice a month
 - This room is off limits for your pet
- **Bathe/groom your pet on a weekly basis**
 - Look for shampoos/wipes that are formulated to prevent dander, wipes are helpful for difficult to bathe pets
 - Consult with your vet which type of shampoo is acceptable to use frequently on your pet without drying his/her coat out
 - Monitor your pets coat for any signs of dermatitis, which often leads to accelerated shedding which can increase allergens in the air
 - Consult with your vet on your pets diet and any supplements that may help keep your pets coat conditioned and healthy
 - Brush your pet outside when possible, or if you have a cat, brush outdoors only if you have a safe enclosed area or if your cat is on a leash/harness- otherwise you can groom him/her in the bathroom, as it is a room often containing more hard/more easily cleanable surfaces than other rooms

- **Adjust your cleaning routine**
 - Vacuum frequently, preferably with a vacuum equipped with a HEPA filter or disposable bag so allergens will not escape the bag during disposal
 -
 - Dust and wipe down walls more frequently –the use of an electrostatic duster or damp rag can help reduce allergens
 - If you have a cat, consider cleaning the litter box more frequently and using low dust and perfume free litter
 - Consider wearing a dust mask while cleaning or having another family member help out
 - Invest in easily washable pet bedding instead of bulky beds if able
- **See a doctor or allergist**
 - A medical professional will be able to pinpoint what is triggering your allergies, IE: it may not actually be your pet but rather tree pollen that got on your dog's fur during a walk
 - Your doctor may suggest antihistamine sprays/pills, immunotherapy shots or other alternatives which will help manage and reduce reactions

Petting & Pain Induced Aggression- Sample



After a long day of work you sit down to relax and watch some TV or read a book. Your sweet cat decides to jump up with you and enjoy your company, so you begin petting her while you relax when out of the blue she swats/bites you. What was that for?! Your cat may have become overstimulated and her warning signs went unnoticed because you were engrossed in that amazing book or the dramatic tv show. Follow these steps to ensure you both experience enjoyable petting sessions in the future.

- If your cat has a history of this behavior you can no longer absentmindedly pet her, you must pay attention to her body language and warning signs
- Sudden changes in ear position, tail lashing, skin twitching (specifically on back) and a sudden look back at where your hand is are all common signs of budding overstimulation
- Be aware of your timing and touch-
 - **Are you petting too rough?** *Adjust how you pet your cat and attempt a few short and light strokes in a single direction in a favorable area, avoid rustling of fur*
 - **Where are you petting?** *If this behavior occurs when you pet near a certain spot, your cat may be in pain and/or communicating she does not like being pet there- consult with your vet to determine if this is an underlying medical issue*
 - **Were you petting for too long?** *If you're not paying attention to your cats body language it is easy to assume she is enjoying the petting, after all, she was a few minutes ago! Pay attention to your cats signals so you can stop petting at the first warning. Shorten the time petting your cat to avoid overstimulation, reward her with a treat and a break in petting. In many cases the length of time you are able to pet your cat will increase.*

Introductions: Setting your cat and dog up for success in a multi-pet home- Sample

Despite common beliefs, many cats and dogs live quite peacefully in homes. Certainly there are cases where a dog's high prey drive will result in him/her not being an ideal candidate to share a home with a cat, so take note of any signs of aggression. Common, and sometimes missed, signs of aggression include a stiffening of the body, showing teeth, hard stares, snarling or lip curling, air snapping and lunging.

Training, why?

Individual training isn't as scary as it sounds, and it is extremely helpful when introducing cats and dogs. The primary reason being that cats and dogs do not share the same 'language', thus often misreading each other's signals. That can be a rocky start to their relationship, and yours as well! For example, a play bow from a dog is a signal he wishes to initiate play. To a cat, the act of play bowing is not always seen as play but rather an intrusion into her personal space which is often dealt with by hissing, swatting

and even running. Dogs usually enjoy running around and chasing each other, so he may think he is playing by chasing your running cat. While your cat is running out of fear, the dog will interpret this as the cat engaging in play. While dogs being afraid of cats may make for amusing viral videos, in most cases it can be anything but funny for your dog. Setting some ground rules will help ensure everyone is relaxed and safe.

The basics:

There are many routes one can take in terms of basic obedience training for your dog including an in home trainer, a public class or taking the DIY road with a book (just make sure to thoroughly research the author and methods). Dogs are receptive to learning and pleasing, however tasty treats never hurt. Arm yourself with irresistible treats and lots of love and patience. Just as with cats, dog-appeasing pheromone spray is available and can be extremely helpful when dealing with a nervous dog.

Basic behaviors that are helpful for your dog to know are commands such as sit, stay, (lay) down and watch me/focus. Make sure to practice in various places and scenarios so you are confident your dog will ignore environmental stimuli and focus on you. As an added security measure you can have your dog wear a harness and leash or a drag line during introduction phases, until he/she learns your commands.

Make sure your cat has a nice high place to stay, such as a cat tree, in the room where the family spends most of their time or where you would like your pets to spend time together. This will ensure that the cat has an escape route should she feel unsure. This will also provide a place for her to go where she will realize that she can be in the same room with the dog without being bothered.

Also, be sure to trim your cats nails prior to introducing him/her to a dog, just to keep your dog safe in the event your cat becomes too stressed and swats.

Click, everyone is ok!

Although this won't happen immediately, clicker training is an excellent way to communicate with both your dog and cat. Clicker training is useful for showing your dog that when he is relaxed in the presence of your cat he will get treats, but also for showing your cat that she can be in the same room with the dog and not be his primary focus. As an added bonus, any time you spend training your pets is time that you are also bonding with them and increasing their confidence.

You can click/reward for calm behavior for both of your pets. If your dog lays on his side and focuses on something other than your cat, reward him! Even if he just wants to play, his good intentions are not known by your cat. He needs to understand the preferred way of interacting with your cat, and your cat needs to understand that your dog gets it. If your dog is the 'innocent bystander' and the cat does not see it that way, you can attempt this through a gate or semi-closed/covered hallway and gradually decrease the distance between the dog and cat.

Over several training sessions your cat will realize that your dog is no longer intruding her space or making her uncomfortable, and this will ease her stress. She will realize there isn't a need for swatting or any other defensive behaviors since the dog is no longer viewed as a threat. The amount of time needed

to get to this point will vary based on your pets, do not worry if you aren't moving as fast as you like as it is up to them in terms of pacing.

It is important that neither of your pets stares at or stalks the other too intently. They should be able to look at each other and look away without issue. If you feel one is too focused on the other, you can use the clicker to distract your dog or a toy to distract your cat. Both clicker training and play therapy are methods you can use to turn a negative situation into a positive one.

For more information on clicker training please visit <http://www.asPCA.org/pet-care/virtual-pet-behaviorist/clicker-training-your-pet>.

Give me those treats!

While dogs are more often thought to be more treat/food motivated, treating for calm behavior in the presence of each other works for both cats and dogs. You can use small amounts of canned cat food as treats if that is your cats preference. The point you want them both to understand is that they can coexist in the same room nicely and they will be rewarded. Having the right treats will make a difference in terms of attentiveness in your pets, so test out a few to see what they each prefer and use those only in the presence of each other.

Off limits:

To prevent regression or even litter box issues, the litter box should be off limits to your dog. Not only is it unsafe for your dog to play around and possibly ingest litter, but it can create a very negative association for your cat with her litterbox. She may become startled if she is using the litterbox and (depending on where their relationship is at) is greeted by a friend or foe. Depending on how tolerant your cat is in terms of distance the dog needs to be from her box, you may need to set up a room just for your cat. You can use training and a gate to keep your dog from entering the room, which will also help your cat feel safe enough in the room.

Litter Box Aversions: Substrates and Types- Sample

Litter box problems are one of the most frustrating behavior problems for cat owners. In many cases an aversion to the litter box is caused by a sudden change to the litter box and can be a simple fix. Sudden changes in type of litter including scent and texture can account for sudden changes in litter box habits. While a hooded/covered litter box seems ideal for humans as it contains the odor, it is often less than idyllic for cats. Not only does it hold the odor inside for the duration of time spent in the box, it also poses the possibility of an ambush in a multi-pet household. If your cat has ever been ambushed, whether play or not, he may feel his safety has been compromised and will take measures to ensure he can see his surroundings in the event of another surprise attack. The chart below is an example of how to track litter box preferences including substrate, type of box, additives and locations. Use this table as a guide to creating a chart that matches your tracking needs.



	Box 1 – Open Litter - Type 1	Box 2 – Open Litter - Type 2	Box 3 – Hooded - Litter Type 1	Box 4 – Hooded - Litter Type 2
Sunday				
Monday				
Tuesday				
Wednesday				
Thursday				
Friday				
Saturday				

Cat Introductions: Setting your cat up for success in a multi-cat home-Sample

Properly introducing your new cat with your existing cat(s) is essential, as introductions often lay the groundwork for their relationship. If your current cat has lived with other cats and was always friendly it can be very tempting to just let your new cat out in the same space as your current cat. You may assume they will just work it out, however cats don't always hit it off the right way and a negative initial meeting can set a poor foundation for their relationship. They need you to help them start off on the right paw!

Cat to cat introductions should be done slowly, and with the needs of each cat kept in mind. It is difficult to resist the urge to have the cats meet immediately so they can begin a wonderful friendship, however if you let your new cat loose in the home a number of things can happen with less than stellar consequences.

Your existing cat may feel that his territory has been invaded if the newcomer is just let loose to explore. This could lead to your established cat feeling unsafe in his home and in turn that leads to behavior changes or he could be aggressive (defensive) towards the new cat. That doesn't help either of them!

From the new cat's perspective, she is unsure of where she is. Every scent and sound is unfamiliar and a possible threat lurks around every corner. If you have adopted your new cat, she has likely experienced a controlled number of sounds and smells. She also may be used to living in a small space and while you want her to experience 'freedom', rushing it can leave her feeling very overwhelmed and stressed.

The Beginning:

Start out by setting up a safe haven for the newcomer, ideally this should be done prior to the cat actually arriving. The safe haven should contain the basic necessities such as a scratching post, toys, somewhere comfortable to sleep, food and water on one side of the room and the litter box on the other. You can purchase a synthetic 'friendly pheromone' spray, such as Feliway, at most pet stores and at Buddy's Boutique at the Madison shelter location. Use that to spray the corners of objects to help her feel more relaxed in her new environment.

If the safe haven happens to be a bedroom, it is important to ensure you have provided enough perches and hideaways so she does not spend all of her time hiding under furniture. You can either create or purchase tunnels, so your new cat feels safe moving through the room. Soft music can also be used to lessen the intensity of unfamiliar/stressful sounds outside the room.

It is important to introduce play as a means of confidence building for your new cat and your existing cat. By doing this, you will gain insight into what type of toys and play your new cat likes. Later on, when you introduce the cats and attempt group play you will have the upper hand and your new cat will be more likely to relax and enjoy the time.

When you first bring your new cat into her safe haven, simply place the carrier down and open it. Do not force her out, if she is fearful that will only make it worse. The carrier will already have her scent on it so she may feel safer inside, she will come out when she feels comfortable. If she is nervous she may spend hours inside the carrier before coming out. That is alright, just allow her time alone to acclimate herself to the new surroundings. If she comes right out to explore that is a great start, feel free to spend some time with her but understand she still needs time to check out her new space.

Scent Swapping:

Scent communicating is tremendously important to cats, and they are great at it so your cats will already know there is another cat in the home. To ease their curiosity and keep everyone safe you can use scent swapping to your advantage. Give each cat a small blanket for a day or two and once you know they are laying on it you can switch the blankets. This way, each cat gets a better sniff of the other without having to meet yet. You can also use a sock to pet each cat around his/her cheeks and head and place the sock in each other's place. Take caution when placing the blanket or sock, neutral areas are best. The pheromones cats secrete when pet on their cheeks and head are 'friendly' and you can increase the scents 'friendly' effect by lightly spritzing a product such as Feliway on the sock/blanket as well.

Letting 'the new guy' explore:

The next step involves letting your new cat explore her new home safely, while temporarily secluding your existing cat. Initially keep the exploration sessions short, this allows your new cat to check out what she is comfortable with and ending on a positive note. If in a multi-level home, keep her on one floor and close off a few doors so you can control where she goes. Allowing your new cat to check out some of the home while the other cat is elsewhere allows her to not only get the most recent scent information but leave her scent for him to find later. You can do several sessions a day if the new cat is confidently exploring. Each cat moves at his own pace, so this will require your judgment and awareness of his/her body language to decide on how long to do this. Some cats may need several days and some may need a month or more.

Starting to get visual:

You can use a baby gate in place of the closed door to your cats safe haven room in conjunction to food. You can use treats or full meals. The baby gate allows each cat to stay in their comfort zones as well as associating the other cat with something positive. If the cats are handling this stage well, you can move the food bowls closer. Over a period of time (determined by them, of course!) the bowls can be moved as close to the gate as possible. As long as they show no signs of stress and aggression at this point it is safe to remove the gate. Continue feeding for several more days with the door open, and close it after the meal is over.

Game on:

Another step in each cat associating the other with positive things is play time. This step will be done in sessions, short if need be, and include the open door and a fun interactive (wand type) toy for each cat. If you are by yourself this may be a little trickier, so you may need to call in help via a friend or family member. Keep the games short and positive, reward for good interaction.

No longer single, time to mingle:

At this point you have warmed up your cats to each other's presence and if they have had no major disputes, it is time to let them mingle. Time comingling in the home should still be supervised at this time, so keeping the safe haven room intact is still important. It will be up to you to determine how long you need to supervise them before letting them go unsupervised. A few minor instances of hissing if one gets too close to the other is normal, try to distract them with some play and that should ease the tension.

Keep in mind:

Each cat will warm up to their surroundings in due time, which depends on the cats personality. No cats are the same in this matter, so do not be alarmed if there is some hissing and things don't go as you had planned. You have layed the groundwork for a solid relationship by this point, some cats need more time. You may need to go back to the 'starting to get visual' point and hold at that position a bit longer.

Destructive Behavior: Scratching Objects- Sample

If your cat is scratching your couch or carpets, rest assured it isn't because she disagrees with your choice of home furnishings. Perhaps it's the texture of material or the sturdiness of the couch that her current scratching post is lacking. If your cat is inappropriately scratching items in your home in place of her scratching post, she is trying to communicate with you. A closer look into what and where she is scratching can shed light on how to best approach the issue.

Scratching is:

- a necessary behavior for cats and is not something that should be eliminated
- a great way for your cat to stretch her muscles and release tension, stress or excitement
- a visual mark that tells other cats there is another cat in the area
- a way for her to comfort herself with familiar smells, reaffirming she belongs
- a way for cats to exchange information with other cats

If you examine your current scratcher setup, you might be surprised that just a few simple tweaks can resolve the destructive scratching. In some cases, you will need to use some deterrent techniques and retrain your cat how to use her scratcher.

If...	Then consider...
You have provided your cat a flat scratcher but she still scratches your couch.	A sturdy vertical scratching post- your cat may prefer a tall surface to scratch on.
You have a sturdy vertical scratcher but your cat still scratches your couch.	Looking at the material of the scratcher- carpeting can sometimes snag nails or be too soft to effectively remove the dead nail sheath. Try wrapping the post with rope or sisal.
The current scratcher is tucked away or placed in a seldom used room.	Moving the scratcher into a socially significant area where family often gathers, such as a living room or den.
Your home has more than one cat, but only one scratcher.	Adding another scratcher- scratching is a marking behavior and by claiming a scratcher with their scent it helps them feel secure. If the other cat has already claimed the lone scratcher, your cat may have found your couch/carpet a suitable replacement.
Your cat commonly uses her scratcher, yet scratches the carpet or furniture when someone comes home.	Put a scratcher closer to the area- your cat may be so excited to see you or your family member that she needs to release her excitement yet wants to be near you.
You have provided a strong vertical or horizontal scratcher yet your cat continues to scratch furniture or carpeting.	Making the scratcher taller or longer- she may not getting the same relief from stretching on her scratcher that she does from the furniture/carpeting.
Your cat is using her scratchers yet still scratches your furniture and carpeting.	Using a combination of deterrents from scratching furniture/carpeting with a bit of retraining/behavior modification.
Your cat is chewing electronic cords.	Consider installing cord covers where necessary.

Remember, for every no, there must be a yes. If you want to tell your cat 'no, I don't want you doing this' you must also provide her with an appropriate solution. You need to be the problem solver.

CAT BEHAVIOR CALL EMAIL - Sample

Dear **NAME**,

Thanks so much for reaching out to our Pet Helpline. It was a pleasure speaking with you earlier and I look forward to helping you with **CAT'S NAME'S BEHAVIOR COMPLAINT**.

As per our discussion I've included a brief summary of what we covered earlier and several additional resources on **BEHAVIOR** resolution for you to look over. I know that dealing with a concerning behavior can be overwhelming and I'm here whenever you have a question, concern or breakthrough!

- **PREVIOUSLY DISCUSSED INITIAL STEPS TOWARDS RESOLUTION**



- LINK TO OR ATTACHMENT OF BEHAVIOR HANDOUT
- VIDEO/PHOTO IF APPLICABLE

Warmly,

NAME

TITLE

CONTACT INFO

Destructive Behavior: Scratching Objects- Deterrents and Retraining- Sample

Detering Scratching:

The best deterrents are those that will make the object undesirable and does not require your presence to be effective. Methods such as squirting your cat with a water bottle are often ineffective in deterring the unwanted behavior but very successful in having your cat associate you with the negative feeling of being sprayed.

While there are products available in most pet stores available to help deter your cat from certain areas or objects, there are similar products available that aren't marketed towards pet owners. Products such as plastic carpet protectors can be just as effective as training mats (such as x-mats) and are typically more widely available and often cheaper.

Vertical Scratching:

With curtains, double sided tape or Sticky Paws works well. Cats typically do not like the sticky texture and it is light weight enough that it can be applied to the fabric. Sticky Paws are made not to leave residue on fabrics, however you should always check. Double sided tape and adhesive shelf liner are other alternatives. Place the tape from as high as your cat can reach to the bottom, an x-pattern works best at covering the majority of surface. Avoid any deterrent sprays, as this might inadvertently keep your cat from using the scratcher due to proximity to the smell.

For couches, it is important to understand that he is often marking the area to announce he is a part of the family. This is where you spend a lot of time, he wants to be near you and let everyone else know that you are his. Keep that in mind when picking out a scratcher! A cat tree placed next to or behind the sofa with a scratching post base will allow him to feel a part of the activity, allow him to supervise and also provide the proper place to scratch.

If your cat is scratching the sides or back of the sofa, taking a plastic carpet runner/protector and attaching it with the nubby side out is one option. The nubby texture is unappealing for cats as it is not very comfortable on their paws. If you cannot use the carpet runner, Sticky Paws, double sided tape or adhesive shelf liner are other solutions.

Sticky Paws and shelf liners are available in a multitude of sizes which makes for easy application to a large surface.

If you believe your cat is scratching the couch due to texture (a tightly woven material is preferred by many cats) try covering the couch with a bed sheet, think slick and smooth texture. You must tightly tuck the sheet over the couch and tape it around the legs so your cat cannot get underneath the sheet and scratch the couch.

Horizontal Scratching:

A large part of horizontal scratching is location. Where in particular is your cat scratching? There may be multiple places, but if you look at the floor plan of your home and take a close look at where he is scratching, you will notice a pattern. This is important because it will give you insight into why your cat is scratching in the particular area.

If your cat is scratching the carpet/rug next to the front door when you get home, he is likely extremely excited for your return and trying to release his excitement and energy. Try placing your scratcher near the door and using either the upside down carpet runner or one of the sticky methods over the carpet/rug.

A wedge shaped scratcher can help if you notice multiple horizontal places have been scratched. There may have been a time where your cats nails were caught in the carpeting/rug and he decided it was a pretty nice texture to scratch on. It's important that you keep your cats nails trimmed regularly and the material of the scratcher is not the same as your carpet/rug, it will just confuse him.

Retraining:

Retraining? This implies some sort of training. With a cat. This isn't as daunting as it sounds. Retraining your cat to use his scratching post requires you to make your cats new scratching area so amazing he cannot resist it. Some cats may immediately take to a new scratcher once they investigate it and realize it is their preferred texture. However, some need a little coaxing.

Scent: Some scratchers come with catnip inside and you can take it to the next level by rubbing some catnip onto the surface. You can also take something that contains the scent of your cat, such as a blanket or cloth you've rubbed along his cheeks, and rub that on the surface. Cats use facial marking to reaffirm they are in familiar surroundings and things are ok, this method will help him accept the new scratcher.

Sound: To many cats, the sound of scratching triggers the desire to do the same. When your cat is nearby, run your fingers along the scratcher to create a sound similar to that of his own scratching would make.

Play: Using a fishing pole/wand type of toy can quickly show your cat how amazing his new scratcher is. Start an interactive play session, moving the toy as prey, and have him 'catch' the toy on the scratcher. When he pounces on it to catch his prey, he will realize what a

great scratching surface he has stumbled upon. The more enjoyable it is for him to sink his claws into, the better.

Removing the Deterrents:

Do not rush to remove the deterrents at the first sight of success! In retraining, there may be slip ups down the line so it is crucial that you keep the deterrents up until you have

established a new pattern of regularly using the scratcher. If you had to use multiple deterrents, gradually phase them out one by one.

Do not remove your cats old and run down scratcher as soon as you get him a new one. The old one, while likely ineffective for conditioning, still is important as it contains his scent and his marks. Give it time, and once you are sure that your cat has accepted his new scratcher, then you can remove the old.

Avoiding the Litter Box Blues- Sample

KEEP IN MIND

- Cats WANT to use their litter box and litter box issues can be as stressful for them as they are upsetting to you.
- Cats are great communicators however, since we don't speak the same language so their communications are often misunderstood.
- Don't forget the possibility of an underlying medical condition- a medical checkup can be key to determining if the litter box blues are a result of something bothering your cat internally.

LOCATION

- Out of sight out of mind for you, out of luck for kitty- it may be convenient for you to put the litter box somewhere tucked away but that can lead to a cat feeling trapped and unsafe.
- Often the best place to put a litter box is socially significant for the cat which is often significant for you as well.
- Don't move the litter box around too much as this could surprise your cat at an inconvenient time.
- Have multiple floors? Have a box on every floor to ensure kitty has a place to go.

SHARING

- Multiple cats sharing a litter box results in a dirty box much more quickly than cats not sharing, which can lead to one or more of your cats looking elsewhere to eliminate.

- Best practice is one box per cat, plus one since cats generally do not want to share.
- In a multi-pet home, the chance of play attacks or serious bullying can be present which can lead to one cat developing a fear of using the box or one cat not allowing the other cat to use the box.

ONE SIZE DOES NOT FIT ALL

- General rule is the litter box should be one and a half times the length of your cat- if you are unsure, pick the largest box available.
- The litter box your kitten used ceases to be appropriate once he outgrows his kitten size.
- A cat needs room to turn around and dig/bury which can be difficult in a box that is too small and may result in accidents outside of the box.
- Young kittens and older cats are not always able to get into high sided or tall litter boxes.
- Puppy/dog litter pans or regular litter box with an opening cut into the side can make all the difference to a cat who is unable to access the litter box due to medical reasons.

ADDITIVES

- Scented litter is designed to appease the human sense of smell, not a felines, which is much more sensitive- thus making scented litter off-putting for many cats.
- Cat claws can get snagged in plastic litter liners and can frighten cats or begin a negative association with the litter box itself – tears in the liner due to snagged claws can also result in dirty litter getting underneath the liner, leaving an unpleasant odor and feeling of uncleanness for the cat.
- Declawed and older cats often have sensitivity issues with their paws and many litters can be uncomfortable to them- opt for the softest you can find.
- A sudden change can cause stress to your cat, which can lead to not using the litter box- stick with the same litter and make any changes as gradually as possible.

Aggression in Cats- Sample

Aggression in any form is a serious problem for cat owners and is can be extremely dangerous. While some forms of aggression can be treated with behavior and/or environmental modification, some types do require a visit to your veterinarian. Any sudden change in behavior may be an indication that your cat has a medical condition, so do not hesitate to call your veterinarian for an opinion. It can be difficult to determine which type of aggression your cat is displaying at first as it is overwhelming and there may be more than one type being displayed. If your suspect one or more of these types of aggression is being displayed by your cat(s) please contact the St. Hubert's Pet Helpline via phone or e-mail and consider scheduling a vet appointment.

Keep In Mind:

- Do not attempt to break up a cat fight physically as this increases your risk for getting injured.
- If the fighting is constant, don't assume they will "work it out". They need your help to peacefully coexist, or the problem will escalate!
- Do not punish the cats. Punishment can result in the cat/s associating you with something negative, which will only make your situation worse.

- For individualized guidance on how to handle the situation contact the St. Hubert's Pet Helpline or your veterinarian.
- In some cases a veterinary behaviorist may be needed to aid in solving behavioral/medical issues.

Play Aggression:

This type of aggression is common in young cats but can also show in adult cats under certain circumstances. High-spirited play, pouncing and nipping among other behaviors are normal kitten behaviors that can be dangerous if not corrected. If not corrected, this can lead to a much bigger and stronger adult cat that does the same behaviors.

In this situation the best method of addressing the behaviors is prevention and finding appropriate outlet for the play. Remember to never use your hands, arms or any other body part as a toy as it may encourage your cat to nip, bite and scratch. If you have previously played this way, switch to using a wand/fishing pole type of toy instead which will keep your body at a safe distance from any teeth or claws.

Territorial/Inter-cat Aggression:

It may surprise you to know that cats can be extremely territorial, and they can take what we humans think nothing of, to be a very severe intrusion of their territory. Territorial aggression may be brought on by seeing other cats in your yard which your cat deems to be her territory. It can also be brought on by a new pet in the home or when an existing cat reaches social maturity. Inter-cat aggression can show up due to two unaltered cats of the same gender fighting over a male/female cat outside or something as simple as not having enough resources for both cats to share.

When bringing home a new pet, make sure to follow suggested guidelines for acclimating him/her to the home and to the other pets. If you feel you may have rushed the introduction, or if the inter-cat aggression is severe, you can always re-introduce them. If you need to separate two cats fighting, first distract them with a noise. You can try to direct one of the cats into a safe room with a nearby object (pillow, throw blanket, etc.) or toss a blanket over the aggressor. This should give the other cat (victim of the attack) time to escape to a safe room. If this was a rare occurrence, possibly sparked by the appearance of an outside animal, keep the cats separated until they both return to normal behavior. When both exhibiting their normal behaviors, reintroduce them with something positive such as interactive play.

Petting-Induced Aggression:

If your cat has ever nipped or bitten you while you were petting him, you may be wondering why he seemed to enjoy the attention one moment and changed his mind the next. Some cats have a certain threshold for physical interactions and you may be unknowingly exceeding that limit. If your cat has

shown any signs of petting-induced aggression it is a good idea to always pay attention while petting her and look for any signs of budding agitation including the thumping or twitching of the tail, ear position changing, twitching of the skin on her back and any turning of her head towards your hand.

You can reduce her agitation by the use of positive reinforcement paired with shortening the petting and adjusting the heaviness of your touch. For example: if your cat tends to get agitated after 10 minutes of petting, pet her lightly for 5-6 minutes and as long as there were no signs of aggression reward her with a tasty treat. Also be mindful if she seems increasingly agitated while being pet in any particular spot as this could be a sign of a medical condition or injury.

Redirected Aggression:

Often a case of redirected aggression seems as if your cat has become aggressive “out of the blue” or “for no reason”. Although you may not initially see it or ever see it, there is a reason and you will need to play detective to find it. This type of aggression is directed towards a person or a pet that did not cause the aggression, much in the way humans often take their frustration/anger out on a family member after a difficult day at work.

It is important to identify the source of stress and remove it if possible. Unfortunately it is not always possible to either identify the stressor or remove it, so the first course of action is to let the cat calm down. She may need to be separated from the immediate area/family or other pet for several hours or days depending on severity. Cats are sensitive to change and anything including a new piece of furniture being brought into the home, loud visitors and seeing animals outside the home among other things can trigger this type of aggression. It is important that you attempt to find out the cause so you can work on addressing the behavior effectively.

Fear Aggression:

Although some cats may be more prone to having a fearful personality, such as a kitten or cat without human socialization early on, the cause of your cats fear may be an isolated object or situation. It is important to observe your cat to find a trigger(s) for his behavior and in this case journaling can be of help. Your cat may be fearful because he has not previously been exposed to something or he associates an object/person/situation with a prior negative experience. It is important not to attempt to console or comfort your cat physically while he is fearful as this could lead to injuries on your part and an exacerbated fear on his.

Changing fearful behavior is often not a quick fix and requires patience as each cat responds differently. If able to identify the trigger, you will need to remove the trigger if possible and change your cat's perception of that trigger. Often a combination of play therapy, desensitization techniques and other behavior modifications will lessen or eliminate the fearfulness over time. In some cases, cats can remain extremely sensitive to their surroundings and may require medication from a veterinarian in order for the aforementioned techniques to be able to work.

Pain Induced Aggression:

If your cat's aggression comes on suddenly and his behavior has changed recently, it is important to have your pet seen by a veterinarian. In the meantime you can avoid petting your pet to avoid causing further discomfort and risking injury. Your vet should be able to diagnose any medical cause and treat



the pain, once that has been dealt with you can begin desensitizing your cat to learn that petting or any touch no longer produces pain but rather treats and enjoyable feelings.

Predatory Aggression:

Predatory aggression may be linked with play aggression in young cats. A young cat that has never had an appropriate outlet for natural cat behaviors such as stalking, pouncing, nipping, etc. may have found the only outlet was other pets or even humans. While this type of aggression is often directed at prey animals, the lack of 'prey' may send your cat in search of the next best thing- you or another pet.

Teaching your cat appropriate ways to release his predation will reduce the chances of you or a child becoming the target. It is important to include play with a wand/fishing pole type of toy that simulates prey as part of your daily routine. The play needs to simulate a hunt, so it is important that you not only mimic the motions of prey but also wind down the game to simulate an injured prey. Reward your cat for a job well done with a meal, as in the wild he would eat his catch.

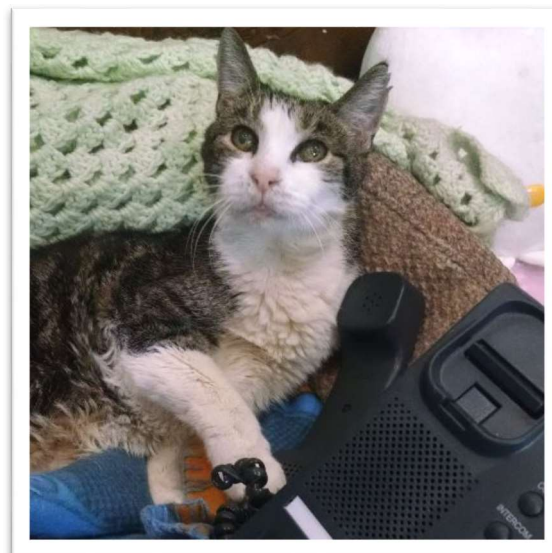
When to Reach Out? Sample

When to Reach Out?

It is never too early to seek help

When a pet has a sudden change of behavior it is often a cry for help. **They are trying to communicate in the best way they know how. What appears to us as 'spiteful' or 'out of the blue' misbehaving is actually your pet attempting to let you know that something is wrong.**

In most cases, when dealing with behavior, it is easier to change a behavior the earlier it is caught. While long standing issues can still be resolved, it can often take a longer time frame. Many times, loving pet parents deal with inappropriate behavior from their pets for years before the problem is too much to handle. Calling at the first sign of concern and having a better understanding of why your pet is doing something can make a difference in how the issue is approached and thus how quickly it is resolved.



Call us, because they can't!

How to reach us

Call or e-mail us for free behavioral guidance and assistance with other services.

Phone: (973) 377-2253

Email: helpline@sthuberts.org

Visit us on the web for information on behavior, low cost vet care, missing pets information and more!

Facebook: facebook.com/StHubertsPetRetention

Resources, Missing Pet and Behavior Information: sthuberts.org/pethelpline