



Cats may display behaviors that are considered undesirable by caregivers; however, many of these actions are natural and instinctual for the cat. By gaining a better understanding of the reasons behind these behaviors and applying positive reinforcement techniques, caregivers can effectively guide their cats toward more acceptable alternatives in a compassionate and supportive way.

WHY DISCIPLINE DOES NOT WORK

Disciplining cats with yelling, squirt bottles, or physical punishment can:

- Increase fear and stress
- Lead to more unwanted behaviors
- Damage your bond with your cat
- Make it harder for your cat to learn new habits

Instead of punishment, change your behavior and use positive reinforcement

WHEN TO CALL YOUR VETERINARIAN

Some behaviors may be caused by health problems. Get a medical checkup if your cat:

- Acts differently than usual
- Meows more than normal
- Bites or scratches people
- Urinates or defecates outside the litter box
- Shows signs of anxiety or obsessive behavior



COMMON BEHAVIORS AND WHAT YOU CAN DO

Meowing for Attention

Why it happens: Cats meow or vocalize to communicate with people, especially when they feel ignored or bored.

Solutions:

- Play with your cat with a wand toy at least twice a day
- Keep a consistent routine for petting and attention
- Reward quiet, calm behavior with your cat's preferred treats
- If it happens at certain times of the day, redirect before the meowing starts (like using a toy or feeder)

Jumping on Counters

Why it happens: Cats may jump up for food or to be near you. If they get food on the counter—even once—they will keep trying.

Solutions:

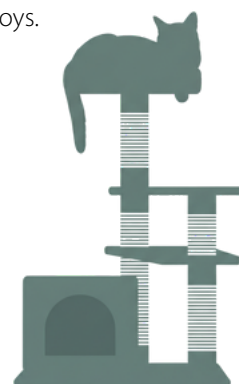
- Keep counters clean and free of food
- Give your cat high perches nearby (but not close enough to jump from)
- Use warm spots like sunny windows or heated cat beds (not a heating pad, which can cause burns)
- Put treats on the perch to entice and reward desired behavior
- Train by giving your cat treats when they choose the perch instead of the counter

Biting Hands or Feet

Why it happens: Some cats learn that biting during play is okay if hands or feet are used as toys.

Solutions:

- See a veterinarian to rule out pain or illness
- Never play with hands or feet—use toys instead
- Play twice a day with wand toys
- If your cat bites feet, carry a wand toy to redirect their "hunt"
- Keep play sessions short and fun to mimic real hunting



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Waking You Up Early

Why it happens: Cats naturally eat at dawn and dusk. If you feed them when they wake you, they learn to keep doing it.

Solutions:

- Use a timed feeder or treat dispenser that opens before they wake you
- Choose one that tosses kibble to mimic hunting
- This keeps your cat busy and lets you sleep

Biting During Petting

Why it happens: Even if a cat enjoys petting, too much petting or petting in an area the cat does not like, can lead to biting.

Solutions:

- Cats may bite if they are sick or in pain. If this is a new behavior, contact your veterinarian
- Pet gently and slowly, mostly around the face (temporal glands between eyes and ears)
- Sit beside your cat, not in front
- Keep interactions short
- Pause often to see if your cat wants more
- Avoid petting the belly

Biting from Frustration

Why it happens: Cats may bite when they are upset—like seeing another cat outdoors or after a fight with a housemate.

Solutions:

- Never pick up or approach an upset cat
- Use visual barriers like cardboard or privacy film on windows
- Separate cats with dividers that they cannot see through, and not your hands (e.g., a large pillow or piece of cardboard)
- Only interact with the cat when they are calm again (~1–2 hours)

House-soiling or Marking

Why it happens: It could be medical or from something in their environment (e.g., stress-related).

Solutions:

- Rule out medical issues with your veterinarian
- Provide enough litter boxes (one per cat + one extra, on each floor)
- Place boxes in quiet, easy-to-access spots
- Reduce stress in the home and meet your cat's environmental needs
- If problems continue, ask your veterinarian about a behavior specialist

Scratching Furniture

Why it happens: Scratching is normal for cats. They do it to mark territory and keep their claws healthy.

Solutions:

- Offer vertical and horizontal scratchers to find your cat's preference
- Place scratchers near windows, doors, and resting spots
- Use treats or toys to reward scratching on the right surface
- Cover furniture with protectors or blankets
- Never punish your cat—instead, redirect and reward



FINAL TIPS AND KEY TAKEAWAYS

- **Contact Your Veterinarian:** Changes in your cat's behavior can be caused by underlying medical problems.
- **No Disciplining:** Avoid yelling, spraying, or using physical punishment. These actions increase fear and make behavior worse.
- **Meet Needs:** Make sure your cat's environment supports natural behaviors like scratching, climbing, hiding, and hunting.
- **Give Them Choice:** Understand your cat's needs and give them choices.
- **Redirect and Reinforce:** Guide your cat toward better behaviors and reward them when they make good choices.
- **Change Habits:** Notice if your actions are encouraging and unwanted behavior (like feeding when meowed at) and adjust.
- **Have Patience:** Behavior change takes time, consistency, and patience. Stick with it and celebrate small wins!

For more information, visit catfriendly.com/training

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