



Harness & Leash Training Your Cat

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Your cat can become an adventurous cat with some patience and appropriate instruction.



Find your cat a comfortable harness and then teach him how to walk on a leash if you want him to join you on outside excursions, even if they are simply in the backyard or on the porch. In addition to being useful when you're outside, leash walking will also be helpful when you're traveling or taking your cat to the veterinarian. Additionally, it's a terrific method for your cat to exercise and can help with behaviour issues brought on by boredom. If your cat enjoys walking on a harness and leash, you can enjoy walks together more and this will encourage you to get out and have fun together more often.



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Walking outside can be tremendous fun for cats — it provides them new things to view and sniff out. Even if they never become a fan of the harness and leash, there are some amazing pet strollers out there that allow cats to see and smell things they don't get to in the house. Getting outside either way will broaden your cat's environment and provide the stimulation and excitement he may be missing in his daily routine. [Check out these pet strollers if leash training is not for your cat.](#)

The majority of cats can be taught to walk on a leash, but some cat personalities are more open to trying new things, like donning a harness and strolling outside. The best time to introduce your cat to a harness is when he is a kitten since he will naturally be more accepting of it. However, if you are patient and make leash training enjoyable for your cat, older cats can also learn to walk on a leash.

However, bear in mind that not all cats are suitable for outdoor exploration and leash walking. Due to their age, health, or personalities, some cats may never feel at ease outside or on a leash, so you should never push your pet beyond his comfort zone. By going on an inside adventure, you can still support your cat's continued happiness, activity, and stimulation!

Read on for advice on how to start leash training your cat indoors if you believe your cat is a good fit for it.

Getting Comfortable with Wearing the Harness

Making your cat's experience with a harness positive is the key to getting them accustomed to it, and food helps with that. You can start by placing the harness next to your cat's food bowl or by just putting it out for him to sniff before giving him goodies.

Another great way to create a positive association with the harness is through play. Some cats are not food motivated, so in these cases, you can help ease your cat's mind with play. Approach your cat when he's in an especially playful mood. Place the harness on him lightly and continue to play with him using interactive toys such as teasers, and other stimulating items.

Some cats find unfamiliar noises disturbing, so practice fastening or releasing the velcro on the harness to help your feline companion grow used to them while he is blissfully eating or playing nearby.

Test Out the Harness

Put the harness on your cat now that he has seen it, but don't secure it. More treats can be given as a diversion and to aid your cat in developing pleasant associations with the harness. Before meals, put the harness on so that the food will divert his attention from the new sensation and prevent him from trying to remove it. Do this over several days until he seems to be ok with it.

Spend some time playing with your cat while he wears the harness. During the training phase, try to strictly limit all play sessions to times when he's wearing his harness so that he begins to relate the fun of play time with wearing the harness.

[Interactive toys are the best toys to divert your cat's attention.](#)

Depending on how comfortable your cat is at this point, you can fasten the harness and practice adjusting the fit. There shouldn't be enough for more than one or two fingers beneath the harness. Remember that cats can escape their harness when they're scared, and you don't want your cat to escape from you when you're outside.

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After a short while, remove the harness and provide another food reward or play with him energetically with a toy he really loves. Follow this procedure for a few days while observing how your cat responds to the harness. If he seems at ease wearing it, leave it on a little while longer; but, if he becomes upset, distract him with food or play and remove the harness. To avoid a negative reaction from your cat, try again later with a nicer treat or new toy —perhaps something you reserve for very special occasions— and take off the harness earlier this time.

The first few times a cat wears a harness, it's totally common for them to freeze up, refuse to walk, or walk quite erratically. It will take some time for your cat to become used to having something on his back because it's likely never happened before.

It might take many days or even weeks for your cat to become accustomed to wearing the harness and walking normally, but once they have, it's time to attach the leash.

Attach the leash after bringing your cat into an open space. While you give him treats and distract him with toys, you could let the leash dangle behind him. However, some cats might find a dangling leash unsettling. If you find this is the case, holding the leash while allowing your cat to roam free is advised.

Practice trailing your cat about your house while holding the leash loosely after he feels comfortable with it. Throughout this process, give out lots of treats and compliments and distract him with some toys.

After some practice on both of your parts, it's time to start gently leading your cat. Pull the leash a little while calling your cat to you. Give him a treat if he succeeds. You can use a clicker to reinforce that he has displayed the desired behaviour if you have previously used one for clicker training.

Make sure he doesn't panic when the leash holding him back presses against his skin and that he doesn't wriggle free, leaving you clutching the empty harness and leash as he runs off. Repeat this over several days.

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Stepping Outside

Take things carefully if your cat's only experience of the outside has been through the window because he can be on high alert the first time you take him outside.



You don't need to take your cat far from home to help him get acquainted to nature, so keep that in mind. Start in your backyard, and it would be best if it were enclosed by fencing.

First, take your harnessed cat outside to a peaceful location. If you allow your cat to leave the house while wearing a leash, he might start doing it when unrestrained.

Keep close to him and let him decide when he's ready to go on an adventure. Follow your cat while maintaining a loose leash, but don't push him to go further than he's ready to.

Until your cat is showing obvious signs of complete ease outside, always be ready for a potential "spook" event. This means keeping a large towel or familiar carrier that your cat enjoys being inside nearby so you can swiftly wrap or enclose the scared cat without getting attacked or scratched and bring him back inside. The first few journeys outside ought to be close to the open door that leads back inside. The cat should be aware that, as they get used to being outside, they may always retreat inside for protection if circumstances are too stressful. This will no longer be essential after a few journeys.



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Remember that walking a cat is not the same as walking a dog. While your cat might enjoy going on long walks with you, it's more likely that he will just want to explore your yard and relax in the sun. Don't be disappointed by his apparent lack of enthusiasm.

In any case, it's crucial to pay attention to what your cat enjoys doing; don't push him outside of his comfort zone. Your cat is the one making decisions, just like at home. Remember, it's okay if your cat doesn't seem to get used to the harness; enjoy an indoor excursion instead, or invest in a pet stroller or pet backpack, which will provide your cat with the benefits of a safe outdoor excursion without the need to don a harness.

3. Never let your cat out in the open unsupervised. Even if you only intend to be gone for a short while, never tie your cat's leash to anything and leave him. Your cat won't be able to flee from any oncoming wildlife and could hurt himself by becoming caught on the leash.

[We supply a harness with each kitten leaving our cattery - have a look at the ones we carry in our store, Jewelspride Pet Products.](#)

Additional Leash Training Tips

1. Avoid allowing your leashed cat to leave the house by himself. Every time, carry him outside. Carry your cat outside rather than letting him explore on his own. The goal is to decrease the propensity for door-dashing when the leash is off because a cat habituated to leaving the house on his own initiative when the leash is on would likely attempt to do so at other times as well.
2. When your cat nags you for a stroll, resist the urge to put the harness on him. Avoid letting your cat outside when he is pleading to be let outside. Cats are smart and they'll begin to beg to go outdoors even when the timing isn't right for you. Although endearing at first, this will eventually drive you crazy, so it's best not to promote the behaviour. Stay in control of the walking routine.