

Humane

FORT WAYNE



CAT OWNER'S GUIDE

Table of Contents

- 03. About Humane Fort Wayne**
- 04. Your New Cat**
- 06. Post Spay/Neuter Instructions**
- 07. Upper Respiratory Infections & Yearly Vaccinations**
- 08. Maintaining a Healthy Weight and Lifestyle & Training**
- 09. Overstimulation**
- 10. The Litterbox**
- 11. Solving Litterbox Problems**
- 13. Introducing Your New Cat to Your Resident Cat**
- 14. Introducing Your New Cat to Your Resident Dog**
- 15. Children and Cats**
- 16. Adopting an Under Socialized or Fearful Cat**
- 17. Talkative Cats**
- 18. Managing Rough Play**
- 19. Scratching & Trimming Your Cat's Claws**
- 21. Declawing**
- 23. Emergency Pet Info**



When pets have safe, forever homes, they thrive. And with their loving companionship, so do we.

At Humane Fort Wayne, we work tirelessly for the benefit of pets and the people who love them. Everything we do—from adoption and retention programs, to wellness services, community outreach and education—helps to promote their happiness and well-being.

From our staff, to our members, to our volunteers—we are Humane Fort Wayne.

We're for people. We're for pets. **We're for Love, Unleashed.**

Our Shelter

We take in animals from all kinds of circumstances. Once they enter our care, we provide medical and/or rehabilitation services, behavioral assessments, and of course, lots of love and attention to prepare them for their adoption! Each pet available for adoption is spayed or neutered, current on all vaccines, has been given the current month's flea & tick preventative, and is microchipped.

In addition to our adoption and clinic services, we also provide a variety of programs to help pets and the people who love them. From fostering to In-Home Services, our outreach programs provide supplies and assistance during difficult times—keeping pets in their homes.

Our Clinic

Humane Fort Wayne is here for your pets every step of the way. We offer low-cost clinic services including vaccinations, spay/neuter, online pharmacy and more!

Get Involved

Passionate about pets? Visit our website, www.HumaneFW.org, to learn how you can become a Humane Fort Wayne Volunteer.

Your New Cat

Congratulations! We are happy and thankful that you have decided to adopt a new cat from our shelter. We want to help make this transition as easy as possible so that you and your new cat can spend the rest of your lives together. You can always contact Humane Fort Wayne for questions, or consult this book which has many tips and suggestions to help you get started.

The First Day Home

Now that you have decided to add a furry friend to your family, you must be patient. This is a huge change for your cat and it will take time for them to adjust to not only you and your family, but to the new surroundings, smells, and sounds.

The first day you have your new cat at home should be spent allowing them to get used to their new home. Having them start out in a quiet, safe room will help them to adjust. Cats are territorial animals so they will do best if they get used to one small part of the house at a time before moving on to explore more. Allow time before introducing your new cat to other animals in the home.

[See Pages 13 & 14 for more information.](#)

Make sure to visit your cat regularly as they become comfortable in their safe room. Everything will be new and stressful to them, so let them adjust at their own pace. Depending on the cat, it may only take a few days to become completely comfortable, or it could take months. A good way to tell that your cat is adjusting is when they are eating, drinking, and using the litterbox normally. Your cat should also not run and hide when someone enters their safe room. When you think your cat is ready to explore the rest of the house, simply open the door and let them explore.

*If your new cat goes three days without eating, that is an emergency. Contact us and your vet right away. Sometimes a cat who is scared can, or will, starve themselves.

Supplies You'll Need

Food: When switching your cat's food, try to make the transition slowly. Suddenly changing your cat's diet can upset their stomach.

Water: Cats need fresh water available to them at all times. Some cats like running water, so a good solution is a cat water fountain. They can be found at your local pet store or online. If you keep the fountain clean and the water is fresh, it can also help your cat to drink more water.



Litterbox, Litter, and a Scoop: It is recommended to get two litterboxes for your first cat and then an additional one for every other cat in the house. For example, if you have two cats, it would be best to have three litterboxes around the house. There are different types of litterboxes you could get for your new cat. It should be large enough for your cat's whole body to fit inside and be able to turn around in. There are also a variety of litters to choose from. Unscented litters are usually a good choice. Once you choose a litter, stick with it so that the cat can get used to it. If you do decide to change the litter, make the transition slowly so the cat can adjust. Make sure you get a scooper and scoop the litterbox daily! Completely dump the box once a week. Don't clean the box with heavy scented cleaners. [See Page 10 for more information.](#)

Scratcher: Scratching is a natural behavior for cats so giving them an outlet will prevent them from scratching on your furniture. Some cats have preferences on the type of scratcher. It may take some trial and error to find the perfect scratcher for your cat.

Declawing is a permanent physical change that can lead to behavioral issues in your new pet. There are many ways to manage scratching without declawing. For more information on scratching and declawing, look at pages 21-22.

Cat Tower: Cat towers are a great way to give your cat more space to run and play, which can be very helpful in a house with multiple cats. Much like scratchers, cat towers come in a variety of materials, shapes, and sizes.

Toys: Cats love toys! There are a wide variety of toys that cats enjoy, ranging from easy, cheap, and homemade toys like crumpled paper, to fancy and expensive toys from the pet store. Keep the toys in different spots around the house, or give the cat a different selection every once in a while to keep things fresh. Playing with your cat by throwing their toys for them or using an interactive toy, like a wand, can allow you and your cat to bond. Always supervise your cat with new toys. Don't give cats long strings or ribbons that they can swallow.



Post Spay/Neuter Instructions

Your new cat has undergone major surgery and anesthesia. Listed below are a few helpful tips to make your cat's recovery easier for both of you.

- 1 Discourage vigorous exercise and play for the next 7-14 days. Normal exercise should be encouraged following this time period.
- 2 DO NOT allow your pet to lick, scratch, or chew its incision. If you see your pet doing this, use an Elizabethan Collar (e-collar) for 10-14 days as necessary. Collars are available at most pet stores and your vet clinic.
- 3 The surgery incision is either glued or has internal sutures. No sutures will need to be removed unless informed otherwise.
- 4 Check the incision site twice daily. EXPECT SWELLING AND/OR BRUISING or a hard lump at the incision site. This is a normal reaction to the absorbable suture material. Swelling should disappear in 2 weeks.
If any bleeding or discharge from the incision occurs, please call your vet clinic or Humane Fort Wayne for instructions.
- 5 Keep the incision dry for 2 weeks after surgery. NO BATHING OR SWIMMING. DO NOT use alcohol or peroxide to clean the incision.
- 6 DO NOT give your pet Aspirin, Tylenol, or any human medications. It can be toxic or fatal. Pain medication is available, if needed, by prescription only at your vet.
- 7 Some coughing may occur up to three days post-op due to intubation (the process of inserting a tube into the mouth and then into the airway).
- 8 If these instructions are not followed, the incision might open up which requires further treatment.

** If you have any questions or concerns, please contact your veterinarian or Humane Fort Wayne. HUMANE FORT WAYNE IS NOT A 24 HOUR CARE FACILITY, NOR IS IT A FULL SERVICE VETERINARY CLINIC.*

** Humane Fort Wayne will not be responsible for any medical care and/or expenses once the Adoption Contract and Release have been signed and the pet is sent home with the new owners.*

Upper Respiratory Infections

In a shelter, the animals are all exposed to one another. Some of them haven't received proper health care before or are already carrying infectious diseases when they come in. Feline upper respiratory infection (feline "URI") is the cat equivalent of a human cold or flu infection. It is species specific so it can't affect humans. Feline URI is normally a mild disease that can be easily treated. However, if left untreated, it's debilitating and can lead to fatal pneumonia.

Signs that your new cat or kitten may have feline URI may include sneezing, runny nose, red or watery eyes, congestion (seen as drooling or open-mouthed breathing), ulcers on the tongue/lips/nose/roof of mouth, lack of appetite or thirst, and lack of energy. If you notice your new cat showing these symptoms, seek veterinary care as soon as possible, especially for kittens or adult pets that stop eating.

To help your pet get well fast, follow your veterinarian's instructions closely. Use any medications exactly as prescribed, even if you think your pet is getting better. Have your pet rest as much as possible in a quiet space. Gently wipe any discharge from your pet's eyes and nose with a warm, damp towel. To help relieve congestion, you can use a vaporizer or have the cat go into the bathroom and run hot water in the shower for a few minutes daily.

This is not a good time to introduce your new pet to family members and other pets. Give your pet lots of love and be patient. Your new companion will be able to integrate into your family once they're feeling better.

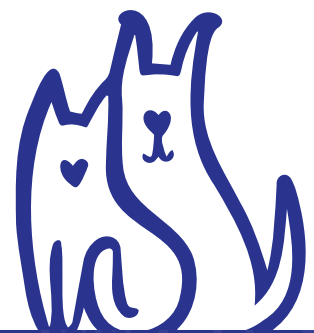
Rabies & Yearly Vaccinations

Establishing a vet for your new cat is essential to keeping your pet happy and healthy. It is recommended that your cat makes at least one yearly visit to the vet. This will allow your vet to check your cat's overall health, and can provide your cat with its yearly required vaccinations.

Here at Humane Fort Wayne, we require all adopted animals have a 10 Day Vet Check per the signed Adoption Contract. For any questions or concerns, please contact us!

The state of Indiana requires a 1 year or 3 year rabies vaccination for your cat. Set a reminder now to talk to your vet about the vaccinations your cat needs at their 10 Day Vet Check!

The City of Fort Wayne also requires that all cats living within the city limits are registered with Fort Wayne Animal Care & Control. If you chose a yearly registration for your cat upon adoption, make sure to register your cat again in 1 year.



Maintaining a Healthy Weight and Lifestyle

Cats that are overweight have a higher risk of developing health issues like diabetes, arthritis, and skin issues. Overall, their quality of life decreases, as they can't properly groom themselves, which can lead to discomfort or pain. Through diet and exercise, however, your cat can maintain a healthy weight and lifestyle.

Having set meal times with measured portions, rather than leaving food out in the bowl, can help prevent your cat from overeating. Cats sometimes eat simply because they are bored. Also, by managing how much your cat eats, you can keep an eye on their appetite. Changes in appetite can be an indication of illness.

Active cats are healthy cats. Exercise helps them to stay in shape and keeps them from getting bored. Providing toys and playing with your cat can also help you both get to know each other.

Training

Training your cat should begin early, no matter how old your new cat is. Socializing cats is crucial to their development and will help you to have a well-rounded pet. Talking to, playing, and touching your cat can help them to become more socialized. Clicker training is a great form of positive reinforcement that can help teach your cat manners and even relieve a cat's stress.

Positive Reinforcement

Positive reinforcement training is the act of giving your pet a reward immediately after doing something that you want to encourage. It makes your cat more likely to continue the behavior if it associates it with a treat or a pet, for example. The timing of the reward must be immediately after they do the behavior you like or else they may associate it with something else.



Common Myths About Cats

❌ Cats drink milk

Cats are lactose-intolerant so giving your pet milk out of your fridge will hurt their stomach. If you want to give your pet a treat, pick something new from your local pet store.

❌ Cats can enjoy human food

Cats should be fed high-quality, commercial cat food. Other foods meant for humans are not appropriate diet for your animal. They can cause digestive issues, make your cat gain weight, and they don't have the proper vitamins and nutrients your cat needs in its diet.

❌ Certain cats are "alpha" cats

Cats don't have a hierarchal social structure. While one cat may be more friendly, or another more timid, this doesn't fix them in a set social position in relation to other cats.

Being consistent is also important. Have everyone in your family be aware of the desired behaviors and cues. Never reward a cat's bad behaviors. Continuously reinforce the behaviors you want until your cat has reliably learned the behavior.

Clicker Training with Treats

Using food and/or a clicker is often the best way to train your cat. When working with your cat, have your clicker (available at any pet store) and your treats ready. When you are ready to start, get your cat's attention, click the clicker, and immediately give them a treat. This will allow the cat to associate the click sound with something positive.

Once your cat becomes accustomed to these short training sessions (limit to 5 minutes at a time), you can move on to more complicated tricks, like teaching high fives! Check out Jackson Galaxy's Cat Pawsitive Clicker Training Resources online for specific instructions.

Treats should be something small and easy to eat so that your cat eats it quickly and returns its attention to you rather than looking for crumbs on the floor. It may take a while to find the perfect treat for training your pet. Some cats aren't interested in treats; try giving them affection or a toy instead. Pair treats with verbal praise, as well.

Overstimulation

Sometimes friendly cats may suddenly bite and scratch. These random outbursts are not aggression, but they may appear that way. Overstimulation can be caused by over petting, stress, or built up frustration that comes from either the lack of interaction or over exposure to an unattainable stimulus, such as a bird at the window. Cats react differently to overstimulation and frustration. Some will only twitch their tails, while others will escalate to a bite. Some signals to be aware of include: restlessness, tail twitching, ears turning back or flicking back and forth, skin rippling when you pet them, or the cat turning/moving toward your hand. Owners have to be aware of their cat's body language to know when to stop petting or interacting with their cat to avoid a bite.

What to Do

If you observe any of these behaviors, you should stop petting your cat and allow them to either just sit or go their own way. If your cat continues to want attention, walk away and give them space until they calm down.

If you want to prolong the amount of petting your cat will tolerate, try using a food reward. When your cat shows any of the behaviors above, give them a special treat and decrease the intensity of your petting. Be sure to stop petting before any aggression occurs. Each time you try to work with your cat, try petting them for slightly longer periods using the food. The cat will then associate pleasant things with petting.

Interactive play sessions can also reduce these behaviors and help to alleviate stress or any built up frustration. These play sessions should mimic the cat's natural hunting behavior. Allow the cat to pounce on and bat around a toy. End the session by letting the cat capture the toy. Make sure you play long enough for your cat to get tired (usually 15-20 minutes depending on the age and activity level of your cat). Don't be surprised if your cat takes a nap after playing!

What Not to Do

Don't punish your cat. Any physical punishment can make the problem worse. Also avoid using a laser light toy because it can lead to more frustration since your cat can't actually catch the "prey".

The Litterbox

Location

People often want to put the litterbox somewhere out of the way, like the basement, to minimize the odor and keep the rest of the house less messy. However, that can lead to the new cat not remembering where the box is or not wanting to go next to an appliance or on a cold cement floor. A compromise must be made. The box should be in a place where your cat gets some privacy, but is also conveniently located. If the litterbox is in a closet or bedroom, make sure the door is wedged open from both sides to make sure the cat doesn't get locked in or out. Depending on the location, you could even cut a hole in the closet door or add a swinging door. If the litterbox is on a smooth, slick, or cold surface, put a small rug underneath. If you have a multilevel home, you should have a box on each level of the house.

Type of Litter

Research shows that most cats prefer fine-grained litters because they are softer. There are many different options that are fine-grained. Once you find a litter your cat likes, don't change types or brands. Changing it suddenly could result in your cat not using the box.

Many cats don't like scented litters so picking an unscented litter is a good choice. For the same reason, it's not a good idea to have an air freshener near the litterbox. The scents are for people, not cats. Keeping the box clean and adding a thin layer of baking soda on the bottom of the box will help with any odor.

Number of Litterboxes

You should have at least as many litterboxes as you have cats plus one. It is recommended to have two for your first cat plus an additional for every other cat in the house. This will prevent your cats from not using the litterbox because it's already occupied. It can also be a good idea to have the litterboxes in several locations and on each level of the house so that no cat can guard the litterbox area and prevent others from using it.

Types of Litterboxes

There are a variety of litterboxes to choose from and it may take some time to find the perfect one for your cat. The best box size is about 2' x 3'. Keep in mind a small box for a kitten will need to be switched for a bigger box. Your cat should be able to turn around comfortably and have room to dig. Some boxes are covered and some aren't. While most people would prefer a covered one, there can be some issues that come from it. With a covered box, you may forget to clean it, it traps the odors inside so you actually have to clean it more often, and it may not be big enough for your cat to move around in. That being said, a covered litterbox can provide more privacy, which is especially helpful for timid cats.

Cleaning the Box

The litterbox should be cleaned daily. How often you need to change the litter depends on the number of cats, number of litterboxes, and type of litter you use. Twice a week is a general guideline for clay litter, but depending on the circumstances, it may need to be changed more often. Scoopable litter can go for about one week before needing to be changed. If there is an odor or much of the litter is wet or clumped, it should be changed. Don't wash the litterbox with strong-smelling chemicals or cleaning products since this can make your cat not want to use it. Soap and water works just fine.

Liners

Some cats don't mind having a liner in their litterbox, but others do. It may take some experimentation to see if your cat is okay with the liner or not. If you do use a liner, make sure it's anchored in place so it doesn't get caught by your cat's claws and moved around.

Depth of Litter

Most cats won't use litter that's more than about three inches deep. Some long-haired cats actually prefer less litter and a smooth, slick surface, such as the bottom of the litterbox. The litterbox needs to be cleaned regularly and adding more litter doesn't change that.

"Litter-training Cats"

You don't really "litter-train" your cat like you house-train a dog. A cat doesn't need to be taught to use the litterbox as long as it's in an acceptable, accessible place and follows the suggestions above. All you should need to do is show your new cat all of the locations of the boxes. Trying to train your cat to do anything in the litterbox can actually cause a negative association with the litterbox.

Solving Litterbox Problems

There are a variety of reasons why cats may go outside the litterbox. Sometimes, the reason the litterbox problem initially started is not the same reason it is continuing. For example, if your cat stops using the box while it's sick, it could develop a preference for a different surface or location in your house. Cats don't stop using the litterbox because they are mad or upset with us. By carefully observing your cat and its environment, you can identify the problems and change them.

Aversion to the Litterbox

Your cat may have decided that the litterbox is an unpleasant place because: the box isn't clean enough, they have experienced a painful medical problem, they have been startled by a noise while using the box, they have been ambushed by another cat, dog, or you in the box, or they associate the litterbox with punishment (they were punished for going outside the box and then placed inside).

Keep the litterbox clean. Scoop at least once a day and change the litter once a week. You can also add a new box in a different location that is not near any appliances and is easily accessible with a new type of litter. This will allow your cat to form a new, positive association with a litterbox. If ambushing is a problem, get a litterbox with more than one exit.

Surface Preferences

All animals develop preferences for a certain surface to eliminate on that may be established early in life or can change overnight. Your cat may have a surface preference if: they consistently eliminate on a particular texture, such as carpet, bedding, tile, cement, bathtubs, or sinks; they frequently scratch on the same texture after going, even if they used the litterbox; or they are or previously were an outdoor cat that prefers grass or soil.

If your cat likes soft surfaces, try using a high quality, scoopable litter and put a soft rug under the box. If your cat likes slick, smooth surfaces, try putting in a thin layer of litter at one end of the box, leaving the other one bare and leave the box on a hard floor. If your cat has a history of being outdoors, add some soil to the litter. Make the area where they have been soiling aversive by covering it with an upside down carpet runner, aluminum foil, or citrus-scented cotton balls.

Location Preferences

Your cat may have location preferences if: they always eliminate in quiet, protected places, such as in a closet or under a desk; they always eliminate in the area where the litterbox previously was or where there are urine odors; or they eliminate on a different level of the house than where the litterbox is.

Put at least one litterbox on every level of your house, and make the area where they are soiling aversive by covering it with an upside down carpet runner, aluminum foil, or citrus-scented cotton balls, or put a litterbox where your cat has been soiling. When they are consistently using it for at least a month, you can gradually move it to a more convenient spot at a rate of an inch per day.

Medical Problems

It's common for cats to not use their litterbox when they have a medical problem. For example, a urinary tract infection can be very painful. The cat associates the pain with the litterbox and begins to avoid it. If your cat is having a house-soiling problem, check with your veterinarian first to rule out any medical problems for the behavior. Cats don't always act sick so this change in behavior can help you find a medical problem.

Anxiety

When a cat is feeling stressed or anxious they sometimes will not use their litterbox. Some causes of anxiety can be: a new baby, a new pet, moving, conflict between animals in the home, or even a roaming cat sitting outside the window.

If your cat isn't using the litterbox in response to any of the reasons listed above, you can work to reduce your cat's stress with stress reducing techniques, such as using special pheromone diffusers (available at pet stores and online) and play therapy.

What Not to Do

Don't ever punish your cat for going outside the litterbox. If you find a soiled area, it's too late to try and change the behavior. Any type of punishment will only make your cat afraid of you and they won't understand what you are trying to tell them. Just clean it thoroughly to eliminate any odor so your cat isn't motivated to go there again.

Introducing Your New Cat to Your Resident Cat

Cats can be wonderful companions to each other. However, if you have an older cat that isn't used to being around other cats, it may take them a while to get used to your new furry friend. Younger cats may only need a few days, but an older cat may take weeks or months to get comfortable with a new cat in its house. Cats are territorial animals so the introduction should be done slowly so they can get used to each other before actually meeting face to face. This prevents aggression and fearful behavior from developing.

Step 1

Keep your new cat in a room with their litterbox, food, water, and a bed. Have your cats eat on opposite sides of the door to this room. This will establish a positive association with each other's smells. Don't put the food so close to the door that the cats get too upset to eat. Gradually move the bowls closer to the door until they can both eat calmly.

Step 2

As long as neither cat is sick, you can switch blankets or beds between your cats so they can get used to each other's scent. You can also rub a towel on one cat and put it underneath the food bowl of the other. This step should be done with all cats in the home.

Step 3

Once your new cat is becoming comfortable in their safe room, let them explore the rest of the house while putting your resident cat in the new cat's room. This also allows them to experience the other cat's scent without meeting face to face.

Step 4

Have the cats meet in short, supervised sessions, increasing the time together based off their behavior. Try to avoid any aggression or fearful behavior. If these are allowed to become a habit, they'll be hard to change. If a cat is showing these behaviors, separate them again and start over with the introduction process to get them more used to one another. If your cats do have a small spat, don't try to separate them with your body. Try making a loud noise or throw a blanket over them. Allow them to calm down before going back to the introduction steps. Don't punish them, either. It can make things worse. If you continue to have problems, you can consult a professional to ensure the safety of your pets.

Tips

- 1 If one of your cats is sick or hurt, this can make the introduction process longer. Talk with your veterinarian to make sure all your cats are healthy before trying to introduce them to one another.
- 2 You'll need at least one litterbox per cat plus one so you'll have to clean them more frequently. You also want to be sure none of the cats are being "ambushed" by the other cat while trying to use the box.
- 3 Try to keep your resident cat's schedule as close as possible to what it was like before you got the new cat.
- 4 Be sure each cat has a safe hiding spot away from the other cats.
- 5 You can also use anxiety reducing products to help with the introductions.

Introducing Your New Cat to Your Resident Dog

Cats and dogs can be great friends, with proper introductions! Follow the steps below to introduce your new cat to your resident dog. These steps should be done over a matter of days/weeks depending on the comfort level of both the cat and dog.

Step 1

After your new cat and resident dog have become comfortable eating on opposite sides of the door, and have been exposed to each other's scents as described in the "Introducing Your New Cat to Your Resident Cat" section, you can attempt a face-to-face introduction in a controlled manner. A baby gate can be used for a good first face to face introduction.

If your dog doesn't already know commands, "Sit," "Down," "Come," and "Stay," you should begin working on them. This will help keep your dog calm in your new cat's presence.

Step 2

Put your dog's leash on, and using treats, have them sit or lie down and stay. Have a family member or friend enter the room and quietly sit next to your new cat, but don't have them physically restrain the cat. Have this person offer your cat some special treats or catnip to make them feel more comfortable. At first, the cat and dogs should be on opposite sides of the room. Remember, many of short visits are better than a few long visits. Don't drag out the visits so long that the dog becomes uncontrollable. Repeat this step several times until both the cat and dog are tolerating each other's presence without fear, aggression, or other undesirable behavior.

Step 3

Next, allow your cat freedom to explore your dog at their own pace, with the dog still on-leash and in a "down stay." Meanwhile, keep giving your dog treats and praise for their calm behavior. If your cat runs away or becomes aggressive, you're progressing too fast. Go back to the previous introduction steps.

You may want to keep your dog on-leash and with you whenever your cat is free in the house during the introduction process. Be sure that your cat has an escape route, high perches, and a place to hide. Keep your dog and cat separated when you aren't home until you're certain your cat will be safe.

Dogs like to eat cat food, so keep the food out of your dog's reach. Investigating the litter box and eating feces is also a common behavior in dogs, so keep the litter box in a place where your dog cannot access it.

Children and Cats

Owning a cat can be a wonderful experience for all family members, especially children. Cats can enhance a child's self-esteem, teach them responsibility and help them learn empathy. Despite this, children and cats may not always automatically get along. Parents must be willing to teach both the cat and their children acceptable behaviors and limits.

Below are some tips to help you and your child gain your new cat's trust:

- 1 **Holding:** Have your child sit down when they hold the cat. Many cats don't enjoy being held, but will sit next to you and your child, especially if you offer them treats. If you sit with the child in your lap, you can ensure that your child is gentle and doesn't get hurt.
- 2 **Petting:** Petting is a great way for your child and cat to become friends. Make sure your child knows to be gentle and let the cat leave when it wants to.
- 3 **Treats:** Having your child give your cat a treat is another great way for your cat to become comfortable with your child. Have your child give treats in an open palm, rather than holding it in their fingers.
- 4 **Play:** Teach your child to play with your cat with toys instead of hands. This will create a positive and safe relationship between the two.
- 5 **Training:** Training can create a strong bond between your cat and the family.
- 6 **Safe Spaces:** Have places where your cat can take breaks from your child. Never allow your child to chase or harass the cat.

Cats and Babies

It may take time for your cat to become comfortable with your child and to learn what behaviors are appropriate. Young cats will want to play, but will need to be taught to be gentle around a baby. Punishing your cat will often make matters worse. Your cat can begin to associate punishment with being around children, which will make them more defensive around your child. If your cat is growling, hissing, or biting at your child, you should seek the help of someone at Humane Fort Wayne or another feline specialist to help change the behavior and protect your child.



Adopting an Under Socialized or Fearful Cat

Many shelter cats are used to being around other cats, but not always people. They can be scared in new situations, especially if they are meeting new people and trying to get used to a new place, litterbox, and carrier. With patience and positive-reinforcement, however, these cats will become less stressed and truly become a part of your family.

Just like any new cat, an under socialized cat will do well starting out in one quiet room where they can try to get used to you and the new house. When your cat is becoming more confident and is reliably using the litterbox, you can let them explore more of the house. Additional litter boxes around the house are recommended to help ensure your cat is still using them. Keeping the original box in the cat's safe room is also helpful.

Due to a lack of socialization, these cats may be quick to run and hide when it's loud or you have people over. Cats deal with fear in different ways. Some cats try to hide, some show behaviors like hissing, growling, biting, scratching, etc. and some even lose control of their bladder. You will need to observe your new cat to understand what their triggers are and how they react to them.

Cats can work through this fear and get better through positive reinforcement training. You can work with them to become desensitized to the things that scare them through this training by giving them treats and praises. There are also stress-reducing products that you can find at your local pet store, or you can ask your veterinarian about getting medication that can help your cat adjust in scary situations.

Under socialized cats may never be comfortable with being handled. They may never want to be held or sit in your lap. You can prolong the amount of time they'll tolerate being handled with a food reward. When the cat comes near you or gets into your lap, give them treats to encourage them to stay, but let them leave if they want.

Often shelter cats only experiences with a carrier are when they were taken from their home, during their time at the shelter, and going to the vet. Positive-reinforcement training can help to make your cat less fearful of the carrier. You can also leave the carrier out and let your cat go in when they please. Treats can help to create a positive association, as well. Avoid bringing out the carrier ONLY when going to the vet to prevent further stress.

Even though shelter cats come from a place where they are surrounded by cats, they may not get along well with other cats, or they may not like new cats. If you are patient and introduce them properly, multiple cats may learn to co-exist.

What Not to Do

- ❌ Never force your cat to spend time with new people. Allow them to approach and give them positive reinforcement for interacting with people.
- ❌ Never chase your cat. If you find yourself in a situation where your cat doesn't want to be handled for medication or being put into a carrier, don't corner them. Wait until they settle down somewhere and then approach them.
- ❌ Never punish your new cat for house soiling, showing fearful behavior, such as hissing, or any other unwanted behavior. Punishment will make your cat afraid of you and can lead to aggression.
- ❌ Never force your cat to experience the thing that causes them fear. You can work on desensitizing them at a distance, but if they become frightened, you need to listen to your cat and remove them from that situation.

Talkative Cats

Some cats “talk” more than others. Vocalizing is a way for your cat to communicate with you so understanding why they are making noise is very important.

Medical Reasons

If your cat’s behavior suddenly changes, you should take them to the veterinarian. If your usually quiet cat suddenly begins talking to you, they could be sick or be in pain.

Breed Tendency

Certain breeds, like Siamese, are known to be vocal. If you prefer it when your cat is quiet, don’t give your cat attention when they’re vocal. Instead, give them attention when they’re quiet.

Attention-Seeking Behavior

Some cats are vocal to get your attention. If you talk back, feed them, yell at them, or touch them, you’re encouraging the behavior. To discourage this behavior, simply ignore your cat when they talk. Reward them when they are quiet instead.

Your Cat Wants to Go Outside

If your cat was previously an outdoor cat, they may be vocal to try and go out. If you want to keep your cat inside, some things you can do to eliminate the noise are: spaying or neutering, having a play schedule, having a window seat, giving your cat plenty of attention, or leaving strong citrus scents by the door.

Grief

The death or departure of a person or animal in your cat’s life can lead to them to vocalize their grief. This can be a normal part of the grieving process. The best way to help your cat is to keep their schedule the same and give them lots of love. With time, they should become quieter.

Transition

A new cat or any cat going through a change may begin to talk. Be patient. If the behavior is not encouraged, it will go away on its own once the cat gets used to the change.



Managing Rough Play

Young cats (under the age of two) and cats that live in single-cat homes commonly have play-motivated aggressive behaviors. Cats use play as a way to practice skills they would need to survive in the wild. Exploring and pouncing on things that resemble prey helps to stimulate them mentally and physically. Kittens learn to play and bite gently from their littermates and mother. A cat that was separated from their family too early may play more roughly since they didn't get a chance to learn more. Also, if humans play with cats using their hands or feet instead of toys, the cat will think that rough play is okay.

You can teach your cat not to play roughly through encouraging acceptable behavior. Redirect the aggression to acceptable objects, such as toys. Throwing their toy or dragging a toy behind you are great ways to get your cat to run, pounce, and use up some energy. Another good toy is one that they can wrestle with, that is around the size of your cat, since this type of play is often how cats play with each other. Establishing multiple play times during the day can help to keep young cats from trying to initiate play by pouncing on you.

Discouraging unacceptable behaviors is also important. You need to set consistent rules that all family members help to enforce. Applying a taste aversive to your hands, or to gloves, will help to reduce the chance of your cat biting you. The aversive will only work if you offer your cat acceptable alternatives. Once your cat tastes the aversive and pulls away, immediately offer them a toy. This will help to teach your cat to direct their rough play at toys, not people. Keeping a stash of toys in each room can help to establish this behavior. If this doesn't seem to work, withdraw attention when your cat starts to play too rough. You can walk to another room and close the door long enough for them to calm down. Since your cat wants to play with you, they will eventually figure out how far they can go if you keep the limit consistent.

Note: *None of these methods will work if you don't also give your cat an acceptable outlet for their energy by playing with them and giving them toys.*

What Not to Do

If you attempt to hit or flick your cat for playing rough, it will most likely backfire. Your cat can become afraid of your hands, or could think that you are just playing even more.



Scratching

Scratching is a natural behavior which allows cats to remove the dead outer layer of their claws, mark their territory, stretch their bodies, and to work off energy. Since this action is natural, you can't stop your cat from scratching. However, you can give them acceptable things like a scratch post to use as an outlet.

To train your cat to use acceptable scratching objects, make sure they are in a good location for your cat to see and reach them. Some cats have preferences on the type of material, shape, and height of the scratcher, too. If your cat is trying to scratch on inappropriate objects, place new acceptable objects close by. Once you know your cat's preferences, you can use things like rope, corrugated cardboard, a log, or a scratcher from the pet store. Make sure the scratcher can stay standing when your cat goes to use them. You can also cover the inappropriate objects with things your cat won't like, such as double sided sticky tape, aluminum foil, or sheets of sandpaper. Once your cat consistently uses the appropriate object, it can be moved, but the new location should have your cat's preferences in mind. Slowly move it over the course of several days/weeks. Also, don't remove the unappealing coverings from the inappropriate objects until your cat is consistently using the appropriate object in its permanent location for weeks or even a month. Then the coverings should also be removed gradually.

As a last resort, there are products that go over your cat's claws. They are plastic caps that go on the tips of the nails with non-toxic adhesive. The process can be tedious, though. The caps can pop off and they need to be reattached as the nails grow. Some cats also don't like them very much. These products are just a temporary fix because they don't change the cat's behavior.

Never punish your cat for scratching. It won't change the behavior. The cat will simply learn to scratch when you aren't around rather than learn where it is appropriate to scratch.

Trimming Your Cat's Claws

To keep them sharp, cats keep their claws retracted except when they need them. When the nails become too long, they curve and can't be retracted completely. Long nails can also get snagged on your carpet and skin. The sharp tips of your cat's claws should be trimmed every week or so. When trimming, be sure to only cut the tip and not the pink part of their nail. If you cut too much, your cat will bleed and it will be painful. There are several types of claw trimmers that are designed for pets.

If your cat is sensitive to having their nails trimmed, try to make good associations to having their feet touched. Give your cat treats as you touch their legs and paws. Have your cat build up a tolerance to having their paws handled. From there, you can start to trim the nails one at a time while giving treats to your pet. Start with one foot at a time until your cat is willing to let you do all four feet. Don't try to start with all four at once because both you and your cat will have negative memories of claw clippers.

If your cat has issues with their nails being trimmed, you've gone too fast.

Having a second person to help you trim your cat's nails can be helpful, as well. One person can hold the cat and give them treats while the other carefully trims the nails.

(See nail trimming diagram on following page.)

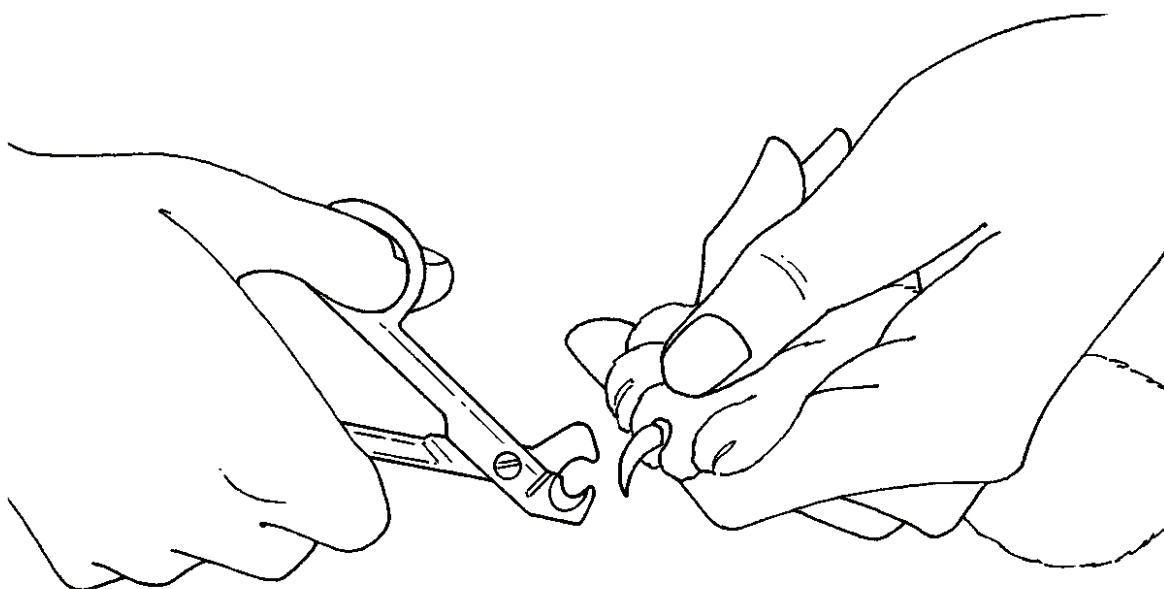
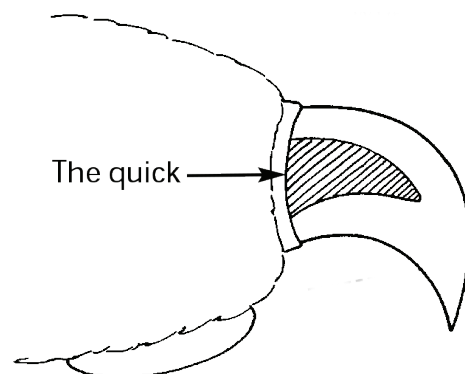


Because cats' temperaments vary, there is no "perfect" way to handle a cat when trimming their nails. Some cats will do well with no restraints at all, but most need to be held firmly but gently to make sure no one gets hurt. Try resting your cat in the crook of your arm while holding the paw with the other hand. Another good option is to place your cat on a table and lift one paw at a time. If you happen to have a particularly sociable cat, they may even lie in your lap while you do it. If you have a helper, they can hold the cat while you trim the nails, or just rub the cat's nose or give them treats.

Once you are in position to cut your cat's claws, take a paw in your hand, curl your fingers, and use your thumb to gently press down on the joint just above the nail. This will extend the claw out and you will quickly but carefully snip off the sharp tip. Don't cut too close to the pink part of the nail called "the quick," where the blood vessels and nerve endings are. Just like the pink part of a human fingernail, the quick is very sensitive and cutting into it will hurt and draw blood. If this happens, apply a little pressure to the very tip of the claw (not the entire paw, which will only increase the blood flow) or dip the claw in a bit of styptic powder, then leave the cat alone, checking on them occasionally.

If you aren't able to trim all 20 nails at once, it's fine. Few cats will stay patient for more than a few minutes, so take what you can get. Be sure to praise your pet for cooperating and then wait for the next opportunity, such as a catnap, to cut more of the nails.

Note: When working with a long-haired cat, be sure the clippers are clear of fur or you may accidentally pull it, which will hurt and make your cat less willing to cooperate with future nail trimming.



Declawing

Declawing is an amputation of the first digit of each toe, which is like taking off your fingers at the first knuckle. It is not simply removing the nail. It's a painful procedure that can cause your cat stress for weeks, months, or forever. If it isn't done correctly, the cat can lose part of their pads or, more commonly, there can be painful deformed re-growths that require more surgery. Declawing can cause many problems.

18%

show
increased
biting

17%

suffer
wounds
re-opening

15%

will not
use the
litterbox

11%

suffer from
lameness

10%

see nail
regrowth

up to
50%

of declawed cats
develop acute physical
complications

up to
20%

of declawed cats develop
long-term physical
complications

75 to
90%

of pet owners change
their minds about
declawing once they
know the risks



Illegal in 37 Countries
+ 8 U.S. cities



Declawing =
Amputation of the
first knuckle

Declawing Can Produce:

- Chronic Pain
- Arthritis or Lameness
- Nerve/ Tissue Damage
- Gangrene
- Abscesses
- Paw Pad Atrophy
- Bone Regrowth

Litterbox issues are **two times** more
common in declawed cats

Osteomyelitis affects **30%** of declawed
cats (painful bone infection)

**"Claws are a physically, socially,
and emotionally vital part of
every cat."**

—Jackson Galaxy, Cat Behaviorist

Source: Know the Truth Declawing Facts

Medical Issues

Declawing is an unnecessary amputation that is illegal in many countries and is being outlawed in parts of the United States. Re-growths can be so painful that the cat can't walk or stand. A cat bears about 60% of their body weight on their front limbs. After declawing, they are forced to bear that weight on parts of their feet that aren't meant to support them, which can result in bruising or lameness years after the surgery. Some cats even have to have multiple "re-declaw" surgeries, which is the only way to relieve the pain.

Emotional Issues

Cats who were recently declawed may go into hiding or resort to biting because they feel helpless.

Behavioral Issues

Declawing a cat can lead to many issues such as litterbox aversion, aggression, and biting. Litterbox aversion can occur because the cat has to stand in the litter on mutilated toes so they may associate that pain with the box. You can use softer litters, but it will still be painful.

Aggression can occur during vet visits because they associate the pain in their feet with the vet. This could lead to higher costs at the vet to sedate them before they are examined or treated. Unfortunately, many people interpret this behavior as the cat just being mean, which leads to handling the cat in a way that reinforces their fear. A cat's first line of defense is their claws. When you take that away, they may try to bite. Scratching is actually way less painful and dangerous than a bite because of the risk of infection.

Along with these issues, your cat could get hurt if they end up outside. Even if you keep your cat indoors, accidents happen. Declawed cats will be at a disadvantage when it comes to climbing and catching food without their claws.

Myths About Declawing

My other cat is declawed. Indoor cats rarely use their claws on each other, so this shouldn't be an issue. Cats in shelters live together and most cats have claws, but some don't and they get along fine.

I don't want my cat to scratch the children. Cats won't scratch unless they're provoked. Teach your child to be gentle, and watch for signs that the cat is getting overstimulated or stressed. Keep the nails trimmed, too!

Emergency Pet Info

Your new pet will be curious to explore their surroundings, and it is your responsibility to keep them safe! Below is a list of common household pet dangers. If your pet is hurt, injured, or needs emergency medical care, take them immediately to the nearest emergency pet hospital.

Products

- Medication
- Vitamins
- Tobacco products
- Detergents/fabric softeners
- Cleaning products
- Mothballs
- Antifreeze/coolant
- Gasoline
- Paint/paint thinner
- Lighter fluid
- Insecticides/Pesticides
- Fertilizer
- Compost
- Non pet-safe de-icing salts

Objects

- Coins
- Buttons
- Jewelry
- Nylons
- Yarn/thread/needles
- Batteries
- Paper clips
- Rubber bands
- Twist ties
- Plastic wrap
- Cotton swabs
- Hair pins
- Eye glasses
- Dental floss
- Towels
- Rugs
- Razors
- Electrical cords

Foods

- Chocolate
- Coffee/Caffeine
- Grapes/Raisins/Currants
- Macadamia Nuts
- Avocados
- Onions
- Garlic
- Salt
- Tea leaves
- Raw dough/yeast
- Xylitol - check your peanut butter label!
- Alcohol
- Fatty foods (butter, oils, drippings, scraps)

Areas & Appliances

Watch your pet closely around these common areas where escapes or accidents can happen:

- Doorways
- Windows
- Balconies
- Fireplaces/fire pits
- Gates
- Bathtubs
- Sinks
- Toilets
- Washer/Dryer
- Pools/hot tubs
- Grill



SHELTER

4914 S. Hanna Street
Fort Wayne, Indiana 46806

CLINIC

1333 Maycrest Drive
Fort Wayne, Indiana 46805

HumaneFW.org
260 744-0454



We turn 'likes'
into love!