



Kids and Cats

Many of us grew up with a family pet. There is a lot more information available now to keep our pets and our kids safe. Always supervise children and cats. Never leave a child unattended. Begin teaching your child at an early age how to safely interact with cats both inside and outside your home.



Here are things that cats wish children (and adults!) would learn:

- Leave cats alone if they are asleep or resting.
- Leave cats alone while they are eating or drinking.
- Don't sneak up on a cat. A sideways approach is the least threatening.
- When interacting with a cat let them come to you. Pay attention to body language.
- Do not invade a cat's space especially if it is a small confined space.
- Cats may be hand shy. The side of the face or under the chin or chest is a place that most would prefer to be pet. If the cat seems irritated by this just stop and leave the cat alone.
- If the cat is not feeling well, or has a medical condition, they would like to be left alone. Imagine how you feel when you are sick, our pets may feel that way but they cannot speak up. Always contact your vet if you suspect that your cat may have a medical condition.
- Do not grab tails or ears.
- Do not put your face up close to your pet's face.
- Do not climb on top or stand over a cat.
- Avoid yelling or screaming at a cat.
- Never tease a cat. Even staring directly into a cat's eyes can be perceived as a threat, especially if you do not know the cat.
- Contrary to the pictures being passed around on the internet, cats do not enjoy being hugged! It is very intrusive, so please show affection by rewarding with things that your cat enjoys instead.

CAT LANGUAGE



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Body Language:

Being aware of what our cats are saying is an important part of living with them. Most display clear information, we just do not always know what to look for. The chart above will help you know what your cat is telling you. If your cat seems to be showing any of the challenging signs or stress signs, you should contact a behaviorist who uses positive training methods. They can work with you to determine the cause of the behavior. Never punish a cat when they express that they are not comfortable. If the cat is punished, they will stop giving warning signals and resort to more drastic measures.

What Works:

- Training, such as attending a group class is a great way for your dog to learn and can be a family experience.

- Use positive, reward based training methods
- Plenty of physical and mental exercise
- Time alone. Everyone in the house needs time to decompress, including the cat. They may also need a break during hectic times, such as holidays. What we view as fun can be overwhelming to a pet.
- Having your child be proactive in the care of the cat. This not only teaches responsibility, it builds a relationship between the two.

Bonding Activities:

Here are some great bonding activities that anyone can participate in (children with supervision):

- Hand feeding
- Reading to your cat. Calming and soothing.
- Clicker training or treat training. Cats can learn to sit, give paw and more! For more information contact our behavior department at: behavior@jaxhumane.org

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