



Feline Forum

Courtesy of:

How smart are cats?

While it's difficult to truly assess the intelligence of cats, it's clear that given a little incentive most cats can learn simple commands if their owners are patient and persistent enough.

For example, you can teach your cat to sit on demand. Take your cat's favorite food treat, hold it in front of her nose, and move it upward and backward. As the cat's nose follows the treat and points up toward the ceiling, the cat will naturally sit down. At that precise moment say "sit" and quickly give the food treat. Practice this a few times a day and soon your cat will sit down

when you want her to.

Cats are careful observers and will remember things that have a direct relevance to them. That's why many cats go into hiding at the very sight of the carrier used to bring them to the vet, even if it's been more than a year since the last visit. And even subtle changes in your routine, to which cats get very accustomed, won't go unnoticed.

Thus, your kitty certainly has the capacity to learn. With the right mix of perseverance and patience, you'll find she'll learn all kinds of tricks.

Long Hair or Short?

One of the most important things to consider when adopting a new kitten is whether to get one with long or short hair.

Longhaired cats tend to need more grooming from their owners than do breeds with short- or medium-length hair. The hair of certain breeds, especially the Persian and Himalayan, mats quickly unless it is brushed daily. And, longhaired cats are particu-

larly prone to forming hairballs.

Of course, having a longhaired cat in your home means you'll have lots of hair everywhere. And while a shorthaired cat sheds, too, the amounts tend to be less than that of their longhaired cousins.

But regardless of which type of kitty you get be prepared to groom him or her at least once a week. Doing so will ensure your cat's coat stays healthy, will help you become more familiar with his or her body's unique features, and will promote a special closeness between you.

Feline first aid kits

Having a first aid kit at home that's stocked with items for your kitty is as important as having one for your human companions. You can buy first-aid kits at pet stores, or you can stock your own.

Here's what it should include:

- ◆ Your veterinarian's phone number, plus the number of an emergency weekend or night vet
- ◆ The ASPCA National Animal Poison Control Center number (888-426-4435, 800-548-2423, or 900-680-0000)
- ◆ A comprehensive cat care manual such as *The Cornell Book of Cats*
- ◆ Clean, heavy towels or thick blankets
- ◆ Gauze rolls or pads
- ◆ Adhesive (medical) tape
- ◆ Absorbent cotton balls and swabs
- ◆ Scissors, preferably with rounded tips
- ◆ Hydrogen peroxide
- ◆ Antibiotic ointment
- ◆ Hydrocortisone ointment
- ◆ Eyewash
- ◆ Tweezers
- ◆ Rectal thermometer
- ◆ Syringe (without the needle) for giving oral medications
- ◆ Syrup of ipecac
- ◆ Styptic pencil
- ◆ Copy of your cat's medical records

The information for *Feline Forum* has been prepared by the Cornell Feline Health Center, Cornell College of Veterinary Medicine, Ithaca, NY. Copyright 2000.



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