

Training Your Cat

Some people point to the dog's ability to learn obedience commands and tricks as proof that dogs are smarter than cats. Others point to the same as proof that cats are smarter than dogs. We're not going to get into that argument!

The important thing to remember is that cats and dogs are different in how they relate to us. Dogs have an ingrained need to be part of a family structure - to have a job to do within that family. Dogs are that way because wolves are that way - survival depends on the family, or pack.

The cat came from a different place - from solitary hunters who didn't need teamwork to survive. If you want to put a good spin on it as a cat-lover, you could say that dogs need to be with us, while cats choose to. Because of this distinction, you absolutely cannot get a cat to do something he doesn't want to. Something must be in it for him. With training tricks, that something is usually food.

Teach the cat an association between a word - such as "sit" - and an action by using treats and praise. According to animal trainer Anne Gordon, in her book *Show Biz Tricks for Cats* (Adams), you start teaching the "sit" command with a hungry cat, a table, and a quiet room.

Get your cat to stand up by touching her in front of her tail and then hold the treat a little over her head, saying her name and the command "sit." Slowly move the treat between your cat's ears, but not high enough for her to pick her front paws off the ground and grab the tidbit. Instead, she'll sit. After she does, praise her and give her the treat. Work in short sessions and be patient. Your cat eventually gets the idea. Just another activity for the kids over the Christmas break!

Kind Regards,

Scott & Chris