



KITTEN KINDERGARTEN

Instructor: Jessica Johnson



CLASS GOALS

- ◆ Learn how to raise happy, healthy, well-adjusted kittens.
- ◆ Understand life from a cat's point of view.
- ◆ Raise kittens who are confident, sociable and easy to handle.
- ◆ Teach kittens to enjoy things that may be potentially scary or stressful.
- ◆ Show others that cats are awesome, and that not all cats are aloof, reclusive, fearful or aggressive.
- ◆ Teach our kittens skills that may prevent future behavior problems.

COURSE SYLLABUS

Week	Class Objectives	Lecture Topic
1	Clicker Intro, Enjoying Being Held, Rough Handling	Orientation
2	Target, Sit, Lay On Your Back, Come	Nutrition
3	Enjoying the Crate, Handling Skills, Wearing a Harness	Catification
4	Nail Trims, Leash Walking, Jump Up/Down	Litter Box Issues
5	Vet Prep: Accepting Pills, Accepting Injections, Accepting Restraint	Health & Wellness
6	Stay, Meeting a Dog, Socialization Walk	Pet Introductions

**Class agenda may be subject to change.*

CAT TRAINING 101

HOW DO WE TRAIN CATS?

METHOD 1:

Classical Counter Conditioning: training kitty to associate all potentially fearful situations with pleasant experiences. Example: If we have a cat that hates its crate, we can feed him in the crate to associate the crate with something pleasant (ie: **FOOD!**).

Examples of Potentially Scary Situations:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| ◆ Traveling in the crate | ◆ Being physically restrained |
| ◆ Riding in the car | ◆ Being handled roughly by a child |
| ◆ Nail trims | ◆ Harness and leash |
| ◆ Being examined by the vet | ◆ Other animals or environments |
| ◆ Taking a pill | |
| ◆ Receiving an injection | |

HOW DO WE TRAIN CATS?

METHOD 2:

Positive Reinforcement Training: to teach behaviors that we want to see more of, like sitting calmly next to me when I am working at the computer, not **ON** the computer. By training basic, we can ask for a replacement for anything naughty that kitty might do. *Example: Sit, Come When Called, Targeting, Get Off the Counter, etc.* We are also building our kitten's confidence by rewarding them for doing the right thing.

Step 1: Reward the behavior that you want. *Ex. Sit = treat*

Step 2: Remove rewards for unwanted behavior. *Ex. Meowing incessantly = Ignored. No reward, or I walk away.*

TRAINING TIPS

- ◆ Withhold food earlier in the day so kitten arrives motivated to eat.
- ◆ Use proper timing, 1-2 seconds to present the reward MAX.
- ◆ Train in a stepwise manner as needed. Slow and steady progress wins the race.
- ◆ During handling, control the kitten's body weight so it always feels supported.
- ◆ Practice daily for a minimum of 15 minutes.

CLASS TIPS

- ◆ Good treat choices include: squeeze cheese, cream cheese, wet food in syringes or on a spoon/tongue depressor, dry treats. The stinkier the better.
- ◆ If your kitten is too energetic or bothers the other kittens during play time, please leash kitty until he/she calms down to prevent them from learning bad or bullying behaviors.
- ◆ If kitty is timid, they do NOT have to play with the other kittens. Playing with toys or just sitting back in a hiding place and observing is OK too.
- ◆ Always be mindful of what your kitten and the other kittens in class are doing, for their safety and to ensure that they only have positive experiences while in class.

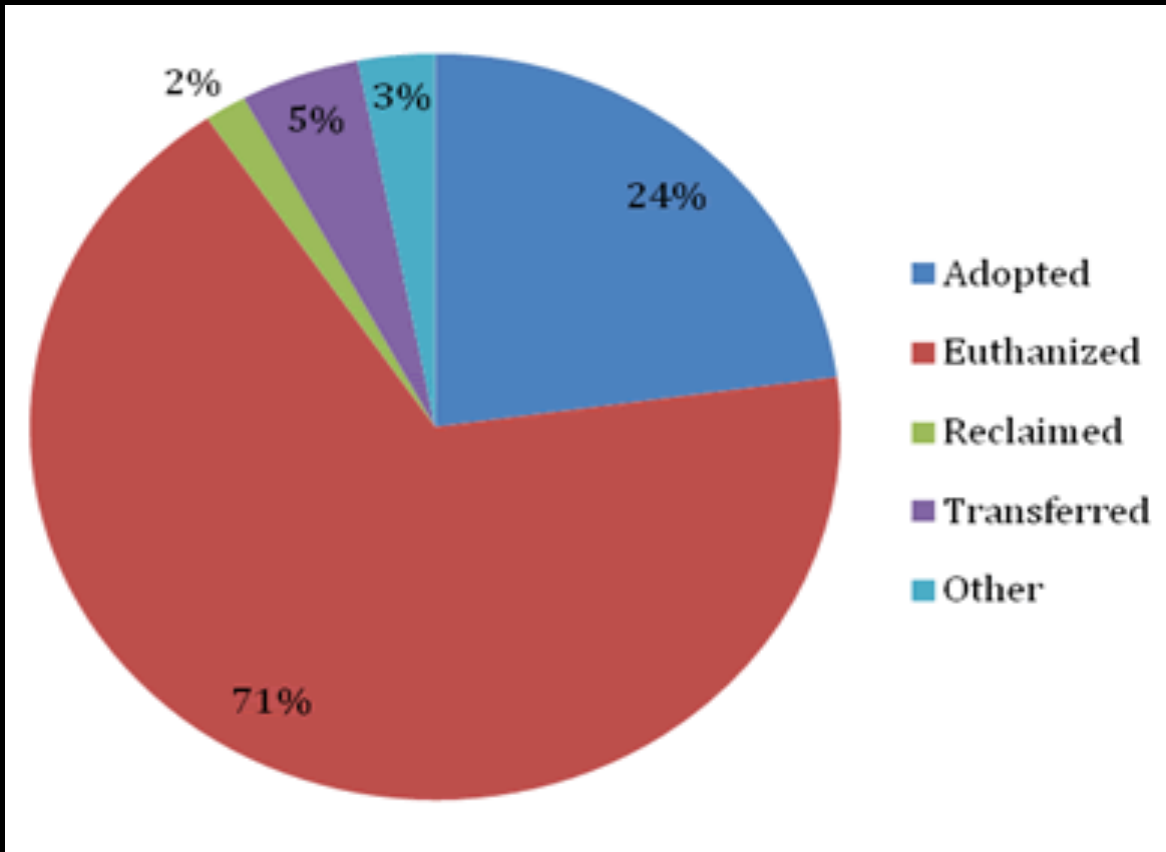
WHY SHOULD WE TRAIN CATS?

DID YOU KNOW?



- ◆ **There are over 75 million cats in the U.S., but 1/3 never sees a veterinarian in their lifetime.**
WHY? In general, cats are seen as less valuable than dogs.
- ◆ **More cats are relinquished to shelters than dogs.**
WHY? Problems with behavior is the #1 reason cats end up in shelters.
- ◆ **When a cat gets lost and is turned in to the shelter, only 2-5% are ever reclaimed by their owners (vs 30% of dogs).**
WHY? Some reasons owners may choose not to reclaim their cats include moving, allergies, fur color doesn't match the furniture (seriously), etc; but the true, underlying reason is that the owner(s) and their cat had a **poorly formed bond**, which results in a poor perception of their cat and little to no desire to reclaim them.

SHELTER CAT STATISTICS



All of LA County 2014-2015 Statistics

Adopted: 5,289
Transferred: 5,668
Reclaimed: 289
Euthanized: 7,856
Total Intake: 20,565

Vs.

2010-2011 Statistics

Adopted: 5,945
Transferred: 1,854
Reclaimed: 278
Euthanized: 13,100
Total Intake: 22,219

SO WHY SHOULD WE TRAIN CATS?

- ◆ **Negative Stereotype:** cats are often seen as mysterious, aloof, unsociable, un-trainable, or wild. The public often feels that cat behavior problems are unsolvable. By teaching our cats basic commands, we can raise more confident, friendly cats and solve behavior problems that may arise later in life.
- ◆ **To Make Life Easier for Both Cat & Owner:** Cats are very sensitive and can resort to eliminating inappropriately for even minor upsets. Socializing and training early in life results in less stress during trips to the vet, trimming nails, adjusting to new pets/house guests, bathing, etc.

SO WHY SHOULD WE TRAIN CATS?

- ◆ **To Prevent Problem Behaviors:** trained, socialized cats are less prone to scratching furniture, biting, developing aggression, developing fears/phobias, inappropriate urination and litter box habits, getting into trouble, etc.
- ◆ **To Keep Them Out of Shelters:** for being relinquished for behavior or attitude problems, or for running away and not coming back.
- ◆ **To help them get adopted!** (for shelter cats/kittens) Trained, well socialized cats and kittens show better in kennels, are friendly and outgoing, and will be less likely to be returned for behavior problems.

TIME FOR AN IMAGE MAKE-OVER!



Aggressive



Fearful



Antisocial

THE NEW AND IMPROVED CAT



Confident



Loving



Stress-Free



Well Behaved



3 KEYS TO SUCCESS



Early Socialization: New people, places, objects & animals are OK. No need to hide or be stressed.



Desensitization: Its FUN to be handled, get your nails trimmed, be examined and given medications.



Training: Using positive reinforcement to encourage good behaviors, like sit, come, wait quietly in the carrier and more.

KITTEN DEVELOPMENT

- ◆ Helps us understand how cats become fearful.
 - ◆ Helps us understand fear-related problems.
- ◆ Helps us understand when a cat is actively fearful or anxious.
- ◆ Helps us understand how to prevent fear, aggression and unruly behavior.
 - ◆ Helps us learn how to get the behaviors that we want.

KITTEN DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES

WEEK 1



Physical Development

- Unable to regulate own body temperature for a few weeks
- Rely on the sense of touch, smell, & temperature to navigate world
- Licking by the mother keeps kittens warm and stimulates their digestion & elimination
- Double their birth weight in 1st week of life; undergo rapid growth—equivalent of several months for human babies

Behavioral Development

- Able to move towards warmth right after birth; don't do much socially but need the warmth of their mother & siblings
- Able to identify their mother with pinpoint accuracy
- At 2 days of age purring starts; by 5 days able to respond to sounds

KITTEN DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES

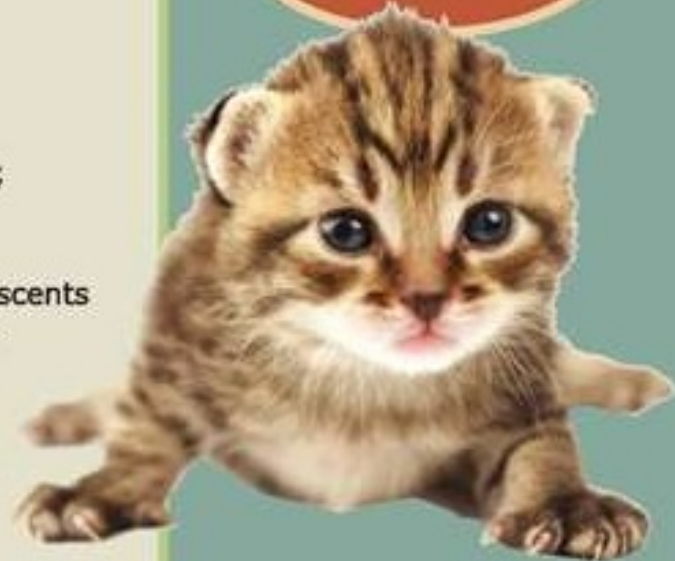
Physical Development

- Gains in sensory and motor skills
- Eyes open & begin to see blurry images (at 7–10 days on average)
- Ears unfold, improving ability to hear
- Sense of smell improves
- Gaining strength and motor skills

Behavioral Development

- By 10 days, exhibit conditioned responses to sounds; by 2 weeks, orient to natural sounds; respond to mother's commands
- Can recognize distinct odors; may hiss at unfamiliar scents
- May test out wobbly legs, with caution; beginning of independence from the mother; start of exploration
- Formation of social relationships; will sniff & paw at littermates; majority of grooming still done by the mother but will begin now or at 3 weeks to start self-grooming & grooming of siblings
- Development of predatory behavior

WEEK 2



KITTEN DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES

WEEK 3



Physical Development

- Continued gains in sensory and motor skills, some reaching adult states
- Better at regulating their own body temperature
- Rudimentary walking emerges
- Vision improves rapidly
- Weaning begins; decrease in initiation of nursing bouts by the mother in preparation for weaning; first teeth appear
- Voluntary elimination starts at between 3-5 weeks

Behavioral Development

- Less snuggling needed with mother and littermates, leading to more independence
- Visual orienting and following objects; visual orientation to the nest
- Litter box can be introduced
- Expansion of the socialization period: social play emerges—life is a party at this point

KITTEN DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES

WEEK 4

Physical Development

- Adult-like orienting
- Adult-like hearing and vision
- Better coordination and motor skills
- Weaning is well underway
- Usually a dramatic growth burst; most doubled weight gain by now
- Teeth continue to come in
- Much better at body temperature regulation

Behavioral Development

- Visual orienting and obstacle avoidance; begin to stray farther from the nest
- Can learn tasks with visual cues alone
- Queen brings live prey to the nest; begins to show hunting skills
- Solitary play declines, group play more common; spend most awake hours playing with littermates & grooming one another
- Begin to interact with humans & other animals in their environment on a regular basis
- Dominance hierarchies forming



KITTEN DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES

WEEK 5



Physical Development

- Running emerges
- Basic skills, like hearing, vision, and locomotion, are well developed but still don't have the grace of an adult feline
- Weaning is well underway but nursing continues

Behavioral Development

- Engages in complex interactions that make up typical kitten play; hides while playing
- Starts to kill prey
- Able to successfully use a litter box; elimination substrate preference begins to develop

KITTEN DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES

Physical Development

- Time of growth and strengthening of the kitten physique, as well as refinement of sensory-motor skills
- Capable of all the gaits exhibited by adults
- Full control of elimination functions
- Eating solid food several times a day
- Baby teeth still erupting

Behavioral Development

- Engages in complex interactions that make up typical kitten play due to new-found mobility and coordination; show more adult response to threatening visual and olfactory stimuli (e.g., mild piloerection to cat silhouette)
- Asserting even more independence from mom, with or without littermates
- May be chewing on everything in the house (due to teething)
- Emulating daily routines of mom
- Cope with regular handling by humans

WEEK 6



KITTEN DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES

AMBULATORY/SOCIALIZATION PERIOD:

Lasts until 12 weeks of age.

Kitten's eyes and ears have opened and they are beginning to move around. Now they can hear and see things and can start bonding with the animals around them and their environment. They may startle easily, but they recover quickly. They will be curious about new things and bond with the animals around them. After this period is over, fear of new things becomes the norm and it becomes harder to recover.



KITTEN DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES

FEAR PERIOD:

lasts from 12 weeks on.

As movement improves, curiosity increases. However, curiosity may lead to being curious of things that may harm them, such as predators, so fear develops to keep them safe from danger. Their default setting becomes "be afraid of things." This period continues throughout the rest of their life. This is why animals do not approach you in the wild to be your friend.



CONSEQUENCES OF POOR SOCIALIZATION

- ◆ **Fear** of new people, other pets, new environments, fear of handling. *Problematic if you move, have friends over, have children, cat runs away, you get a 2nd cat, etc.*
- ◆ Fear can lead to **Hiding** (flight or freeze response), **Aggression** (fight response), and/or **Stress** (pottying outside the litterbox).

And that is no life for a cat!

CAT BODY LANGUAGE

HOW CATS COMMUNICATE

Cats communicate primarily through **Body Language**, however they have over 100 unique vocalizations, which they mix and match in order to communicate with us (because humans in general are very poor at reading their body language). Therefore, meowing can be considered a learned behavior that cats use to communicate with humans! Your cat may even reserve a special type of meow just for greeting you!

Types of Vocalizations include:

The Meow (Mew for kittens)

The Purr (contentment, for comfort or stress)

The Trill (a friendly greeting)

The Chatter (excitement or frustration)

The Beep (ahem, excuse me)

The Growl (a warning)

The Hiss (afraid or angry, after growl)

The Yowl (in heat or final warning)

The Burble (purr, meow and growl hybrid)

The Wail (desperate, give me what I want!)

BODY LANGUAGE: TAIL

CAT TAIL SPEAK



I'm scared



*I'm happy
to see you*



*I'm getting
upset*



Let's be friends



*Hmmm. I'm
interested*



*I'm crazy
about you*



I feel loving












I'm worried



I'm mad

BODY LANGUAGE: EARS

	MORE AGGRESSIVE →		
↑ MORE SUBMISSIVE OR MORE FEARFUL ↓	EARS PRICKED FORWARDS 		
	EARS OUT SIDWAYS, FLATTENED 		
	PUPILS DILATED, EARS RIGHT BACK 	PUPILS DILATED, EARS HALF BACK 	EARS TURNED BACK 

BODY LANGUAGE: FACE



Happy



Angry



Frightened

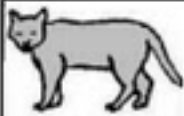

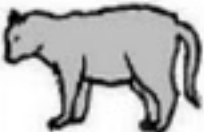
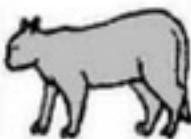














Playful



Content

BODY LANGUAGE: POSTURES

	← MORE AGGRESSIVE →			
	 TAIL MAY BE HELD ALOFT			
				
	"FLINCH"  MAY EVEN FALL OVER IN SUBMISSIVE FEAR			
	TOTALLY WITHDRAWN  TAIL TUCKED UNDER			LAST DITCH  SCARED ANGRY
↓ MORE SUBMISSIVE OR MORE FEARFUL ↓				

READING CATS



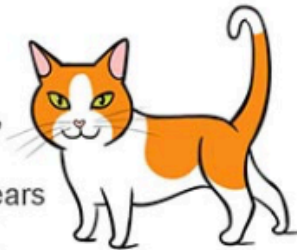
A happy, confident cat will have a straight or arched back and tail up.

A happy cat

These cats are relaxed and happy.

1

Cat is standing, has a relaxed body posture, ears are in a natural position, tail is held upright with the tip of the tail curved, eyes are a normal shape, mouth is closed.



2

Cat is lying down, belly is exposed, body posture is relaxed, body is stretched out, ears are in natural position, eyes may be partly closed, mouth is closed.



3

Cat is sitting, body posture is relaxed, tail is held out loosely from body, ears are in natural position, eyes are a normal shape, mouth is closed.



READING CATS



A cat with a concave belly that is lowering to the ground is stressed or fearful.

A worried cat

These cats are telling you that they are uncomfortable and don't want you near them.

1



Cat is in a crouched position, muscles are tense, body is held tightly, tail is tucked tightly into body, ears are slightly swivelled sideways, head is slightly lowered and tucked into body, pupils are dilated, mild tension shows in face.

2



Cats who are worried or anxious may hide.

READING CATS



A fearful animal will try to appear smaller, while a confident or dominant one will try to appear bigger.

An angry or very unhappy cat

These cats are not happy and want you to stay away or go away.

1



Cat is lying down, body is flattened, ears are flattened to the head, pupils are dilated, tail is held tightly into body, body is tense, limbs are held tight and close to body.

2







Cat is lying down, body is flattened, ears are flattened to the head and drawn back, body is slightly rolled over to one side, pupils are dilated, mouth is open and tense, teeth are showing.

3







Cat is standing, back is arched, body is held sideways, hair is raised, posture is tense, front paw is slightly lifted off the ground (ready to swipe if needed), ears are lowered and pointing out to the side, mouth is open and tense, teeth are showing, tail is tense.

STRESS SIGNALS

Score	Body Postures	Head Postures
<p>1 Relaxed</p>	<p>Activity – sleeping or resting, alert or active, may be playing Body – lying on side, on belly or sitting; if standing or moving, back horizontal Breathing – slow to normal Legs – bent, hind legs may be laid out; when standing extended Tail – extended or loosely wrapped; up or loosely down when standing</p> 	<p>Head – laid on surface or over body, some movement Eyes – closed to open, pupils slit to normal size Ears – normal to forward Whiskers – normal to forward Sounds – none, purr</p> 
<p>2 Alert</p>	<p>Activity - resting, awake or actively exploring Body – lying on belly or sitting; if standing or moving the back is horizontal Breathing – normal Legs – bent; when standing extended Tail – on body or curved back; up or tense downwards when standing; may be twitching</p> 	<p>Head – over the body, some movement Eyes – open normally, pupils normal Ears – normal or erected to front or back Whiskers – normal to forward Sounds – none or meow</p> 

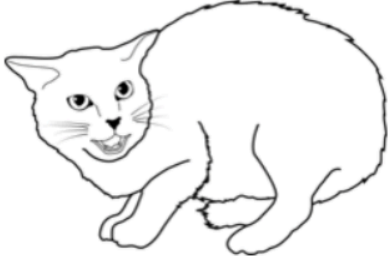



* We want to see our cats at a 1 or 2 as much as possible.

STRESS SIGNALS

<p>3 Tense</p>	<p>Activity – resting or alert, may be actively exploring, trying to escape Body – lying on belly or sitting; if standing or moving the back of the body is lower than the front (“slinking”) Breathing – normal Legs – bent, hind legs bent and front legs extended when standing Tail – close to body; tense downwards or curled forward, may be twitching when standing.</p>		<p>Head – over the body or pressed to body, little or no movement Eyes – wide open or pressed together, pupils normal to partially dilated Ears – erected to front or back Whiskers – normal to forward Sounds – none, meow, or plaintive meow</p>	
<p>4 Anxious</p>	<p>Activity – alert, may be actively trying to escape Body – lying on belly or sitting; if standing or moving the back of the body is lower than the front Breathing – normal or fast Legs – under body, bent when standing Tail – close to the body; may be curled forward close to body when standing. The tip may move up and down or side to side.</p>		<p>Head – on the plane of the body, little or no movement Eyes – wide open, pupils dilated Ears – partially flattened Whiskers – normal to forward or back Sounds – none, plaintive meow, growling, yowling</p>	

At Stage 3, a cat may begin to feign sleep, which is a sign of stress.

STRESS SIGNALS

<p>5 Fearful</p>	<p>Activity – motionless, alert or crawling Body – lying on belly or crouched directly on top of all paws, may be shaking; if standing the whole body is near to the ground, may be shaking Breathing – fast Legs – bent; when standing bent near to surface Tail – close to the body; curled forward close to the body when standing.</p>		<p>Head – near to surface motionless Eyes – fully open, pupils fully dilated Ears – fully flattened Whiskers – back Sounds – none, plaintive meow, growling, yowling</p>	
<p>6 Terrified</p>	<p>Activity – motionless alert Body – crouched directly on top of all paws, shaking. Hair on back and tail bushy. Breathing – fast Legs – stiff or bent to increase apparent size Tail – close to body</p>		<p>Head – lower than the body Eyes – fully opened, pupils fully dilated Ears – fully flattened, back on head Whiskers – back Sounds – none, plaintive meow, growling, yowling, hissing</p>	

If our cats progress past Stage 3, we must do whatever we can to minimize their stress back down to a 3 or below. Prolonged exposure to chronic stress may result in poor health, behavior problems and hair loss over time.

FROM FEAR TO AGGRESSION



Hiding Phase: The beginning of fear, going over threshold.

- ◆ **FREEZE:** decreased movement; if eating, will stop.
- ◆ **AVERTING GAZE**
- ◆ **TRYING TO LOOK SMALL:** tucks in tail and feet.
- ◆ **LEANING INTO WALL:** tries to look as small as possible.
- ◆ **EARS GO BACK OR TO THE SIDE**
- ◆ **EYES DILATE**
- ◆ **TAIL PUFFS UP:** *Piloerection*

Brewing Aggression: Transitioning from fear to aggression

- ◆ **TAIL SWISHING:** a wagging tail does NOT mean a happy cat!
- ◆ **GROWLING**
- ◆ **HISSING**
- ◆ **SWATTING**
- ◆ **BITING**

RECOVERY FROM FEAR



Signs of Improvement: stress levels returning to under threshold level.

- ◆ Leans into petting
- ◆ Eating when hungry
- ◆ Relaxed body posture (confident kitty poses- tail up, back arched- see above)