

TEACHING YOUR CAT TO WALK ON A LEASH

HOW TO TEACH:

First you'll need to familiarize your cat with wearing a harness (see handout "Teaching Your Cat to Wear a Harness"). Your cat should be comfortable wearing a harness for 10 to 15 minutes before starting to work on leash training.

Getting Used to the Leash:

Start in a quiet, safe place like indoors or a securely fenced yard.

Attach a six- to eight-foot, lightweight leash to the harness (never attach a leash to the cat's collar). When your cat feels tension on the leash, he may pull or back up. Wait patiently until there is no tension on the leash, then click and treat (C/T). As long as he is not pulling, allow him to move around with the leash on, following him to prevent tension on the leash.

Walking on a Leash:

Using a target (a longer dowel works well in this case), have your cat follow the target (see handout on teaching your cat to target). C/T when he follows the target for one or two steps. Gradually increase the number of steps your cat must take to get the C/T. Once he is following the target for 10 or more steps, add a cue like "let's go" to signal him to follow you.

Going for a walk:

Choose quiet times and places to walk your cat. Be aware that there are things that might frighten your cat – loud noises, approaching dogs, moving vehicles, etc. For your first few walks, you might want to take his carrier with you, so that if he becomes frightened you can put him in the carrier. If you try to hold him when he is frightened and panicked, he may scratch you or injure himself.

COMMENTS:

Be aware that walking a cat is different from walking a dog. Sometimes you can ask him to follow you using your "let's go" cue. Other times you will follow him, allowing him to sniff and explore.

Keep your walks short – 10 to 15 minutes.

Carry treats to reward good behavior.