



A Guide to Harness Training Your Cat



⚠ Caution: harness training will not suit all cats. All cats are individuals with different personality traits and preferences and not every cat will be interested in or comfortable with harness training. Leash walking can be dangerous for you and your cat. If startled, your cat could become lost or injured and could injure you or others in their attempts to flee.

Harness training your cat can have numerous advantages for your cat, for you and for your local wildlife! If you're considering allowing your cat some outdoor time while keeping them safe, harness training is an excellent option for some cats. Walking a cat on a leash and harness provides enrichment, stimulation, and a supervised way for your feline friend to experience the outdoors.

Determining Suitability:

Observe your cat to gauge their interest in outdoor exploration. If your cat is a door-dasher or expresses a desire to be outdoors, they may be a suitable candidate for harness training. On the contrary, if your cat is generally timid or startles easily they might prefer indoor activities. It's crucial to recognise that each cat has a unique personality, and not all of them share the same enthusiasm for outdoor excursions.

Harness Training Plan

Take training at your cat's pace. Have plenty of their favourite treat ready and limit training sessions to 2-3 minutes or less. Ensure each training session is a positive experience and always end on a high note; don't wait until your cat loses interest to end the session.

1. Choose a well-fitting harness and a lightweight leash. Never attach the leash directly to a collar to prevent injuries.
2. Find a quiet space at home to practice.
3. Introduce your cat to the harness by placing it on the floor with treats around and allow them to investigate in their own time. Familiarise your cat to the sounds of buckling and unbuckling the harness.
4. Place the harness on your cat briefly. Then try doing up the clips. Gradually increase the time your cat wears the harness, associating it with positive experiences like play and feeding.
5. Attach the leash to the harness gradually allowing your cat to get used to the feeling.
6. Practice indoor walks, gradually increasing the distance.
7. Choose a safe, quiet outdoor area to practice. Keep initial walks very short and positive.
8. Establish a regular walking routine. Remember to adjust feeding to accommodate treat rewards.



Safety 'Recall' Training

- 🌿 Call your cat's name before feeding, rewarding them when they come to you. Increase the distance over time.
- 🌿 Playing 'hide and seek' is a fun way to practice your cat's recall – make it easy to start by just moving a few steps away and calling their name, then gradually increase the difficulty by moving to another room, even hiding behind a piece of furniture.
- 🌿 Reward with a treat every time they come to you.

Final Remarks

Walking a cat is fundamentally different from walking a dog. If you've ever attempted to walk a cat, you quickly realise that they tend to take the lead. Your cat might catch a scent, become fascinated by a spot, or simply want to linger in one place. It's a unique and somewhat unpredictable experience. Keep in mind that walking a cat is more about their preferences than yours.

If you intend to take your cat for walks in locations like a park, consider bringing a cat carrier or other safe secure space like a cat backpack to use if they become startled during the outing. Avoid sudden leash pulls, which can startle your cat, and pay attention to their [body language](#). Take a break at the first sign they are stressed.

Remember, every cat is unique, and training may progress at different paces. Be patient, keep sessions positive, and enjoy the bonding experience with your feline companion.