



Top 5 Behavior Tips for Cats and Dogs

FROM THE SF SPCA VETERINARY BEHAVIOR SERVICE

1. ENRICHMENT ISN'T EXTRA, IT'S ESSENTIAL

Bored pets act out. Keep your cat or dog mentally and physically engaged every day with fun activities that express natural behaviors.

- For dogs: Try sniffing games or walks, food puzzles, long-lasting food-stuffed treats (like KONGs), interactive toys, and fun training sessions.
- For cats: Try climbing structures, scratching posts, window perches, puzzle feeders, and wand toys (but no laser pointers!).

2. AVOID PUNISHMENT

Fear-based tools (like shock or prong collars and yelling) can make behavior worse, increase anxiety, and reduce trust. Use positive reinforcement-based training instead: reward good behavior, rather than punish bad behavior. It's kinder, more effective, and backed by science.

3. REWARD GOOD BEHAVIOR

When your pet demonstrates good behavior, say "yes!" or click a clicker, and immediately reward your pet. This approach is called "capturing." Reinforcing and rewarding the behaviors you like helps turn those behaviors into long-lasting habits.

4. FIND THEIR FAVORITE REWARD

Every pet is different. Some love treats, others prefer toys, praise, or play. Discover what your pet truly enjoys and use it to teach and motivate.

5. KEEP TRAINING SHORT AND SWEET

Training works best in 3 to 5 minute bursts, a few times a day. Always end training sessions on a high note with a win and a reward. Just a few minutes a day can lead to big behavior changes over time.



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