

How to Help Your Cat Become More Affectionate



It is possible to help a cat become more cuddly and affectionate. You have to be patient, start at your cat's comfort level, and keep your expectations in check. Knowing the personality of your cat, and what they can and cannot tolerate is important. Can they be held for a short period of time? Can they be picked up and placed on a bed or cat condo? Can you pet them? On what parts of their body do they like to be petted? If you reach for them, will they run away?

Once you make a note of what your cat does and doesn't like, you can appropriately get them acclimated to touch by desensitizing them to it. This means to gradually expose them to touch and handling at a level that is comfortable for them, and at their pace. Always let cats call the shots so they don't feel threatened.

Begin touching them in a spot that's comfortable for them. If they dislike being stroked on their head, start at their tail. If they dislike being touched on their tail, start at their head. Most cats like to be touched on the top of their head and forehead (in between their ears), massaged gently on the occiput (the little boney area at the base of the skull), on their cheeks, and along or under their chin.

They also tend to like to be stroked on the back of their neck, and to the left or right of their spine around their shoulder blades. Some cats like the rump area at the base of their tail gently touched as well. Cats tend to dislike being stroked on their lumbar region (belly area below their rib cage and above their hips).

Never push things too far, and always quit while you're ahead to leave your cat wanting more. If they leave after 3 strokes, only touch/ pet them twice next time. Stop petting and touching them before they feel the need to leave the situation.

Pair your touches with food. Feed them as you touch them, or immediately afterwards.

If they enjoy special treats or wet food, use this opportunity to place your hands on either side of their body and 'scoot' them to their food. This is a way to desensitize them to being picked up, and is very effective. Use delicious treats as a reward for touch. Never continue to pet them after they are finished eating, pet before and during.

Once they are comfortable with handling during eating, begin to lift them gently to nearby areas they enjoy. If they like a window perch, pick them up and place them on it when there is a bird outside the window. If there is a special, fluffy, warm cat bed they like, pick them up and place them on it. Continue to pair treats with your touches and pick-ups. All of this will ensure that your cat develops a positive association to your touch.

Also, make your home as cat-friendly as possible. Cats love warmth, and soft, fluffy sleeping areas. They also like cat perches and condos. By providing your kitty with clean, warm, soft surfaces to lay on, and more vertical territory, your kitty will be happier and will likely become more 'cuddly' over time. Remember, patience is the key!

The Talkative Cat



Are you asking yourself, "Why does my cat meow so much?" Cats communicate through a variety of vocalizations – meowing, purring, and hissing, among others. They display their unique personalities through these vocalizations, a characteristic most people find endearing. When these vocalizations become excessive or occur at inopportune times, however, problems arise.

What is excessive vocalization? Excessive vocalization does not have a strict definition. What is considered "excessive" depends on the tolerance level of the individual listener, which may be influenced by many factors, including prior experience with cats, the type of vocalization, the time of day, and the perceived reason for the vocalization. For example, a cat meowing loudly for breakfast may be more tolerable than the same cat repeatedly meowing for no apparent reason in the middle of the night.

When is excessive vocalization normal? All vocalization is normal; it's the way cats communicate with each other and with us. Normal increases in vocalization occur during mating season when female cats are in heat and male cats compete for access to them. (One good reason to spay/neuter your cats is to eliminate this cacophony.) Increases in vocalization are also common when there are changes in the household, such as a move to a new place or a change from being an outdoor to an indoor pet. In these cases, the increases in vocalization may be transient. Certain cat breeds, notably the Siamese, vocalize more than others.

What causes excessive vocalization? The most common cause of excessive vocalization is attention-seeking, a learned behavior. Many cats learn to meow to signal their wish to go outside or be fed. This technique is especially effective early in the morning or at night when you are tired. To stop the offending noise, you readily acquiesce to your cat's demands. Once cats expect your attention, they continue to vocalize even if you attempt to ignore their behavior. As you probably are aware, most cats will outlast you, and you eventually give in. Excessive vocalization may also indicate the presence of a medical or more serious behavior problem. Cats may meow excessively when they are in pain or possess neurological problems or sensory deficits such as hearing or vision loss. Anxiety disorders, aggression, cognitive dysfunction, or other behavioral problem can also cause cats to vocalize repeatedly. Consult with your veterinarian or a veterinary behaviorist to determine if medical or behavioral problems exist.

How do you treat excessive vocalization? Treatment for excessive vocalization depends on the underlying problem. All cats should be taken to a veterinarian or veterinary behaviorist so a primary medical or behavioral diagnosis can be made. If attention-seeking behavior is diagnosed, you must consistently ignore your cat's vocalization, refusing to respond to any request for attention until the cat is quiet. Typically, cats will initially vocalize more and for longer periods of time before they finally give up. During this time, you must continue to ignore the cat. If you give in, your cat will learn that louder and longer vocalization is the only way to reliably get your attention.