

# Cats

## ROCK



and are an active part of our lives today. Many are relaxed and comfortable hanging on the back of our sofa's, but others act like outgoing, active dogs. When you have a cat with a lot of energy, often you can

become the target of their need to hunt, chase, and attack. Instead of fighting it - or worse, bleeding and getting frustrated, give them appropriate outlets for their need to be cats.

### Be sure their environment has

- **Secure places to scratch.** If your cat is scratching inappropriate places, chances are they don't have any good, appropriate ones. The difference between the arm of your couch and the scratching post you bought them is that the couch doesn't move toward them when they really pull and dig in. Cats need *secure* places to scratch and stretch – A large, cat tree is best, but if you're not into it, consider securing a small scratching post to the floor or wall.
- **Places to hide.** One of the worst things folks can do is force cats to go face-to-face with a person or another animal. Cats need time. Be sure they have spots they can hide and watch what's going on, without actively participating or being seen: empty boxes and paper bags and small tunnels work great for this.
- Plenty of **elevated spaces** that they're allowed to be on. Cats need to climb, jump, perch and watch - if they're not allowed on the furniture, put up a shelf, just for them. And remember cats are great jumpers....a couple of well placed shelves can be just enough to get them up and above everything.

Note: Consider keeping cats off elevated spaces by filling tupperware lids with water and perching them on the edges of countertops (or similar off-limit areas). This way when the cat (or dog) jumps up, they get soaked and worried it's going to happen again. There are also mats you can buy with pointy plastic teeth that stick up, so it's painful when the cat (or dog) hops up.

## Ways to interact with your cat

- **Spend 3 minutes a day one-on-one** playing or loving on your cat. Spending 90 seconds or more playing with your cat in the morning can stop those inappropriate attacks on your ankles as your trying to get out of the door!
- **Cats love crinkly noises**, consider using crinkly plastic in an old sock; paper bags are always a favorite (for hiding, hunting and playing) and cheap empty water bottles - in an old sock, can be a great wrestling toy.
- **Consider dog toys.** Many cats love our forearms, after all, they're the perfect size to dig-in with their back legs and play with/chew on with their front one's. But boy does it hurt! Instead buy your cat a dog toy that is the same size and shape as an arm (dog bumpers). Even better, rub it in catnip! Then the next time they go after your arm, substitute the toy you'd rather he/she play with, it usually takes only a couple of reminders for them to go after the toy on their own.
- **Play hunting games....**but be sure to end with something! Laser pointers, puzzles (homemade or purchased), catnip, feathers, interactive toys – all allow you to play with your cat and practice their innate skills. Let them chase the laser light or try to get the empty box open, but when they do be sure there's a treat. If you just turn off the laser pointer when you get bored, chances are your cat will stop playing because it didn't end with anything, always end these games specifically....a treat works great!



## Teach your Cat to High 5



High-5 is a fun, easy trick to teach your cat so even if you don't have a lot of time to spend with them, you can at least acknowledge them as you walk by with a High-5.

How to: Encourage your cat to touch the palm of your hand with their paw by holding a treat above their head. As soon as they touch your hand, say Yes! and give them a treat. Repeat over and over and over again.

Remember we only want the paw touching our hand, so only 'mark and treat' with a Yes! when their paw hits your palm. And be sure to encourage your cat to do better and better by making this fun.

Note: use old spice jars to store treats in areas your cat likes to hang in....that way you always have something fresh to give them while they're learning this.