

Cat: Eye Contact Command



Benefit

Teaching your cat to make eye contact with you on command is not hard to do and it can be very useful. An eye contact command can be used to attain and keep your cat's attention in situations that may cause fear or anxiety.

What You Need

- Soft treats, wet food or tuna, whichever your cat prefers
- A clicker, if you use one. Otherwise, say "yes!" to mark the behavior
- A quiet area without distractions for practicing

How to Train It

Step 1. The easiest way to teach your cat to look at you is by holding a treat at eye level and making an interesting sound (e.g. kissy noises, squeak from a squeaky toy). As soon as your cat makes eye contact, give her the treat by moving it in a straight line from your eyes to her mouth.

Repeat this exercise until your cat is looking at your eyes once the treat is presented nine out of ten times.

Step 2. After several repetitions, when your cat begins to look up toward your eyes for a treat, begin to give the behavior (looking at you) a name or command, like "Look" or "Watch Me." Say the command at the moment you "bait" the cat (i.e. attract her attention), right before she looks and gets the treat.

Step 3. Now add the verbal cue. First, clearly say "Look," and move your hand toward your face. When she looks at your hand, click, and give her a treat. Repeat until your cat eagerly responds to the command.

Step 4. After several repetitions of "bait-command → reward" begin to phase out the baiting. Give the command without holding the treat at eye level. Have a treat ready, and the instant your cat makes eye contact, reward her.

Finally, practice this exercise in gradually more distracting environments. Try a busy room rather than a quiet one. Eventually work up to having guests, and other cats or dogs present when giving the command.

Tips

- If your cat is looking at your hand rather than your face, try stretching your hand all the way out. As soon as she makes eye contact with your hand, reward her and gradually move your hand toward your face. As your hand comes closer, reward your cat for following your direction.
- If you're using wet food, use a spoon so your hands stay clean.