

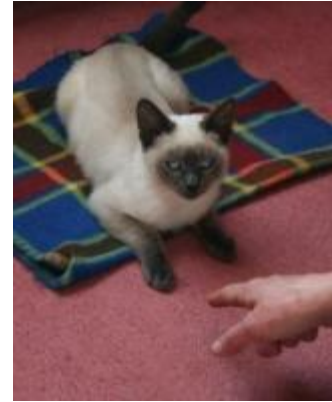
Teaching Cats to Go to a Mat

courtesy of Animal Info Publications

Author: Kath Charlton Dip ACP

Go to Mat is the second recommended behaviour to teach a cat. The first is targeting see '[Target Training for Cats](#)'. But really this behaviour is actually a form of targeting but with their whole bodies rather than just their noses!

Teaching a cat to go to a specific spot eg, a mat, is useful for a number of reasons and not only helps the cat to learn acceptable behaviour and prevent problem behaviours from occurring, ie, teach the cat to sit here instead of walk on the worktops, sit and wait in this spot instead of rush out the door, sit here while I have my tea, sit here while I train the other animals. It also helps us to change a cats unacceptable behaviour and gives a cat info on what to do in situations, not only to help correct the behaviours mentioned previously but also to help deal and correct aggressive encounters.



On the video below you will see Simba, my moggie's, first 'go to mat' training. 'STARTING OFF' initially he offers me nothing, so I try luring then I just throw a piece of chicken on to the mat, which quick starts him into action. I will click for any foot on the mat to begin with and keep clicking for a couple of goes for maintaining contact of the mat AND to help POWER THE MAT UP. I need Simba to realise that this mat is a very special and rewarding place to be. To get him off the mat, so that he can learn that re-positioning himself onto the mat gets the reward I will throw chicken off the mat for him to chase and wait for him to come back to the mat. If he happens to position himself by sitting directly on the mat I will jackpot with a lot of treats straight after one another so that he thinks 'WOW' I'm going to do that again'

Izzy my snowshoe continues the progression by showing how we proofed the cats understanding of the mat. Once the cat is reliably sitting on the mat and it has been powered up, this is proofed further by rewarding with throwing chicken away from the mat for the cat to chase. The cat then has to reposition every time on to the mat for it to happen again.

After that I keep moving the mat about so that the cat fully understands that it is not the area but the mat itself that is the correct place to be. This mat is then moved around into different rooms in the house to proof even further the cat's understanding of the mat.

NOTE each time I change the criteria I also go back a step to rewarding the first one back on the mat before starting to reward off the mat again. Just so I keep powering the actual mat itself up.



Next comes ADVANCING where I start adding more time on the mat before clicking, begin distance work and stays out of sight.

If at any time the cat gets up I just ask it back into position. If is moving a lot out of position then you may have gone too fast...never be worried about going back a step or two in training.. so that the cat or animal can fully understand the behaviour wanted of it.

The video is long... but I wanted to show you how cats learn and how you have to be patient and not try and rush things. You need to let them work things out for themselves.

Izzy loves training and has been trained from young but Simba my moggie has been watching and has now started to want to be trained....coming and asking for a session in his own special way.