

Kitty Love 101

Pet owners often fall into one of 2 categories: dog people and cat people. Why? Because having a pet dog looks very different from having a pet cat. While it's true that both cats and dogs are adorable and adding either to your family is likely to enrich it, the similarities stop there.

Cats have a reputation of being cold and uncaring creatures, only concerned with their own habits. This, of course, is not true. Cats are wonderfully loving pets; they just show and receive love differently than dogs. If you are having a hard time showing your cat love or are interested in how to expand on caring for your feline, we are here to help. We've broken down some tips and tricks in 3 catchy categories: fun, food, and feelings.

Fun

Cats sleep a lot. Like 12 - 16 hours a day, a lot. So it can be easy to overlook their entertainment. However, cats sleep that much for two very important reasons. First, they have evolved to sleep in short bursts all day and night to be on the alert for hunting opportunities. Second, they have nothing better to do.

Household cats may not have the need to hunt any longer, but they still have the deep-seated urge. Helping them exercise their instinct to hunt is a great way to show your cat you love them. Pick up a few special toys to use for interactive play. Laser pointers or wand toys work great. Just 10 minutes of interactive play a day will help them experience the joys of the hunt.

There are other ways you can encourage your pet to stay awake in anticipation of the hunt. Make sure to have entertaining toys like toy mice or fluffy balls they can bat around the house. You may also consider putting in a cat window perch so they can lay in the window and watch the birds. *Pro-tip: hang a bird feeder right outside your window, and your cat will love watching the birds fly in and out during the day.*

Food

Cats, like all animals, love to eat. Feeding your pet is a great way to show them you care. Try picking up some treats for your feline friend. Make sure to vary them up from time to time because treats should feel special. A great time to give treats is right after playtime. This mimics the treat of eating their prey and can encourage them to play more and sleep less.

You can also treat your cat with catnip. Catnip is a great way to encourage cat behavior. It can be sprinkled on new toys or cat furniture to capture their interest. You can even sprinkle some on the floor for your kitty to roll around in! Cat grass is another treat option that you can either

pick up from a pet shop or grow yourself. Cats love to munch on the grass, and it has several health benefits.

Feelings

Cats aren't necessarily clingy animals. They like to have their own space to relax and do cat things. Providing those private cat spaces will make your cat feel more at home and respected. Consider purchasing or creating spaces that are just for your cat. Cat beds, trees, window seats, scratching posts, tunnels, cubes, and even empty laundry baskets are all great options.

You can also take into account your kitty's feelings by learning to communicate like a cat. Have you ever seen your cat look at you and give you a slow blink? Or lay in front of you and expose her belly? Both of these actions are your pet telling you she loves and trusts you. When your cat slow blinks at you, slow blink back. And when they expose their belly to you, a sign of trust, reach out and gently pet their tummy.

One final way to take your pet's feelings into account is to help them groom. Grooming is very important to cats, and they spend half of their waking time on their appearance. While cats do a great job of keeping themselves clean, you can help them with brushing out their coat several times a week. Not only does helping them groom make them feel loved, but the brushing will feel like an all-over massage. Consider purchasing one of the gloved brushes with soft bristles and ease into it by letting the cat smell the new brush.

Loving a cat requires you to understand your cat. Learning the ways cats like to feel love and the ways they do not is the best way to approach bonding. A lot of these tips may seem passive. But when you are playing with your cat, feeding your cat or even just providing your cat with cozy places to sleep, they understand who is responsible. Loving a cat requires a slightly more subtle approach than a dog, but there is a reason there are so many crazy cat ladies in the world; the love of a cat is a wonderfully rewarding experience.