



## Leash Training

First, you'll need to familiarize your cat with wearing a harness (see handout "Teaching Your Cat to Wear a Harness"). Your cat should be comfortable wearing a harness for 10 to 15 minutes before starting to work on leash training.

### Getting Used to the Leash

Start in a quiet, safe place like indoors or a securely fenced yard. Attach a six to eight-foot, lightweight leash to the harness (never attach a leash to the cat's collar). When your cat feels tension on the leash, he may pull or back up. Wait patiently until there is no tension on the leash and as soon as he creates slack in the leash, reward him with a high value treat. As long as he is not pulling, allow him to move around with the leash on, following him to prevent tension on the leash.

### Walking on a Leash

Reward your cat with a high value treat when he chooses to walk on his own. Gradually increase the number of steps your cat must take to get the reward. If your cat is uninterested in moving, refrain from tugging or dragging the leash. This will make him more frightened and less likely to acclimate to the leash. Instead, toss a yummy treat a few steps in front of him and see if he'll follow. Or, if your cat really loves playtime, play with his favorite toy while letting the leash drag. Both will help him become more familiar with the sensation of the leash.

### Going for a walk:

Choose quiet times and places to walk your cat. Be aware that there are things that might frighten your cat – loud noises, approaching dogs, moving vehicles, etc. For your first few walks, you might want to take his carrier with you, so that if he becomes frightened you can put him in the carrier. If you try to hold him when he is frightened and panicked, he may scratch you or injure himself.

### Tips:

- Be aware that walking a cat is different from walking a dog. Sometimes you can ask him to follow you using your "let's go" cue. Other times you will follow him, allowing him to sniff and explore.
- Keep your walks short – 10 to 15 minutes.
- Carry treats to reward good behavior.