



## Too much kindness?

Imagine you're at the dinner table. Your dog is sitting, pressed up against your chair. He's looking up at you with adorable, pleading eyes begging for you to share your meal. "Oh, all right," you say, "I guess one piece won't hurt you." You slip him some food off your plate and he wolfs it down in one gulp.

Many people find it hard to resist feeding treats to their pets. But whether it's human food or snacks made for cats and dogs, it's possible to have too much of a good thing!

Pet obesity is on the rise in North America. Veterinarians are seeing a growing number of cats and dogs with weight-related health issues. Overweight pets are more likely to develop problems like diabetes,

heart disease, arthritis and certain skin conditions. Not to mention they may be uncomfortable, have difficulty moving and may not live as long.



LEIGH SCHINDLER/ISTOCK

## Ways to keep your pet from packing on the extra pounds?

- **Limit how many treats you feed in a day.** Treats are added calories! When pets eat more calories than they burn exercising, they gain weight.
- **Avoid feeding human food.** Human food is often high in fat, sugar and salt – which can contribute to your pet's health problems.
- **Exercise!** Take your dog for daily walks. Encourage your cat to be more active during playtime using toys she has to chase around.
- **Visit your veterinarian for regular weigh-ins.** That way, you'll be able to catch any increases or decreases in your pet's weight.
- **Try using a feeding toy,** which dispenses food slowly and makes your pet "work" a little harder for her meal.



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# DOG AGILITY:



bar jump  
training



*Looking for fun ways to play with your dog?* Try dog agility, an obstacle race course for dogs! People train their dogs to perform a number of tasks including weaving through poles, going through tunnels, walking up teeter-totters and jumping over bars.

Agility requires some patient training. Follow these steps to train your dog to jump a bar:

1. Start with your dog on a leash facing a very low bar – about 10 cm high.
2. Lead your dog over the bar using the “jump” command. As she crosses, toss a treat in front of her as a reward.



3. While on leash, practise jogging up to the bar several times with her. Each time, call “jump” and toss a treat or toy in front of her. This teaches her that good things happen when she jumps (she gets a treat!). Plus, her forward movement prepares her for the next obstacle.
4. Once she gets it with the leash, try to do the same steps without the leash.
5. Increase the height by a small amount. Continue to practise before raising the bar. You could also set up another jump a few metres ahead and have her jump twice.



Don't be frustrated if she isn't a “jumper” or loses interest. Dogs also like short training sessions – 10 to 15 minutes is about right. Keep practice sessions fun and soon she will look forward to learning the next agility obstacle.





# Crafty Corner

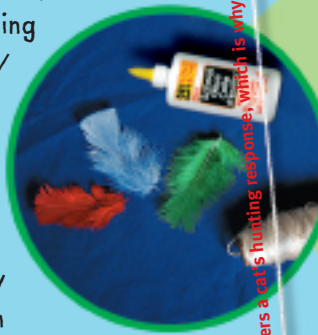
## Make a Feather Wand

**Supplies:** Feathers (from a craft store) / Stick (approx. 40 cm long) You can use a branch, a wooden or plastic dowel, or two chopsticks taped together. / String (approx. 60 cm long) / Glue (non-toxic)

**First:** Glue the quill ends of three feathers together (you may need to tie them with string or thread to keep them tightly together). Let dry. Add more glue, wrap the string around the feather ends and tie a secure knot. Add more glue over the knot (you want to make sure it won't be easy for your cat to pull the feathers away from the string). Tie opposite end of the string to one end of the stick.

**Then:** Hold the stick and dangle the feathers in front of your cat. When your cat lunges for the feathers, pull them away, then let him lunge again. This game of keep-a-way can keep your cat entertained for a long time.

→ Remember to let your cat "win" occasionally so he doesn't get frustrated and bored of the game.



Fact: Movement triggers a cat's hunting response, which is why cats respond so well to toys that move.

## Cat Play!



Kittens, like kids, need stimulation – things to look at, touch and engage their attention – to help their minds and bodies develop. When a human baby plays peek-a-boo or reaches for a toy, she is learning about the world around her and developing muscle skills. When a kitten chases a ball or play-fights with another kitten, he too is improving his mental and physical skills.

The need for stimulation doesn't end with baby-hood. Imagine being stuck in a room with nothing to do, no one to play with and nothing to look at but the same walls and floor. You probably wouldn't actually die of boredom, but you could come close. Prisoners locked in solitary confinement have been known to go crazy. So have animals stuck in barren zoo cages.

Luckily, it's easy to help keep your cat from going stir crazy or being bored out of his scratching tree. Provide your cat with toys, boxes and bags to explore, and places to climb and perch. Whether you purchase new toys or make your own (like the feather wand), when you're home from school take some time to play with your cat – it's fun for you and good for your cat!



### Win a Cat Photo Frame!

Send us a photo of you and your pet along with your full name and address and you will be entered to win one of three cat photo frames.  
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