



WHAT IS POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT?

The caregivers at Best Friends Animal Society practice positive **reinforcement** with all pets, including foster pets, to help them develop good habits and skills. Positive reinforcement rewards good behavior, **redirects** unwanted behavior and builds a bond of trust between you and your foster pets. Please read the following information and **watch the video** our amazing cat specialist, Samantha, has just created for you.

For example, if you see your feline using the litter box and tell her, “Good job!” in a happy, positive voice, you’re giving positive reinforcement. Giving her a treat when she finishes using the litter box is another example of positive reinforcement.

An example of redirecting would be moving your foster cat’s attention to a scratching post or other more appropriate scratching item if she starts clawing at the carpet. Another example would be when your cat or kitten starts playing too rough and bites your hand, you turn or redirect her attention to a cat toy.

Introducing your kitties to new people

If people visit your house, introducing your foster cats to them is a great way to help your felines prepare for a new home and become more **confident** in new situations.

- Make the visit short and positive.
- Have no more than one or two people join you in the kitties’ space. Too many people may be too scary and overwhelm them.
- Have the visitors sit quietly and offer treats and gentle pets.
- If the kittens hide the whole time, that is normal. Just let them get used to the people in their space and then quietly leave. Do not try and pick up the cat or bring her out of her hiding spot. It might take some longer to feel comfortable around strangers.

Introducing your foster cats to new spaces

It is a great idea to introduce your fosters to a new space in your home. Try to think of a time you went somewhere new. When you went to school for the first time, I bet the teacher gave everybody a name tag and a treat because it helped you feel more at ease. Likewise, when you bring your foster kitties to a new room in your house, give them lots of treats and play with them.

Introducing them to new sounds

Do you remember the first time you heard thunder and saw lightening? It can be scary! Cats and kittens need to be introduced to different noises so they feel less scared or startled. For example, keep music or the television at a low volume and then gradually increase it to a normal level.

Another example: Run the vacuum in another room with your kittens at a safe distance. If you need to vacuum their space, you might want to take them to a different room until they are more comfortable with the noise.

Remember the cat carrier you used when you brought your kitty home? When you are not using the carrier for transportation, leave the carrier (with the door removed or securely propped open) in your foster kittens' room. Put toys, treats and a soft blanket in the carrier to encourage the kittens to go in and spend time there.

ACTIVITY

Download our activity sheet on cat enrichment and training.

CREATE

Make an enrichment toy for your foster cat! You can use strips of fabric from an old T-shirt.

Download our **cat wand PDF** and gather your supplies.

When you have your supplies ready, watch **Family Fun! DIY Braided Cat Toy** on the Best Friends YouTube channel. Did you know that a 15-year-old girl created a website that teaches people how to make a pet toy out of recycled materials? Jasmine came to Best Friends Animal Sanctuary and held a class on making pet toys.

Learn to make more toys **here**.

READ

Curl up with your foster cat and your favorite book. If she's shy, try quietly sitting in the room and softly reading your book. It might encourage her to come out and explore. Do you want to read a new book? Check your local library for *KoKoCat, Inside and Out* written by Lynda Graham-Barber and illustrated by Nancy Lane

PLAY

Playtime is an important part of kitten development. Both cats and kittens need toys to play with so they can get physical exercise and mental stimulation. What is your favorite activity for getting your physical exercise? Do you like to ride your bike? Do you like to play softball or dodgeball?

Riding your bike is a solo activity, which means you can do it by yourself. Cats and kittens need solo toys to play with when you are not there. Your cats' solo toys could include ping pong balls, plastic shower curtain rings and safe stuffed toys.

Softball and dodgeball are interactive games that you play with other people. Many cats and kittens love toys that they play with people or fellow cats, which are called **interactive toys**. Examples are Da Bird (a feather dangling from a string) and other toys with yarn and string attached. Interactive toys are fun, but kittens should not be left alone with them since they can easily get wrapped around a kitten's neck or even be swallowed.

SHARE

Show off your braided cat toy! Create a short video of your foster cat playing with a toy that you made or another favorite toy and share it on social media (**with the permission of your parents or guardians**). If you're unable to use social media, then share it with family, friends and classmates. Be sure to add **#BFFosterCamp #BFFamilyFun** hashtags.

Remember, you are saving a life. Your foster cat is so grateful and so is Best Friends!



#BFFPetCamp