

Some Basic Rules to Avoid Cat Behavior Problems

Every home has various rules, and living with cats brings about its own sets of rules. Here is a basic list of things you should teach your kids not to do to help avoid cat behavior problems.

1. No pulling the cat's tail. There is hardly a cat alive that allows its tail to be pulled on without retaliating.
2. No throwing toys at the cat. The cat will quickly come to dislike the person who is hurting him. If the child is throwing toys, someone will need to step in and distract the child. Depending on the age of the child, she or he may or may not understand the concept of hurting and nice play. It doesn't hurt to try to explain it, but remember that kids will be kids.
3. If the cat is swishing his tail rapidly, has his ears back, or growls, it is time to leave him alone, no exceptions. Growling is an obvious indication of displeasure, but the ears back against the head and the rapidly swishing tail are also a cat's way of communicating anger and fear.
4. No picking the cat up by the neck or back (scruff) of the neck. Yes, mother cats do it, and if you know how to do this safely it is fine up until the cat reaches a certain age. But picking a cat up by the scruff of the neck should only be done when absolutely necessary (like when the cat is being aggressive). Try not to do it in front of your child, and don't let your child pick the cat up by the neck or collar – ever.
5. No screaming at the cat. Kids scream, it is what they do, but screaming at the cat will make the cat not want to play. It is very difficult to de-frighten a cat once it has been frightened by a child.
6. No holding the cat down or still. A cat that is being held tightly will respond with the only weapons he has — nails and teeth.
7. No cornering or trapping the cat. Same result as above.
8. No bothering the cat while he is in the litter box. This is essential. If the cat becomes fearful of using the litter box, you will have a big problem on your hands.
9. No using strings to play with the cat. Cats can very easily swallow strings, leading to choking or intestinal blockage. Lots of cat toys come on the ends of strings (such as wand toys), and yarn is a classic, but an adult should always be present to oversee the play when a child is playing with toys attached to string.
10. No giving the cat a bath. Same result as number 6. This is definitely an adult (preferable multiple adults) only chore.

