



PARENTS: Use these notes to teach yourself and then your children how to safely approach, pat and play with a cat.

HOW TO SAFELY APPROACH a cat



Check with an adult who knows the cat before approaching	DON'T approach a cat you don't know without checking with an adult first
Only approach cats you know or cats who belong to someone you know	DON'T approach stray or injured cats - tell an adult so they can help the cat
Be sure the cat sees you before approaching - a cat surprised by a sudden touch may get a fright	DON'T rush up and surprise cats - they will run away and learn to distrust you
Approach only if the cat is awake and shows friendly body language (see our PetSense Cat Body Language Poster)	DON'T disturb sleeping cats, or those who show frightened or anxious body language
Approach only if the cat is not eating or involved in 'frenzied' play	DON'T approach a cat who is eating or is in a state of 'frenzied' play
Approach calmly- rapid movement or loud voices may excite or frighten the cat	DON'T yell or use an overexcited voice or rush towards the cat
Approach from the side - use 'cat eyes'	DON'T overcrowd or corner the cat

HOW TO SAFELY PAT a cat



Sit calmly beside the cat, close to the cat's level	DON'T pick up the cat or force it to sit on your lap
stroke gently, in the direction of the fur, on the side of the neck, along the back, behind the ears or under the chin	DON'T stoke on the face, paws, belly or tummy (unless you know that the cat enjoys a tummy rub)
Use slow hand movements when stroking and when taking your hand away from the cat	DON'T wave your hands in front of the cat's face or make any sudden movements
Be gentle and calm while patting	DON'T poke, push or pull on any part of the cat
Keep all patting sessions to 10 minutes maximum - cats tend to get overstimulated if patting sessions go on too long	DON'T hug or kiss any cat - this is how humans show affection to other humans, not how cats show affection!

HOW TO SAFELY PLAY WITH a cat



Chasing games with scrunched paper balls, ping-pong balls and specially designed cat ball toys	DON'T use toys that make loud noises or that are overwhelming for your cat
Hiding games with clean empty cardboard boxes and/or paper bags	DON'T use plastic bags or encourage your cat to crawl into draws or cupboards (they may get stuck or forgotten!)
Homemade toys such as string attached to a stick or balls of wool	DON'T let your cat play with string toys or balls of wool unsupervised - they could get tangled
Food enrichment activities are great fun for food motivated cats (see the PetSense Fun for Cats Fact Sheet)	DON'T rough-house with the cat or play 'attack' games - this will only teach your cat that being aggressive with humans is okay (which it's NOT!)