



Teaching Your Cat to Wear a Harness

Your indoor cat may enjoy supervised trips outdoors with the security of a harness. Here are some tips for teaching your cat to be comfortable wearing a harness.

Choosing a harness:

Choose an H-type harness or a walking jacket (<http://www.catwalkingjacket.com>).

Note: Figure-eight type harnesses are not secure.

Adjust the harness so when it is on the cat you can place two fingers between the cat and the harness. For a larger cat, you may need to buy a harness made for a small dog.

Getting your cat used to the harness:

Expect some strange behavior when you first put the harness on. Most cats initially dislike the feeling of the harness, so you'll want to distract your cat in some way while the harness is on. You can put the harness on him at feeding time and have him wear it for a few minutes while he is eating; or play a favorite game with him while he is wearing it or just give him a tasty treat. Keep your sessions to a few minutes. Make each subsequent session with the harness longer. Once the cat is wearing the harness for extended periods of time (ten minutes or more) and acting normally, you can add a leash.

NOTES:

- Don't leave the cat in a harness unsupervised.
- Remember to associate the harness with good things – play, food or treats.
- Start out with short session – two minutes or 10 treats at the most.
- Be patient – your cat will eventually come to accept the harness.

Getting used to the leash:

Your cat should be comfortable wearing a harness for 10 to 15 minutes before starting to work on leash training. Start in a quiet, safe place. Attach a six- to eight-foot, lightweight leash to the harness (never attach a leash to the cat's collar). Wait patiently until there is no tension on the leash, then give your cat a 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.

NOTES:

- Be aware that walking a cat on a leash 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.

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