



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. Figure-eight type harness are not as secure and not recommended.

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

You can expect some strange behavior if you just put the harness on without first helping your cat get used to it. Most cats initially dislike the feeling of the harness, so you'll want to go slowly.

First start by letting your cat investigate the harness without actually having it on. Leave it around your house in your cat's normal lounging areas and give your cat treats when she sniffs it or interacts with it in any way. This will help her start to build a positive association with the harness so she's excited about it.

Once your cat is comfortable around the harness, you can start to put the harness on your cat. Don't buckle it all the way, just drape it over her so she can get used to the feeling. Continue giving your cat treats. You can also put the harness on right before meal times to continue building that positive association. Keep your sessions to a few minutes. Make each subsequent session with the harness longer, buckling it when your cat is comfortable. 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 sessions—two minutes or 10 treats at the most.
- Be patient—this process can take weeks or longer.

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 she is not pulling, allow her to move around with the leash on, following her to prevent tension on the leash.

- Be aware that walking a cat on a leash is different from walking a dog. Sometimes you can ask her to follow you using your "let's go" cue. Other times, you will follow her allowing her to sniff and explore.
- Keep your walks short at first—10 to 15 minutes.
- Carry treats to reward good behavior.