

My Cat is Aggressive

Curbing your cat's unwanted aggression

Inside every soft and cuddly cat is a wild animal just waiting to pounce! To understand and change your cat's unwanted aggression, you need to know what's behind it.

Predatory behavior

Cats are natural hunters that like to track and kill. Predatory behavior, such as lying in wait and suddenly pouncing on a real or imaginary creature, is all part of the internal wiring of your cat. This is fine until the imaginary creature becomes your ankle.

Redirect this play aggression with toys designed to allow your cat to pounce and bite safely, far away from your toes and ankles. Sufficient exercise and play should reduce your cat's need to attack inappropriate prey (such as you)!

Territory

Sometimes even laid-back, mellow cats turn aggressive to protect what they consider their territory. Examples of this are sweet mama cats that lunge out to protect their kittens, or the laid-back cat that suddenly attacks when she spies the neighbor's dog in the backyard.

Both cases can be helped by introducing the "intruder" to the cat's situation carefully, over time, showing your cat that nothing bad is going to happen when the "bad guy" enters her territory.

Fear

Cats can become aggressive out of fear. This could stem from rough handling or improper socialization during kittenhood. Cats that have not experienced being restrained until they are several years old may be more aggressive than a kitten that is handled often while still young.

Overstimulation or excitement can also cause aggression. Sometimes, too much is not a good thing. Cats have a threshold of stimulation—go beyond it, and your cat will let you know! Learn what your cat's limits are and try not to press beyond them. For example, if she likes to be stroked or groomed for just a few minutes, don't extend it to five.

Managing your cat's aggression

Experts agree that these are some of the best ways to manage an aggressive cat:

- Consult your veterinarian regarding how to more peacefully interact with your cat.
- Talk to your veterinarian about a proper diet for your cat.
- Play games (such as a fake mouse on a fishing line) that encourage the cat to hunt and pounce safely.
- If your cat wants to play rough, stop playing with her and walk away.
- Remove the stress from your cat's changing environment as much as you can.
- Make sure your cat is [spayed or neutered](#).
- Alert visitors about what to expect from your cat!

If you have any questions or concerns, you should always visit or call your veterinarian – they are your best resource to ensure the health and well-being of your pets.