Feline Exercise

There are more and more indoor cats (which is a good thing), but because of this, their human companions need to be more involved in finding things to occupy their time. Although cats do like their naps, they also like to keep active. In the wild, cats spend their time hunting, looking for mates, grooming and protecting territory, not lounging around all day. See Cat Behavior for more information. Cats, like dogs and other small animals, can become obese if not exercised both mentally and physically.

The biggest challenge is finding what works for your particular cat. I have five Bengal cats – they all play a little different. One likes to bring me her toys to chase and loves to jump in the air. I have a blind cat that loves shoe laces and is 'dead on' chasing it on the floor. My male loves laser pointers and attacking sticks under a throw rug. My other two will wait for me to start playing and join in whatever game is being played at the moment (and usually take over).

Some cats have never ending energy and rather play then sleep, while others will play in short spurts. There are cats that are height seekers and may love a laser pointer going up a tall cat pole, while others like to stay on the ground and hunt their 'prey'. The biggest challenge for some is to find out what their particular pet likes.

Leash Training

Many cats can be trained to walk on a harness/leash. Just remember, they do not walk like a dog on a leash, they walk you - you're just there to make sure they do not get into any trouble. Most cats should be walked in a quiet area, not down the boulevard where there is lots of commotion and other animals that may spook the cat. If you are going beyond your own yard to a woodsy area, make sure your feline is protected against fleas/ticks/mosquitoes and kept away from poisonous plants. For suggestions on how to start leash training, go to Lost Temple Pets Cat Chart Description.

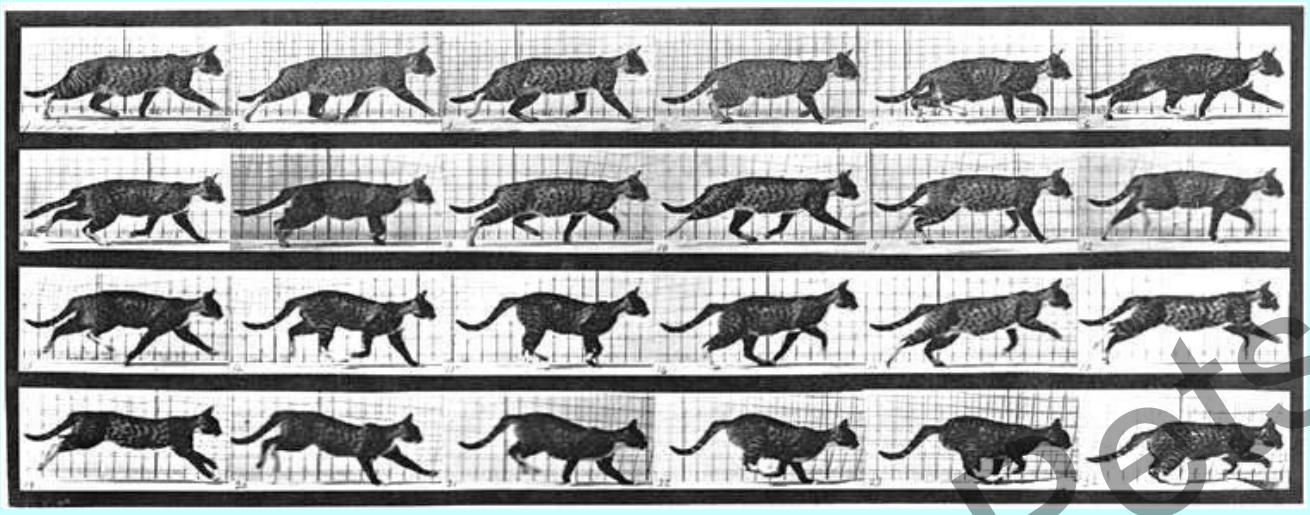
Cat Agility

Like dog agility, cats can be taught to jump through hoops and tunnels, weave poles, climb up stairs and jump over a fence. The difference is that the handler is allowed to use laser pointers or their favorite string toy to entice them through the course – not food.

The cat should be athletic, and in good physical shape. Like any sport, you should bring your feline to the vet immediately if they are showing any changes in gait (walking) or personality. The cat should be toy motivated and enjoy playing, as food is not allowed in the ring. Most of all, if your cat is shy and does not enjoy being out in strange environments, don't force the cat into this stressful situation, but please keep playing at home, if this is something your cat enjoys. Not only should your cat love running, jumping and playing, but also love new environments and be interactive with people. There are many clubs for more information, including ICAT, *International Cat Agility Tournaments.*

Rules: The cat should be at least 3 calendar months old for most events (although training can start at any age). Felines/handlers are in a minimum 20'x20' enclosure with wall heights of 5-6'. Depending on the sponsored event, there can be 6 or more obstacles, including hoops, hurdles, tunnels, stairs and weave poles. The times starts when the cats paws hit the first obstacle and end at the last. Points are add for each item completed and bonus points for the course run completely in the correct order. Maximum of anywhere from 3 to 4 ½ minutes depending on the association running the event. The handler is not allowed to touch the cat at any time. For a complete summary of the rules by the *Cat Fanciers Association (CFA)* visit *ICAT.*

Locomotion



Cats walk directly on their toes, with the bones of their feet making up the lower part of the visible leg.

Unlike most mammals, when cats walk, they use a "pacing" gait; that is, they move the two legs on one side of the body before the legs on the other side.

Cats place each hind paw (almost) directly in the print of the corresponding forepaw, minimizing noise and visible tracks. This also provides sure footing for their hind paws when they navigate rough terrain.

As a walk speeds up into a trot, a cat's gait will change to be a "diagonal" gait, similar to other mammals: the diagonally opposite hind and forelegs will move simultaneously.

Cats have protractible claws. Cats can voluntarily extend their claws on one or more paws. They may extend their claws in hunting or self-defense, climbing, "kneading", or for extra traction on soft surfaces.

Most cats have five claws on their front paws, and four on their rear paws. The fifth front claw (the dewclaw) is proximal to the other claws. More proximally, there is a protrusion which appears to be a sixth "finger". This special feature of the front paws, on the inside of the wrists, is the carpal pad, also found on the paws of big cats and dogs. It has no function in normal walking, but is thought to be an anti-skidding device used while jumping.

Some breeds of cats are prone to polydactylyism, and may have eight or even ten toes. These are particularly common along the North-East coast of North America.
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cat

Feline Muscle and Skeletal Anatomy

Cats have 7 cervical vertebrae, 13 thoracic vertebrae (humans have 12), 7 lumbar vertebrae (humans have 5), 3 sacral vertebrae (humans have 5 because of their bipedal posture), and a variable number of caudal vertebrae in the tail (humans retain 3 to 5 caudal vertebrae, fused into an internal coccyx).

The extra lumbar and thoracic vertebrae account for the cat's spinal mobility and flexibility.

Attached to the spine are 13 ribs, the shoulder, and the pelvis.

Unlike human arms, cat forelimbs are attached to the shoulder by free-floating clavicle bones, which allow them to pass their body through any space into which they can fit their heads.
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cat

Temperature

Cats are able to tolerate quite high temperatures: humans generally start to feel uncomfortable when their skin temperature passes about 44.5 °C (112 °F), but cats show no discomfort until their skin reaches around 52 °C (126 °F), and can tolerate temperatures of up to 56 °C (133 °F) if they have access to water.

Cats conserve heat by reducing the flow of blood to their skin and lose heat by evaporation through their mouth. They do not sweat, and pant only at very high temperatures.

Unusually, a cat's body temperature does not vary throughout the day; this is part of cats' general lack of circadian rhythms and may reflect their tendency to be active both during the day and at night.

Cats' feces are usually dry and their urine is also highly concentrated, both of which are adaptations that allow cats to retain as much fluid as possible. Their kidneys are so efficient that cats can survive on a diet consisting only of meat, with no additional water, and can even rehydrate by drinking seawater.

Nutrition

Cats are obligate carnivores: their physiology has evolved to efficiently process meat, and they have difficulty digesting plant matter with about 20% of their diet being protein.

Cats need amino acid *arginine,* and a diet lacking arginine causes marked weight loss and can be rapidly fatal.

Cats cannot produce the amino acid *taurine*. Taurine deficiency can cause macular degeneration, where the cat's retina slowly degenerates, causing irreversible blindness.

Since cats tend to eat all of their prey, they obtain minerals by digesting animal bones, and a diet composed only of meat may cause *calcium* deficiency.

Senses - Vision, Hearing, Smell, Taste

VISION	**Cats have excellent night vision and can see at only one-sixth the light level required for human vision.** **Domestic cats have slit pupils. At low light levels a cat's pupils will expand to cover most of the exposed surface of its eyes.** **Domestic cats have rather poor color vision and have only two types of cones, optimized for sensitivity to blue and yellowish green. They have limited ability to distinguish between red and green, although they can achieve this in some conditions.**
HEARING	**They can hear higher-pitched sounds than either dogs or humans, detecting frequencies from 55 Hz up to 79 kHz, a range of 10.5 octaves; while humans can only hear from 31 Hz up to 18 kHz, and dogs hear from 67 Hz to 44 kHz, which are both ranges of about 9 octaves.** **Cats do not use this ability to hear ultrasound for communication but it is probably important in hunting, since many species of rodents make ultrasonic calls.** **Cat hearing is extremely sensitive and is among the best of any mammal, being most acute in the range of 500 Hz to 32 kHz.** **Cat's have large movable outer ears (their pinnae), which both amplify sounds and help a cat sense the direction from which a noise is coming.**
SMELL	**Cats have an acute sense of smell, which is due in part to their well-developed olfactory bulb and also to a large surface of olfactory mucosa, in cats this mucosa is about 5.8 cm2 in area, which is about twice that of humans and only 1.7-fold less than the average dog.** **Cats are very sensitive to pheromones such as 3-mercapto-3-methylbutan-1-ol, which they use to communicate through urine spraying and marking with scent glands.** **Cats also respond strongly to plants that contain nepetalactone, especially catnip, as they can detect that substance at less than one part per billion. This response is also produced by other plants, such as Silver Vine and *valerian*, and may be caused by the smell of these plants mimicking a pheromone and stimulating cats' social or sexual behaviors.**
TASTE	**Cats have relatively few taste buds compared to humans. Owing to a mutation in an early cat ancestor, one of two genes necessary to taste sweetness may have been lost by the cat family.** **Their taste buds instead respond to amino acids, bitter tastes and acids.**
WHISKERS	**To aid with navigation and sensation, cats have dozens of movable vibrissae (whiskers) over their body, especially their face.** **These provide information on the width of gaps and on the location of objects in the dark, both by touching objects directly and by sensing air currents; they also trigger protective blink reflexes to protect the eyes from damage. *http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cat***