

Chinchilla Training 101

Training your chinchilla might be more difficult than expected.

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Wouldn't a dancing chinchilla be the cutest thing ever, or a chinchilla that can jump through flaming hoops of fire? Chinchillas are very talented and intelligent pets, but you might find that training them to do mystical tricks of wonder more difficult than expected. Chinchillas can be taught some things, but training them to do tricks for entertainment should probably be left to the dogs.

OK, It Can Learn Its Name

Chinchillas don't have a need to learn tricks, so they won't. However, they are creatures of habit, so they will learn their names through repetition. Over time, your chinchilla will get used to you calling it a certain name. When it's playing and you say its name, it will look up at you and understand that you are talking to it.

Chinchillas memorize where things are placed around the room and its cage. Once it knows the layout of the cage, it will be able to zip around with extreme efficiency. It will also learn where its food is stored. If you keep treats under the cabinet across the room from its cage, every time you walk by the cabinet, it will know you are getting a treat.

Because chinchillas are creatures of habit, you must keep them on a set routine. Drew Carter, a chinchilla owner in York, Pa., said that he always gives his pet chinchilla a treat after out-of-cage playtime. His chinchilla knows this, so if it doesn't receive a treat, it gets a little fussy. Give your chinchilla a routine, and it will be very happy.

OK, It Might Learn To Be Litter Box Trained

Litter-box training is difficult for chinchillas, and will rarely be successful. However, chinchillas will urinate in the same spot in their cage for years. You can put a litter box in the same spot your chinchilla likes to urinate, and it will go in the box. If you move the box, the chinchilla will continue to urinate in its habitual urination spot. Using a litter box makes cleaning easier.

Every chinchilla is different. Some will learn things that others won't. The important thing to remember is that training a chinchilla takes time. Carter said that training a chinchilla takes patience. "Small steps, is the only way to train."

Try to train your chinchilla to jump through a flaming hoop if you want. Take small steps, and hope that your chinchilla will want to one day become a circus super star.