

MEALTIME INTENSITY

Dealing with a cat that is intense around mealtimes can be challenging, but with some behavior management, you can create a more relaxed and positive feeding environment. Here are some tips to help you manage this behavior:

- **Establish a Feeding Routine:** Create a consistent feeding schedule for your cat. Cats thrive on routine, and knowing when to expect meals can help reduce their intensity around mealtimes.
- **Divide Meals into Smaller Portions:** Consider dividing your cat's daily food portion into smaller, more frequent meals. This can help satisfy their hunger without encouraging excessive anticipation.
- **Interactive Feeders:** Use puzzle feeders or other interactive feeding toys to make mealtime more engaging. This not only slows down their eating but also provides mental stimulation, reducing mealtime intensity.
- **Hide and Seek:** Hide small portions of your cat's food around the house or use food-dispensing toys to encourage them to "hunt" for their meals. This taps into their natural hunting instincts and adds an element of fun to the feeding routine.
- **Mealtime Calmness:** Stay calm during mealtimes and avoid reinforcing intense behavior by yelling or reacting strongly. If your cat is overly excited, wait for them to calm down before providing the meal.
- **Ignore Attention-Seeking Behavior:** If your cat tries to get your attention excessively before mealtimes, ignore them until they calm down. Reward calm behavior with attention and food, reinforcing the idea that calmness is more effective in getting what they want.
- **Pre-Meal Playtime:** Engage your cat in interactive play sessions before meals. This helps burn off excess energy, making them more relaxed during mealtimes.

Playtime before a meal will mimic what a cat would be doing in the wild. For them, playtime is defined as "Hunt, Catch, Kill, Eat, Groom, Sleep" They will hunt/chase/catch/claw/bite their prey(toy), then you can feed them their meal.

- **Gradual Introductions:** If you're introducing a new type of food, do so gradually to avoid creating a sense of urgency or excitement. Mix the new food with their current one and slowly increase the ratio over several days.
- **Consistency is Key:** Be consistent in your approach to feeding. Any changes to the routine should be introduced gradually to avoid causing stress or excitement.
- **Consult a Veterinarian:** If your cat's intensity around mealtimes is excessive or if there are sudden changes in their behavior, consult with a veterinarian. Medical issues, such as hyperthyroidism, can sometimes manifest as increased appetite and intense behavior.

By implementing these tips and being patient and consistent, you can help your cat develop healthier mealtime habits and create a more harmonious feeding environment.