



## Your Talkative Cat

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Vocalizing is one way for your cat to communicate with you and with other animals. Some cats “talk” more than others, but most cats do make noise some of the time. We’re all familiar with the meaning of hissing and growling, but there are also many other sounds that your cat is capable of, and a variety of reasons for vocalizing.

### Medical Reasons

If your cat’s behavior changes suddenly, the first thing you should do is take her to your veterinarian for a thorough health examination. Cats can be pros at hiding symptoms of illness, until they’re seriously ill. Any change in behavior may be an early indication of a medical problem. A new vocalizing behavior, in particular, may indicate physical discomfort stemming from an urgent need for medical attention.

### Breed Tendency

Oriental breeds, such as the Siamese, are known to be very vocal. If your cat has a pointed face and a long, lean body, chances are she has some oriental heritage, so “talking” may be a part of her character. Avoid giving her any attention when she is vocal because this will only encourage the vocal behavior. Instead, give her attention when she is quiet.

### Attention-Seeking Behavior

Some cats “talk” because they know they’ll get a reaction. People may talk back, feed her, yell at her, pick her up and lock her in another room, or pick her up and soothe her. All of these responses will encourage attention-seeking behaviors.

To discourage this behavior, simply ignore your cat when she does this, and when she is quiet pour on the love, feed her or give her some treats. This will teach your cat which behaviors you would like her to continue. This may take time so don’t give up.

### Your Cat Wants To Go Outside

If your cat was previously an outdoor cat and you plan to keep her inside, here are some suggestions to help make the transition easier on both of you:

- Spaying/neutering will rid your cat of those hormonal urges to go out and seek a mate. This will result in a calmer, friendlier cat.
- Play Schedule: Schedule play times during the times your cat would normally be outside. This will distract her from her normal routine and establish another, safer routine.
- Window Perch: Be sure your cat has a view of the outdoors and a sunny place to lie. Cats like to watch birds, so putting a bird feeder outside this window is likely to make it a favorite spot for your cat.
- Scavenger Hunt: Give your cat a game to play by hiding bits of dry food around the house. Hide the food in paper bags, boxes and behind open doors. This will give her exercise and keep her busy so she doesn't think of going outside. This is especially good to do right before the family leaves the house for the day.
- Attention: Try to give your cat extra love and attention during this difficult transition.
- Aversives: If your cat still won't give up meowing by the door, try an aversive. Leave strong citrus scents by the door or hide behind a wall and shake a pop can filled with coins to interrupt the behavior. When she is quiet, walk out and give her a food treat and encourage her to play or cuddle.
- Build a “Catio:” These outdoor enclosures can allow cats to enjoy the outdoors safely.

Behavior Help Line (503)416-2983

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## **Grief**

Sometimes after the death or departure of a person or animal in your cat's life, she will vocalize to express her grief. This can be a normal part of the grieving process. The best thing you can do for her is keep her schedule the same (or as close as possible) and spend some extra cuddle and playtime with her. With time, this problem should take care of itself.

## **Transition**

Your cat is new to your home or has just gone through a change (move, new person/animal in the household, person moved out) and has just started her talkative behavior. Be patient. This may be happening due to the transition and will stop on its own if the behavior is not encouraged. Remember, even scolding can be perceived by your cat as attention and thus encourage the behavior.

## **Early Morning Activities**

Your cat may be most active at the wee hours of the morning. 4 – 6am is a common time for cats to be active. Many people complain about their cat vocalizing at this time of day, which may wake the people. Since this is a normal behavior for a cat, the suggestions below are given to help reduce the impact of the behavior and are not intended to prevent it.

- Exercise the cat before bed, until the cat is very tired. You'll know the cat is tired by her choosing to stop play. Especially useful toys are wand toys or other toys that require little human exertion.
- Add catnip with those evening games. Sometimes catnip can help the cat sleep longer, perhaps even through the night.
- Once the cat is very tired, bring her to bed with you. This action tells the cat, "it's time for sleep now."
- Be sure the cat's bowl has food in it for the night. Many cats like to wake at 4am and hunt or feed, so just providing food may keep the cat quiet.
- As an alternative to simply providing food in a bowl, you may hide dry cat food around the house, preferably away from your bedroom. Perhaps put a few pieces of dry cat food inside a paper bag, under a sofa, beneath a piece of newspaper so it can be "found," or inside a cardboard box that may take a bit of effort to climb into; the purpose is to provide a hunting aspect to the nighttime activity. You may need to provide some that are easier to find until he figures out the game.
- Only if you were considering it anyway, you may try getting a second cat. There's no guarantee this will solve the problem. It may create more problems, but many people report that the two cats play so the humans can sleep.