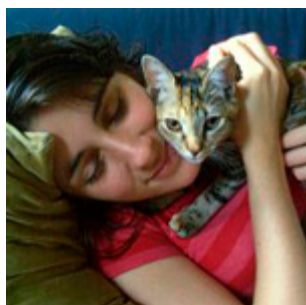


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## ANIMAL CAREERS



### Katie Watts

*Feline Behavior Counselor*

All kitty lovers will agree—Katie Watts has the best job ever! As the ASPCA's Senior Feline Behavior Counselor, she gets to hang out and talk to cats all day. She also gets to help potential pet parents find the best kitty for their household. How did she score that gig? Check out our interview with Katie to find out

how you, too, can spend your days helping animals when you grow up.

### What do you do every day in your job, Katie?

"I work with lots and lots of cats! I make sure all the cats are happy while they're at our shelter, and if a cat has a behavior problem, I try to figure out exactly what's going on and try to help. I also talk to adopters, both before and after they take a cat home."

### How did you get involved in helping animals?

"I think I must have been born loving animals. My mom tells me I used to sit on the front porch and talk to one of the neighborhood dogs, and it looked like he understood what I was saying! As soon as I was old enough, I started volunteering at my local shelter."

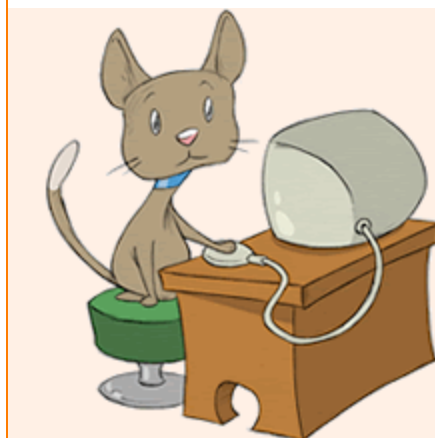
### What skills and education do you need to be a feline behavior counselor?

"The most important thing is to get lots of hands-on experience with as many different cats as possible. That way you can really learn what cats are trying to communicate with their body language and behavior. Many colleges offer classes in animal behavior, and a strong background in science is really helpful, too."

### What's the best part of your job?

"I love helping really shy or behaviorally challenged cats learn how to

Veterinarian  
 Lawyer/Lobbyist  
 Pet Therapy Handler  
 Photographer  
 HLE Officer  
 Arachnologist  
 Biology Major  
 Zookeeper  
 Director of Public Information  
 Feline Behavior Counselor



trust people. We see a lot of scared cats—when I can help them learn that people aren't so bad and help them find loving, forever homes, it's all worth it."

### **What's the hardest part of your job?**

"It's always hard when a cat gets adopted and starts having behavior problems. Sometimes the problems aren't fixable, and the adopter has to return the cat. It's difficult to hear how frustrating and sad it is for them to have to bring the cats back, but sometimes it's the best solution for everyone."

### **Do you have any advice for kids who'd like to work with animals when they get older?**

"Take every opportunity you can to work with animals and learn about them—volunteering is a terrific place to start! When I was growing up, I thought I wanted to be a veterinarian, but through my volunteer experience, I learned that a career in animal behavior was a better fit for me."

### **Do you have any pets at home? What are their names?**

"I have two cats named Madeline and Ingrid. They're three years old and sisters. I also have a small mixed-breed dog named Franklin. They all get along well, but sometimes the cats like to tease Franklin. I think they're the best animals ever, but I may be a bit biased!"