

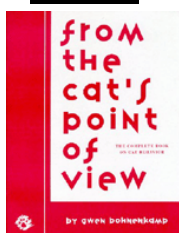
What Indoor Cats Need

To enrich the lives of indoor cats, we have developed this "resource checklist"; and some suggestions for making changes.

✓ **Informed Owners**

As an owner, one of the most important things you can do for you cat is to educate yourself about feline idiosyncrasies. These resources will help you do just that.

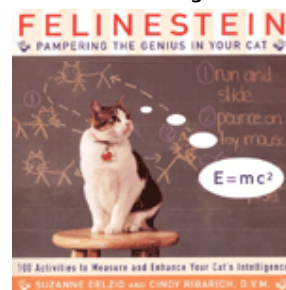
Books



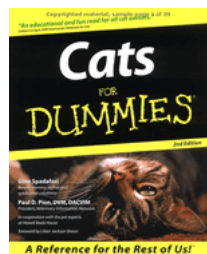
From the Cat's Point of View answers nearly every question the new cat owner could have and gives the experienced cat owner a look at life from the other side of the scratching post. If you only get one book, get this one!

Research has proven that you can make your cat smarter. Whether your cat is gifted or intellectually challenged, you can help him become a certified Felinestein -- a more effective communicator, better problem solver, and faster learner.

Felinestein includes 100 games and activities, some for every type of owner and every personality of cat, that will get your cat exploring, thinking, and making decisions. Incorporating just a few of these challenges into your cat's life will spark his brain power and enrich his life. Most importantly, it will help the two of you bond on a whole new level.



Gina Spadafori, Universal Press Syndicate pet care columnist and host of AOL's "Gina Spadafori's Pet Connection," follows her educational and entertaining book Dogs for Dummies with Cats for Dummies, which she co-authors with Paul Pion, D.V.M., D.A.C.V.I.M., president of the Veterinary Information Network. If you own a cat or are considering cat ownership, Cats for Dummies is a book you'll want to look at. This educational, comprehensive, and entertaining book is probably the closest you'll get to a cat "owners' manual."



✓ **Litter Boxes**

Provide ***At least*** one litter box per cat plus one and clean them daily.

Introduction

Elimination is a basic need for our feline friends. When we house them indoors it is crucial that we provide a place to eliminate that the cat finds attractive. The goal to keep in mind is to provide positive litter box experiences so the cat will continue to use the boxes provided. Cats will avoid anything that has been associated with a negative experience. If your cat has difficulties getting to or into the box, if something startles him while he is using the box, or if he has a negative experience while leaving the box he may avoid that box in the future.

Understanding the natural elimination habits of cats will help prevent problems from developing. Most cats are meticulously clean; they cover their waste and try to eliminate in areas that have not been used before. And although cats eliminate in response to basic biological drives, they also use eliminations to mark their territory. To meet their territorial needs, a good rule to follow is to provide one litter pan per cat plus one in a household. A litter box also should be located on every level of a multi-level home. Multiple boxes provide cats with appropriate places to eliminate and mark territory without offending you or other cats in the household.

The box

There are many shapes, sizes and styles of litter boxes on the market. By taking a little time, considering your cat and your home, you can find ones that work for both of you. Litter boxes need to be big enough for cats to enter and move around in. Larger pans are better because they provide a bigger area for the cat to eliminate in without stepping in the old eliminations, (remember that cats are meticulously clean and do not like getting themselves soiled.) Kittens, older cats and cats with health problems may need accommodations to permit easy entry and exit from the box.

Deciding on what type of litter box to use also can be a challenge. Uncovered boxes have easier accessibility, but may not provide the privacy some cats desire. A covered box may be more attractive to them, but it will need to be scooped and cleaned more often to keep it appealing to the cat. If you are not sure which box your cat prefers, provide both and keep using the one the cat chooses. If your cat uses both then keep both. If you do use a covered pan, never store the scooper or anything on the cover that could fall and startle the cat. Make sure the lid is secure so it can't move and startle the cat while she is using the box. If you need to change box type



Cat Box Rules

1. One box per cat, + 1.
2. Big enough to use easily
3. Unscented, clumping litter
4. Locate for safety and privacy.
5. KEEP IT CLEAN

(or litter type), offer the new box or litter beside the old one and let the cat tell you which she prefers.

Choosing litter

There are many different types of litter on the market that you may use. Always consider your cat whenever purchasing products. Once you find a litter that your cat likes, stick with it. Abrupt changes can result in the cat not using the litter box. Research has shown that most cats prefer fine-grained litters; scoopable litters usually have finer grains than clay litters. Many cats prefer unscented litters, and are put off by the odor of scented or deodorant litters. This is also a good reason not to place room deodorizers or air fresheners near the box.

Your cat's health may be a consideration when choosing a litter. Cats with upper respiratory infections, asthma, or other breathing problems will need a dust-free substrate. After surgical procedures, you may need to change the substrate in the litter box for a short period of time if your veterinarian prescribes it. During this time, you may want to consider placing the new substrate in another litter box where the original litter boxes were, and carefully observe the cat's response to the change. When it is time to return to the original substrate, put the litter pans with the substrate back in their original locations and observe your cat for any problems using them.

How much litter to use

Some cats prefer lots of litter, whereas others want very little. You can determine your cat's preference by filling the box half way, then tipping it so the amount varies from shallow at one end to deep at the other end. Observe where the cat deposits her eliminations, toward the shallow or deep end, and proceed to fill the box to that level.

Location

Litter boxes need to be placed in areas that provide easy access for the cat, while providing some privacy and a clear escape route. They must be located away from appliances and air ducts that could come on unexpectedly, and in an area that another animal or human cannot sneak up on your cat and startle her while she is "doing her business". If you place the box in an area that has a door, you will need to wedge the door open to prevent the cat from getting trapped in the area. These factors should be considered for all areas where you place a litter box. You may want to place a rug or placemat under the litter pan to avoid scattered litter around the box, to make it easier to keep the area clean.

Cleaning

Litter pans need to be scooped daily. Clean the litter pans once a week with water and a non-scented soap. Weekly cleaning is just a general

guideline; if you have more than one cat, or if circumstances dictate, then you may need to clean the boxes more often. Never use ammonia or strong smelling cleaners for this job. A cat's urine contains ammonia compounds and strong cleaner's may be toxic to the cat. A thin layer of baking soda placed on the bottom of the box will help absorb odors without repelling your cat between scoopings. Odor shouldn't be a problem if the litter box is kept clean. If you find the odor offensive, your cat may also find it offensive and not want to eliminate there.

✓ **Scratching**



You already know that cats like to scratch, but why and how can you encourage "proper" scratching? Scratching is a natural behavior for cats. Cats scratch to stretch their muscles, shed old cuticles, sharpen their claws, and leave scent marks. Even when declawed, cats retain the instinct to scratch. Scratching posts provide cats with an outlet for their instinct to scratch while at the same time saving your furniture and carpets! To choose the right scratching

post for your cat, consider the following:

What does your cat like to scratch?

Choose a scratching post that is similar to the material your cat most likes to scratch. Most, but not all, cats prefer scratching posts made out of rough material they can shred. Sisal (a coarse natural fiber) scratching posts are ideal because they are satisfying to scratch and tough enough to stand up to repeated use. Vertical (upright) and horizontal (flat) scratching posts are available in a variety of sizes and materials including sisal, carpet and cardboard. Cats that scratch chair legs or the corners of your couch may prefer a vertical scratching post. Make sure that vertical scratching posts are tall enough so your cat can stretch up while she scratches. Cats that scratch rugs and carpets may prefer a horizontal scratching post or mat. Scratching posts should be stabilized to ensure that they don't move or tip over and scare your cat while she is using them.

Where does your cat scratch?

Cats scratch to leave scent marks that define their territory and tell other cats they have passed through. They will often scratch prominent objects near sleeping areas and room entrances. Therefore, scratching posts should be located in these and other "public" parts of the house that the whole family uses. In multi-cat households there should be several scratching posts, both vertical and horizontal, located throughout the house. These posts should be placed in areas where the cats congregate and along

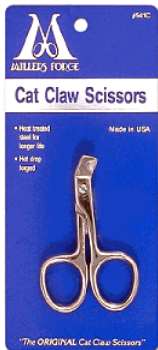
their routes to common areas such as food and water bowls, and litter boxes. Setting up multiple scratching posts provides the cats with an acceptable place to leave their mark without ruining furniture and carpets.

What if my cat won't use the scratching post?

Considering your cat's demonstrated preferences, substitute similar objects for her to scratch. Place the scratching post near the object you want the cat to stop scratching. Cover the inappropriate objects with something your cat will find unappealing, such as double sided sticky tape, aluminum foil, sheets of sandpaper or a piece of plastic carpet runner with the pointy side up. You may give the objects an objectionable odor by attaching cotton balls soaked with a citrus scent or perfume. Don't use anything that could harm the cat if she ingests it though, and be careful with strong odors because you don't want the nearby acceptable objects to be associated with the unpleasant smell.

When your cat is consistently using the scratching post, it can be moved very gradually (no more than a few inches each day) to a location more suitable to you. It's best, however, to keep the scratching post as close to your cat's preferred scratching locations as possible.

Trimming your cat's nails



Nail trims are an easy, and often overlooked, way to reduce damage from scratching. You can clip off the sharp tips of your cat's claws as often as necessary. There are several types of nail trimmers designed especially for cats. These are better than your own nail clippers because they won't crush the nail bed.

Before trimming your cat's claws, accustom her to having her paws handled and squeezed. You can do this by gently petting her legs and paws while giving her a treat to make it a more pleasant experience (it helps to do this before feeding while you're training her). Gradually increase the pressure so that petting becomes gentle squeezing, as you'll need to do this to extend the claw. Continue with the treats until your cat tolerates having her feet handled.

When she is ready, apply a small amount of pressure to the cat's paw, with your thumb on top of her paw and your index finger underneath, until a claw is extended. Near the cat's nail bed you should be able to see a pink area, called the "quick", which contains small blood vessels. **Don't** cut into the pink portion of the nail because it will bleed and be painful for the cat. Cut off just the sharp tip to dull the claw.

Veins(as you can see in this picture)



Go slowly with your cat or she may become fearful of having her nails trimmed. To begin with, trim just one foot (or nail) each day. As your cat becomes accustomed to having her nails clipped you can trim all four feet at the same time.

If you prefer not to trim your cat's nails, you can purchase soft plastic caps that fit over the nail. Nail caps are available under the brand name Soft Paws and are available in a variety of sizes and colors. For more information on nail caps please visit www.catscratching.com.

✓ **Resting Areas**

It may *seem* like all they do is sleep, but there is a method behind cats' narcoleptic tendencies.



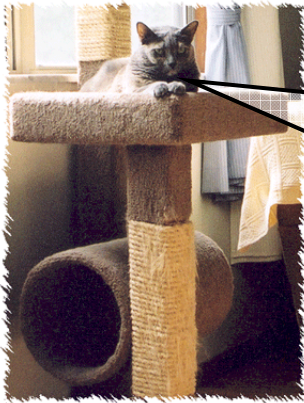
Cats are at their most vulnerable while sleeping, so they prefer to rest in areas where they feel safe and secure. Desirable resting areas typically are quiet, comfortable locations where the cat can get away from other members of the family. Your cat may choose to get out of the way by resting on top of the kitchen cupboards or under the bed, or she may like to sleep curled up in her cat tree or on your bed or sofa.

Owners who prefer the cat to stay off of the bed and other furniture can encourage the cat to rest elsewhere by providing a refuge in a quiet part of the house. A refuge is a less-traveled or out-of-the-way area of the home where the cat has access to all of the necessities; a bed, food, water, a litter box, a scratching post, perch, and toys (see Pg 5 for a detailed description of a **refuge**). Cat beds can be purchased, but snug blankets and towels are just as appealing to cats and are easy to wash. The refuge should be a place where your cat feels safe and comfortable, for example a bedroom or back room. Your cat can retreat to her refuge whenever she wants to rest.

Wherever your cat chooses to rest it is important not to disturb her. Just as you may not want to be bothered while you are asleep or resting, neither does your cat. Respect your cat's privacy when she is resting and she will be more likely to seek you out when she is ready to interact.

✓ Perches

Everyone likes a pleasant view, and cats are no exception.



"I need to know what is going on around me. I am curious. I am a cat. I can hear sounds coming from outside and smell lots of strange things, so I need to see what is happening out there. I want to know that I am safe. If I can hear it and smell it but can't see it, it might frighten me."

Cats like to climb, so a perch provides a safe and private place to watch the action from above. A perch is anything that allows your cat to lie, sit, sleep or look outside from above. A perch is a *must* have for your cat. Perches come in a wide variety of shapes and sizes. You can get perches that attach to a windowsill or you could custom build a perch. More than one perch is great so your cat can look outside at different angles. You can even place a couch, sofa, chair, or sturdy table in front of a window, so your cat can look outside. If you really want to get creative, you can make the scenery more attractive by hanging a bird feeder in the yard and/or plant pretty flowers to attract bees, butterflies, and other insects. This will keep your cat interested and she may sit on her perch for hours looking outside.

"I may feel safer if I can sleep somewhere high. If you are having a problem with finding a suitable area for a perch, watch me and I will show you where I feel comfortable, usually by curling up in a ball and falling asleep."



If you prefer an area different than where your cat chooses, you will need to offer her treats and kind words as you coax her to or place her in the area you *would* like for her to use. Cats respond better if you *entice* to *encourage* the behaviors you want rather than *reprimand* to *discourage* those you don't want (don't we all?).

✓ Toys - Cats need recreation too!

- **Identifying your cat's toy (prey) preference**

There are many different kinds of toys for cats that you can buy, or make yourself. **Cats like toys that do something.** Toys that squeak, chirp, jitter, swing or vibrate remind them of moving meals, enticing them to interact. The first toy you might try is a furry mouse that makes noise and moves. Some even have catnip in them! You can just roll it past your cat on the floor to catch her attention; she'll let you know if it looks like lunch. Each cat is an individual; some like some toys better than others, so just offer a few and they will show you what they like!



"My ancestors had to hunt insects, birds, mice, and other small animals to survive. They had to catch 10 or 20 of these morsels every day, so they had to be ready to pounce at a instant's notice. I don't have to hunt anymore, but I still like to pounce. Having things to stalk and pounce on makes me happy and keeps me healthy and active."



Cats also like toys that have a wand or stick with a toy dangling from the end of a string. They make her feel like she's using her natural quickness and agility to catch something, and it lets her interact with you too. Just let the toy dangle in front her, then slowly drag it

away. Sometimes she can get carried away attacking it, so please be sure she can't bite or chew off a piece that she could choke on.

Balls are another great item to use; they provide the cat with chase and capture. Cats are very good at swatting balls. Things that move on their own also fascinate them, so balls (like ping pong balls) and furry little mice toys that move are great. They also like toys they can catch, pick up and toss in the air. You can also fill balls with food or treats for your cat to play with; this allows your cat to feel like she can have a hunting and stalking session, and catch her own meal.

There is no set number of toys your cat needs, but variety is key to keep her from getting bored with the toys. It often works best to have a batch of toys that can be rotated a few at a time to keep your cat interested. You can rotate them in different sequences to make the old toys seem new and exciting. Without this, your cat will just get bored, sleep twenty-three hours a day, and maybe gain weight, or maybe carve out some pattern in your furniture. Your cat might love a certain toy so much that they start sleeping next to it. When this occurs, they are telling you they'd like to keep it, and not have it included in the toy rotation.

Simple things often make great toys, like crumpled up paper balls, the plastic rings off of milk jugs, the center rolls from toilet paper, cotton-tipped swabs, paper towels, lots of things. You can even stuff old cotton socks with cotton balls and a little catnip, then tie a knot in the end. Cats need an assortment of toys they can roll, pounce on, capture and sink their teeth

into, carry and chase. **As long as it is safe for your cat**, then she may use it.

Also because of their hunting heritage, cats like visual stimulation. If they don't have (or can't get to) a window to look out of, you could buy or make a videotape from a nature show that has live action. They especially like to watch birds, fish, rodents and insects. These videos are great once in awhile when you can't be around to play with them.



Identifying your cat's toy (prey) preferences

Most cats prefer to hunt specific creatures. For example, some cats prefer to chase mice, while others may prefer to catch birds or bugs. Identifying your cat's "prey preference" allows you to buy or make toys that your cat will be more likely to play with rather than ignore. You can identify your cat's prey preference by paying close attention to the way he/she reacts to toys with specific qualities:

1. Find a number of toys or objects that resemble birds. Examples include feathers, stuffed toys covered in feathers, objects suspended in air, and toys making chirping noises.
2. Entice your cat to play by making each object move and fly through the air. Does your cat follow the object? Does he follow all of the objects or ignore most of them? Take note.
3. Next, put those objects out of kitty's sight, and try objects resembling mice, such as fur, stuffed animals, furry mice, and balls. How does your cat react when you make each of these objects move? Does kitty want to chase it? Or is he waiting for you to bring the feathers back out?
4. Try both "bird toys" and "mouse toys" at the same time by alternating them about every 20 seconds. Which does kitty prefer? Does he prefer some of each kind? Maybe he prefers both birds and mice!
5. Finally, put all of these toys away, and try toys resembling bugs. You can try a laser toy, a string with a knot on the end, and some dry food or treats tossed across the floor. How does your cat react? Try to alternate with "bird toys" and "mouse toys" to see which prey is best.
6. If your cat seems to enjoy feathers and/or objects in the air, choose toys resembling birds. If your cat prefers furry toys and/or toys moving on the ground, choose objects resembling mice. If your cat likes tiny objects with lots of movement, choose toys resembling bugs.
7. Be creative! Once you know what types of creatures your cat would like to hunt, think of the qualities those creatures possess and find toys with the same qualities.
8. Think like a cat! When you look for potential toys for your cat, imagine what kind of animal it might resemble. After all, a ball of paper is not just a ball of paper... it's lunch!

