



# Litter Box Training for Your Kitty



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**By keeping a few things in mind, your kitty will be using his or her litter box in no time.**

Using a litter box is an innate behavior for cats. Cats or kittens already know that they want to bury their excrement; they just happen to be a little finicky about where to do it.

Kittens start at a very early age to explore and dig in loose, soft materials such as dirt or litter. This early exploration will lead the kitten to eliminate in these materials. Where your cat or kitten decides to eliminate may be affected by their past experiences. If your cat is not using her litter box, it is up to you to discover the reason and then provide an acceptable place to go.

## **A box to call their own**

The type of box needed may vary from cat to cat. A kitten will require a low box to easily enter. The size of the box should increase as the cat grows. Covered boxes may be the answer for timid cats who desire more privacy, but covered boxes are not always a good choice for bigger cats that need more room. Also, covered boxes can trap odor, which may cause a cat to find another place to eliminate.

In a multi-cat household, a good rule of thumb is to provide as many boxes as there are cats in the home, plus one. Cats often use each box available, but may refuse to use one in which another cat has recently soiled. Sometimes one cat will ambush another cat as he goes to the litter box, and this could put that cat off the box for good.

Feces should be scooped out of litter boxes daily. The number of times the litter should be completely changed depends on the number of cats and the number of boxes. Twice a week is a good guideline. Cats will often stop using a box if they feel it is not clean.

Use soap and water to clean the box. Strong smelling chemicals or cleaning products may cause your cat to avoid the box.

## **Choosing the right litter**

If your cat tends to use your potted plants, try mixing potting soil with your regular litter to see if that is preferred. Once you have found a litter your cat likes, do not change the type or brand.

Most types of litter were designed with the owner in mind and not the cat. Cats are often put off by the odor of scented or deodorant litters or air fresheners placed by their litter. A thin layer of baking soda can be placed on the bottom of the box to help absorb odors without repelling the cat. The best way to keep odors down is to keep the box clean.



## How a cat sees the litter box

The depth of the litter should be no higher than two inches. Most cats do not enjoy that sinking feeling as they step into their box. Piling more and more litter into the box should not be used as a way to avoid cleaning; in fact, it will probably cause your cat to search elsewhere for a place to eliminate.

## Litter box locations

The box should be kept in a quiet, private, yet convenient location. Bathrooms and laundry rooms are agreeable if there isn't a lot of foot traffic. You may also want to place a throw rug under the box. Some cats like to scratch the surface around the litter box, and it will help cut down on the tracking of litter. Also, if you choose the laundry room, remember the noise of the washer and dryer may scare off some cats, and you may need to change locations.

## Accidents happen

If your cat stops using the litter box it could be a serious medical problem or just an accident. If your cat is determined healthy by your vet, the cause may be behavioral. Don't punish the cat for accidents because it won't do any good. If you are

unable to determine the reason for the change, contact an animal behavior professional who is knowledgeable about and is experienced in working with cats.

## Top 10 reasons cats quit using the litter box

- Medical problems
- Poor location
- Unclean box or box odor
- Litter choice
- Box size
- Privacy issues
- Too few boxes
- Moving the box location
- Being scared away from the box by a more aggressive cat

## Persistence makes perfect

It may seem difficult at first, but just remember that using a litter box is something your kitty wants to do. If you can keep these simple things in mind and be patient, your kitty will be using his litter box in no time. 🐾