

Cat 101

Litter Box Training for Your Kitty

With our tips, your kitty will be using his or her litter box in no time.

Using a litter box is a natural behavior for cats. Cats and kittens already know they want to bury their excrement; they just can be finicky about where to do it.

At a very early age, kittens start 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.

A box to call their own

The type of box needed may vary from cat to cat and can be influenced by their past experiences. A kitten requires a low box to easily enter.

Cat tip

The size of the box should increase as the cat grows.

To cover or not to cover?

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. Covered boxes can trap odor, which may cause a cat to find another place to eliminate.

My cat is not alone

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 additional. 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.



To scoop or not to scoop?

Feces should be scooped out of 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 mild 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 you find your cat using your potted plants, try mixing potting soil with your regular litter to see if that is preferred.

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 of air fresheners placed nearby. 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.

Litter tip

Once you have found a litter your cat likes, do not change the type or brand.

How do you know how much litter is right?

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

Why are there still accidents?

If your cat stops using the litter box, it could be a medical problem or just an accident. Check with your veterinarian to rule out any health issues. If your vet determined your cat is healthy, the cause may be behavioral.

Litter box locations

The box should be kept in a quiet, private, low traffic, yet convenient location. Bathrooms and laundry rooms work if noise and visitors to the area are at a minimum. Some cats like to scratch the surface around the litter box. A throw rug can help cut down on the tracking of litter.

9 Reasons

cats quit using the litter box

- 1 Medical problems
- 2 Poor location
- 3 Unclean box or box odor
- 4 Changing the type of litter
- 5 Box size
- 6 Privacy issues
- 7 Too few boxes
- 8 Moving the box location
- 9 Being scared away from the box by a more aggressive cat

Don't punish the cat for accidents as it will have no impact on the condition. If you are unable to determine the reason for the change, contact an animal behavior professional who is knowledgeable and experienced in working with cats.