

INDOOR CATS

Tips and Tricks to
Provide an Exciting
Life for Your Feline
Companion



Increasingly, cats are being kept indoors with access to the outdoors often being restricted to balconies or terraces. It is difficult to fulfil many of their needs in such conditions. If you want your indoor cat to live a happy and exciting life, you will need to create a suitable environment.



PREPARATION

Consider the following points before bringing cats into your home:

- Cats can live for over 20 years, so your responsibility may last a long time!
- Owning a cat is not cheap. In addition to regular food expenses, there are costs for spaying/neutering, vaccinations, and other medical care. You should budget for these.
- Owning a cat requires your time! In an indoor environment, you should provide active and passive entertainment programmes for your furry friend. This means you should be prepared to invest a significant amount of time every day.
- Cats are not for clean freaks! Cat hair and litter will get almost everywhere in an apartment.
- Ensure well in advance that you have arrangements in place for when you're away. Ideally, cats should be allowed to stay in their familiar environment, with cat sitters coming in to look after the cats.

NUMBER OF CATS



We do not recommend keeping a single cat on its own in an apartment. It is a common misconception that cats are solitary animals – they are actually highly sociable creatures. As indoor cats cannot socialise with other cats outdoors, they will need at least one, preferably two or more, feline friends from the beginning. A human simply cannot be an adequate substitute for a feline companion. Try to adopt siblings from the same litter or consider cats in the shelter that have already formed a bond. Farm kittens are rarely suitable for apartment living as they will already have got a taste for the 'big wide world' as babies and are likely to struggle adjusting to a limited living space. For cats with special needs, however, the only option, apart from a specialist shelter for cats with disabilities, is indoor living. So, why not provide a loving home for older, disabled, or FeIV/FIV positive cats?



Required space

The smaller your apartment, the more variety you should provide for your cats. Keep doors open at all times to allow the cats to regularly inspect their entire territory. Let them make use of the third dimension by providing access to shelves, tables, wall units, cabinets, shelves, and cat trees. Everything should be accessible and provide sleeping or observation opportunities. It's best to remove fragile items as a preventive measure. Cats also love elevated spots near windows with interesting views of the outside world. You can also provide 'walkable walls' by using shelves and tunnels, significantly expanding the cat's living space and making it more exciting.



Cats Love a Mess!

Minimalist, sterile furnishings may appeal to humans – but not to cats. They love to have plenty of climbing, jumping, and hiding opportunities throughout the apartment. Play tunnels and closed cardboard boxes with a cat-sized 'cave' entrance and filled with rustling paper, leaves, or hay provide irresistible exploration and hide-and-seek opportunities. Cut the handles off a paper bag to provide a popular hiding spot – for a limited time at least. Boxes and bags tend to lose their appeal after a few days and should be replaced with new hiding spots. You can also regularly move them between different rooms.



Balcony

Free access to a well designed balcony or terrace completes the ideal living space for your indoor cats. Balconies and terraces must be securely enclosed. Note: The safety net should not have large mesh (3x3cm max.) to prevent accidental self-strangulation. Cats will also appreciate the presence of various plants. Don't forget to consider using the walls here too.



Sleep and Rest Periods

You should provide your cats with several rest places where they can sleep undisturbed. Cats especially enjoy relaxing on elevated, warm, quiet, and sheltered beds or in caves.



Litter Trays

In nature, cats never leave faeces and urine in the same place. It is therefore important to have sufficient litter trays. You should provide at least an extra litter tray per number of cats you have (i.e. 2 cats = at least 3 litter trays). Placement is crucial: Don't place the litter trays next to each other and make sure the cat has a good overview and is able to use the litter tray undisturbed. A litter tray should never be placed next to the eating or drinking area. If there are multiple floors in the apartment, make sure there is at least one litter box on each floor.



In terms of the ideal size of litter trays, the rule is: the bigger, the better. They should also be solid and easy to clean. Some cats don't like covered litter trays at all, so it is best to choose open trays that are easy to clean. If you opt for a covered litter tray, make sure you remove the swing door, if it has one. The litter trays should be cleaned several times a day, and the litter should be completely replaced once a week.

Keep in mind, for your own benefit, that cats are very clean animals. Wrong placement, insufficient or dirty litter trays can mean that the cats will use other places as their toilet.

Scratching Opportunities

Scratching is part of every cat's daily ritual. Above all, it serves as a scent signal and creates social security. A cat expresses its personality through scratching, and it is also a sign of happiness, so it is important that you provide various opportunities for this. To stop them from scratching where they shouldn't, for example your furniture, you should provide them with as many suitable alternatives as possible. A sturdy scratching post (the taller, the better), wall-mounted scratching boards, non-slip carpets, sisal mats and similar aids will invite the cat to sharpen its claws and leave its scent marks. Don't replace scratching posts or boards too often – it is precisely when they look tattered and worn that they become more interesting for cats.

Caution: Punishing a cat for scratching in the 'wrong' place is not effective. It will only make your cat insecure and potentially cause further unwanted behaviour.



NUTRITION

Feeding

In nature, cats feed on small animals and eat several small meals throughout the day, usually after extensive hunting sessions. Domestic cats are often fed twice a day, or they have food available to them at all times. To stop your cats from becoming bored or overweight, use a part of their daily food allowance to make them 'earn' it throughout the day and night. There are numerous tools available in pet stores for this purpose, such as food towers, treat balls, puzzle boards, etc. This way you will provide your cats with both mental stimulation and physical activity.

If you are skilled in DIY or craftsmanship, you can easily make your own 'food toy' out of toilet paper rolls, laundry detergent balls, empty PET bottles, small cardboard boxes, etc. There are numerous instructions and ideas on the internet or in specialised literature. You can also hide treats or dry food around the house, but remember to account for these calories in the daily food allowance.



Another way to make your cats work for their food and keep them active is by hiding treats inside a rolled-up towel or placing them under a cup in front of your cats. Can they get to the coveted piece? You can gradually increase the level of difficulty. This is also an excellent mental workout for cats to keep them mentally sharp.

The (two) main meals, which should be given at set times, will provide additional excitement and variety in the indoor cats' daily routines. This regularity also helps you quickly spot any behavioural changes that could be signs of illness.

Water

Cats obtain some of their fluid intake from their food. The amount of water our pets need depends on the type of food (wet food provides water, while dry food extracts water from the body during digestion), the level of activity, and the ambient temperature. The average water requirement (including water obtained from food) is approximately 60ml per kilogram of body weight.

In nature, cats they use water sources such as small streams, ponds, or puddles – they don't have a water bowl right next to their prey. For this reason, the water bowl should not be placed next to the food bowl. Provide water for your cats in multiple locations throughout the house. The larger the bowl, the more interesting it is for the cats. Flowing water, such as a drinking fountain, is particularly popular among cats.

Not all cats like fresh tap water. Some cats drink more when offered mineral water. Others prefer water that has been left standing for two or three days. Some cats enjoy water with a few pebbles placed in the bowl. To find out what your cats prefer, you could set up different water stations over several days and observe which ones your furry friends prefer. All water stations should be regularly cleaned to prevent bacteria.

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PLAYING AND HAVING FUN

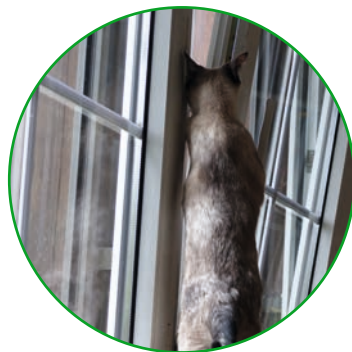


In nature, cats spend up to eleven hours engaged in hunting prey, leaping for prey more than 150 times (with only a small fraction of those leaps being successful). Merely providing food to our indoor cats twice a day does not fulfil their needs. The often-heard statement ‘my cats sleep all day’ almost always indicates that the cats are under-stimulated and bored, and they are forced to compensate for this lack of stimulation with sleep. What else should cats do in a structureless and boring environment with no challenges?

If this happens, you need to find things to excite your cats. Simply providing a cat-friendly environment does not mean that you are released from playing with your cats on a daily basis. You can play various hunting games using different toys (not just specialised cat toys – simple objects like ping-pong balls, corks, streamers, or wrapping paper work very well too). Make sure that the toys cannot be swallowed by your furry friends to avoid intestinal blockage, which can be fatal if not immediately treated. Clicker training or other intensive activities also contribute to their well-being.

For example, some cats enjoy being rocked in a laundry basket or being dragged through the apartment on a carpet or blanket. Incorporate at least two playtime sessions of 20 to 30 minutes each into your daily routine, for example in the morning and evening. Slowly wind down playtime at the end to prevent frustration caused by a sudden end to the play.

You should also stimulate the cats’ sense of smell by bringing home ‘scented gifts’ from time to time. No, not perfume, but for example a handful of grass with roots from a meadow which you can then plant in a flowerpot. Collect leaves, pinecones, small branches, hay, stones, or other surprises from nature and place them in a tub, a pillowcase, or anything similar. Cats ‘read’ countless messages through their noses from such objects, similar to what you get out of the daily newspaper. Many cats love valerian and catnip; a cloth soaked with a few drops of valerian can quickly become an irresistible plaything. A secure (!) birdhouse or wild bee house on the terrace or balcony provides hours of observation and serves as a television programme for the cats.



DANGERS



Avoid accidents and eliminate hazards. **Tilted windows** can be a death trap for cats! So, either don't tilt the windows at all or secure them with protective grids (available in pet stores) or tightly rolled towels pressed into the window gaps. Remove **delicate objects** such as glass, decorations, and Christmas ornaments from places where the cats could knock them down, as this could cause cuts or injuries to their paws. **Hot stoves and cookers** (except induction cookers) can cause severe burns, so don't leave cats unsupervised while cooking and make sure that you don't leave the kitchen before placing a covered pot with cold water on the still-hot cooker. You can also deter particularly curious cats by using double-sided tape on the cooker – they won't be tempted to jump up a second time! Prevent poisoning by keeping **medications** (aspirin, for example, is lethal for cats), **laundry products**, **cleaning products**, and other **chemicals** out of your cats' reach. Be careful with **smaller items** such as paper clips, buttons, rubber bands, needles, strings, etc., as they can easily be swallowed. Ensure that you don't have any **plants that are toxic** to cats on your balcony/terrace and in your apartment. Cats tend to nibble on plants out of boredom, which can lead to chronic poisoning over time. **Toilets** and **bathtubs** can also become a danger. A curious cat can fall in and, in the worst case, drown because it cannot find a grip. **Washing machines** and **dryer drums** are popular sleeping spots. Always check them before using them! And make sure that you always verify that you haven't locked a cat inside a **closet** before you leave the house.

A cat's imagination when it comes to discovering sources of danger knows no bounds. The more bored cats are, the more likely they are to find something that could put them in a dangerous situation. Try to think like a cat when arranging and securing your apartment.



BEHAVIOUR

Attentive cat owners quickly notice when their pets display unusual behaviour. Some behavioural changes such as urinating or defecating outside the litter tray, urine marking, or aggression can be caused by physical illnesses, so the first step should always be to consult a veterinarian to rule out any physical causes. If the veterinarian finds no physical reasons, consider consulting a behaviour therapist. The longer unwanted behaviour persists, the more difficult it becomes to treat. Remember: Unwanted behaviour can be caused by boredom, especially in indoor cats. Punishing the cat will only frighten it and worsen the relationship between you and your furry companion. Engage with your cats, find out what they enjoy most, and spend a lot of time with them.

This guide is meant to serve as an overall initial orientation. It contains only the most important information for keeping indoor cats. You should be aware that keeping cats in an apartment will require a lot more time and effort than keeping outdoor cats. If you are not willing to spend intensive time with your cats daily (including active playtime, not just cuddling in front of the TV), it is better to forego cat ownership for the sake of the cat's well-being.



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