

What Indoor Cats Need to Be Happy

05 January 5, 2015 Dr. Debra Primovic - DVM



Cats are kept [indoors](#) for a number of reasons most relating to health and safety. The most common reasons include minimizing their exposure to [outdoor dangers](#), traumas, toxins and deadly exposure to [infections](#). Cats that are kept exclusively indoors live on average at least twice as long as outdoor cats.

Although the indoor environment may be safer, the indoor environment may not be interesting to a curious cat. It is important to create an environment that is [enriched](#), stimulating, and helps supplement what cats normally would get outside.

The following are some ideas and recommendations to help your indoor cat be its happiest!

1. Good litter, litter box, and [litter box care](#) – make sure you have an adequate number and size of litter boxes. You should have at least one box per cat PLUS one. They should be cleaned or scooped daily, litter changed monthly and boxes replaced twice a year. They should also be in a location where your cat feels safe using the box and away from high traffic areas and dogs. Good litter box hygiene is a must for cats! You should use the texture and type of litter that appeals to your cat.

Editors Pick: Large open clear box with high sides, no hood. Plastic storage boxes are a good choice. Our favorite choice for litter is a scoopable unscented litter. Here are more tips on shopping for [litter](#) or [litter boxes](#).

2. Good quality food – indoor cats need [good quality food](#) to stay healthy. Choose the best quality food that you can afford. Make sure the label indicates that it is “AFFCO” approved which reflects that they company incorporated the minimal levels of nutrients that should be included in a commercial food.

Editors Pick: Hill’s® Science Diet® is formulated to fit the needs of your kitten, adult, or senior cat.

3. Grow a little [cat grass](#) – most cats love cat grass. You can easily grow a small pot or planter and offer it periodically as a special treat.

Editors Pick: “Priscilla’s cat grass” is a good choice. In our experience, it grows really well and every seed is good quality. My cats love it!

4. Toys – cats love to [play](#) and making sure your cats have lots of toys that like helps to enrich their environment. Every cat has differences toy and play preferences. To learn more about your cats play preferences, [click here](#). At a

minimum, have some toys that roll, something with catnip and a toy on a string that can be moved to help stimulate your cat to pounce and play.

Editors Pick: Depends on the toy preference of your cat. Laser lights, feathery feline flyers and cat nip toys are favorites with many cats. To figure out which your cat may prefer, [click here](#).

5. Play time – cats should be given at least 10 minutes of attention each per day. This should include some playing time and some bonding time.

Editors Pick: [Learn more about how cats play!](#)

6. Scratching post – cats have a desire to scratch. Scratching allows them to sharpen their claws, get rid of dead claw pieces and mark territory. Even de-clawed cats like to go through the motions of scratching. You should make sure you have a good spot for your cat to scratch!

Editors Pick: the best scratching post is one your cat likes. Make sure it is tall enough for him or her to really stretch out. Keep it in a location where you cat likes to hang out and if you have multiple cats, consider having multiple posts. [Learn more tips on choosing a scratching post!](#)

7. Refuge – All cats need a refuge or place to get away and feel safe. Most “refuges” are boxes, beds or cat [carriers](#) in a place off the beaten path of the busy household. It should be a place where your cat can get away, feel safe and rest peacefully. This is especially important in busy households, households with dogs or multiple cats.

Editors Pick: Our favorite refuge is a spot on top of a cabinet or dresser that has a small soft area to rest. It should be tall enough for your cat to feel safe and watch the environment. Something as simple as a bed or blanket on a high table or dresser can be a great refuge. Remember, it should be in an area where the dog can not bother your cat and if you have multiple cats, you may need multiple refuges.

8. Visual stimulation – every cat should have the ability to look out the window and be [simulated by the environment](#). A screened in porch is ideal but if that is not possible a nice window seat or window bed is a wonderful addition. Cats love to watch nature and other out-door activities. If possible, consider placing a bird feeder within view of the window.

Editors Pick: Our favorite product for visual stimulation is a screened in porch. If you have a screened in porch, make sure you have some perches and refuges there where your cat can look down on the world. [Window bays](#) are great.

Perch – cats love to climb and a perch is a wonderful spot for your cat to feel safe, observe the environment and climb! Cat trees often have a nice perch and don't take up much room.

Editors Pick: A tall stable cat tree that has a high safe spot for cats to watch the environment. It is especially good in an active room or in a location where your cat can look out the window.

10.Love – cats love to be loved. Take time to let your kitty know you care.

For more information on how to choose the safe toys, [click here](#) or how to choose the right products for other environmental enrichment, [click here](#).