

Keeping Your Indoor Cat Happy!



While many cats enjoy being outside where they can hunt prey and explore their surroundings, it's a myth that going outside is a requirement for feline happiness. Playing regularly with a cat easily satisfies her stalking instinct, keeps her stimulated, and provides the exercise she needs to stay healthy and happy. In fact, the indoor cat who gets lots of attention and playtime is likely happier than the indoor-outdoor cat who is generally ignored by her human companions and on average will live a much longer, healthier life.

Here are some tips for safely confining your cat and making the great indoors an interesting, feline-friendly environment that meets all of your cat's needs.

- Start young. Kittens who are kept indoors usually show no desire to venture outside when they grow up.
- Install a perch near a sunny window. Padded perches can be purchased at many pet supply stores or through catalog retailers. Another option is an enclosure that sits in a window frame (much like an air-conditioning unit) and provides a secure space in which your kitty can “hang out.” Larger options are available that attach to the side of a house or ground-floor apartment patio. It's best to allow your cat access to these when someone is home to supervise.
- Buy a ready-made cat tree (often called a “Kitty Condo”), or make your own. A cat tree may stretch from floor to ceiling or be shorter. It provides great climbing opportunities and, in multi-cat households, creates more play and rest areas by taking advantage of vertical space.
- Play with your cat each day. Try different types of toys and recreate “fishing,” “chasing,” and “flying” prey. And leave “toys” such as paper bags and cardboard boxes out when you are not home.
- Give your cat a feline friend. They can provide one another with companionship and entertainment.
- Plant cat grass (available from pet supply stores) in indoor pots so your feline can graze.
- Clean the litter box regularly.

Even cats who are protected from roaming free should still be outfitted with a collar and visible identification. The occasional open window (make sure your windows have secure screens) or door offers a tempting opportunity for your cat to explore the outdoors. And your cat may become frightened and make her way outside if strangers come to work on your house or if there is a fire or similar disaster. The collar and visible ID could help someone get your pet back to you. If you do lose your cat, contact your local animal shelter immediately to file a report. Shelter workers can give you tips on getting your pet back home safely.



Top Ten Cat Care Essentials!



Although your cat may act independent and be litter-trained, he still counts on you to provide him with food, water, safe shelter, regular veterinary care, companionship, and more. Take care of these ten essentials and you'll be guaranteed to develop a rewarding relationship with your feline companion.

1. **Outfit your cat with a collar and ID tag that includes your name, address, and telephone number.** No matter how careful you are, there's a chance your companion may slip out the door. An ID tag greatly increases the chance that your cat will be returned home safely.
2. **Follow local cat registration laws.** Licensing, a registration and identification system administered by some local governments, protects both cats and people in the community.
3. **Keep your cat indoors.** Keeping your cat safely confined at all times is best for you, your pet and your community.
4. **Take your cat to the veterinarian for regular check-ups.** If you do not have a veterinarian, ask your local animal shelter or a pet-owning friend for a referral.
5. **Spay or neuter your pet.** This will keep her healthier and will reduce the problem of cat overpopulation.
6. **Give your cat a nutritionally balanced diet, including constant access to fresh water.** Ask your veterinarian for advice on what and how often to feed your pet.
7. **Train your cat to refrain from undesirable behaviors such as scratching furniture and jumping on countertops.** Contrary to popular belief, cats can be trained with a bit of patience, effort, and understanding on your part.
8. **Groom your cat often to keep her coat healthy, soft, and shiny.** Although it is especially important to brush long-haired cats to prevent their hair from matting, even short-haired felines need to be groomed to remove as much loose hair as possible. When cats groom themselves, they ingest a great deal of their hair, which often leads to hairballs.
9. **Set aside time to play with your cat.** While cats do not need the same level of exercise that dogs do, enjoying regular play sessions with your pet will provide him with the physical exercise and mental stimulation he needs, as well as strengthen the bond you share.
10. **Be loyal and patient with your cat.** Make sure the expectations you have of your companion are reasonable and remember that the vast majority of behavior problems can be solved. If you are struggling with your pet's behavior, contact the Animal Protection Society of Durham at (919) 560-0640.

