

CREATING A LITTER BOX YOUR CAT WILL LOVE

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Nothing ruins a beautiful relationship between owner and cat faster than the cat's failure to use its litter box. It is the number one complaint reported to vets and cat behaviorists, and why a significant number of cats are regularly thrown outside, surrendered to shelters, or euthanized.

It goes against the nature of a cat not to use the litter box, so it's important that you pay attention when it happens. The kitty is trying to let you know that something is wrong. Many people are surprised to learn that punishing a cat for its indiscretions will likely result in worsening of the behavior. Please seek help in learning the most effective ways of helping a cat change the unwanted behavior.

LITTER BOX BASICS:

- Most cats prefer a simple, large, uncovered box without a liner.
- When given a choice, the majority of cats will choose unscented, sandy (scoopable) litter that is soft underfoot.
- Litter should be about 2-3" deep in the box.
- Even though your cats will use all the boxes, you should have at least one for each cat in your home *plus one extra*.
- There should be a litter box on each floor of your house.
- The boxes should be scooped **NO LESS THAN ONCE A DAY**, preferably twice.
- Scoopable litter should be completely thrown out once a month, the box cleaned with a bleach solution and new litter provided.
- The litter box should be located in a quiet, easily accessible location to which dogs and children have limited access.

Before concluding that your cat has a behavior issue, you must consult a vet for a thorough examination. There could be underlying problems creating the behavior. Even if your cat doesn't have a bladder infection, a painful mouth or a pain elsewhere in the body could make him avoid the litter box.

Here is a list of some of the most commonly reported litter box issues and possible cures:

UNWANTED BEHAVIOR

Kitty stands in the box but misses its aim.

Kitty goes repeatedly to the box to urinate, but fails and ends up going on the floor.

Kitty urinates on bath mats and laundry left on the floor.

Kitty uses the bathtub for its potty.

Kitty urinates in the box but won't defecate in it, or vice versa.

Someone new is sleeping in your bed and kitty has urinated on it.

Kitty is urinating on the new baby's things.

Kitty urinates in suitcases of guests.

Kitty urinates against the doorframe.
(This is a marking behavior and has nothing

THINGS TO TRY

Larger box
Box with higher sides
Add a cover

Consult a veterinarian immediately.

Remove the temptation – put away clothing and put mats on side of tub or over shower door.

Put the litter box in the tub.
Keep 2" of water in the tub.

Add another box in another location. Many cats, esp. females, won't use the same box for both.

Have the new person assume feeding duties and interactive play with the cat to win her over. If kitty is used to sleeping with you and you've banished her from the bedroom, allow her back in when supervised. Don't forget your cat's needs and routine.

Make sure to include your cat when caring for or feeding the baby. Don't forget to play with your cat. Keep kitty out of baby's room when unsupervised.

Deny access to guest room.

Cover the view to outside with newspaper. Spray doorframe with

to do with using a litter box.)

Kitty sprays urine all over the house.

Kitty urinates on beds/furniture

Kitty urinates on carpet.

Kitty rejects the box after declawing surgery or treatment for a bladder infection.

Kitty doesn't cover its waste.

Feliway after cleaning with an enzymatic neutralizer for pet urine.

Consult a feline behaviorist.

Deny access to the rooms with these. Keep items covered with plastic. Get checked for urinary infection.

Clean the spot with a neutralizer and place dishes of food on each spot and/or cover with aluminum foil. Engage in interactive play in that area to change the association with it. Offer a litter box with carpet remnant or piece of cloth (for the short term) then slowly add small amounts of litter back into the box until the cat is using it regularly.

Cat associates the box with pain. Confine to one room, provide a brand new litter box and fill with *Cat Attract* litter. Be patient and loving.

The cat was not taught this by her mother so it is unlikely to change.

Please consult a cat behaviorist or your veterinarian for more help and be patient with your cat. Most behavior problems can be helped over time, so don't give up on your special feline companion!