

# KEEPING INDOOR CATS HAPPY

The main problem faced by the indoor cat is the lack of opportunities to display its wide range of normal behaviours. Considering the cat is a natural hunter, owners must be creative and provide toys and games to keep their cat mentally and physically stimulated. Areas to consider include:

- **Mimicking hunting opportunities**  
Cats are switched on to hunting mode by watching moving toys, so use feather toys, play mice and fishing toys to stimulate stalking and pouncing behaviour
- **Ensure you have enough resources**  
If you have two or more cats, make sure they don't have to share. Providing one litter tray per cat, plus one extra, and offering food and water in more than one quiet location can help avoid competition for resources
- **Make the environment interesting**  
Provide opportunities to climb, and use 3D space where cats can hide and play. For example, cardboard boxes with toys inside can be great fun
- **Make feeding more complex and challenging**  
Providing puzzle feeders can help with this
- **Provide cat grass**  
Cats like to nibble grass, so a tray of cat grass may reduce the desire to eat houseplants
- **The opportunity to scratch and climb**  
Scratching posts are essential and should be located in areas of the house frequented by cats and humans. Ensure they are stable and made of tough material
- **Cat-proof your home**  
Indoor hazards can be minimised by ensuring all flowers and houseplants are non-toxic and by keeping cleaning products locked away



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# CONCLUSION

Weighing up the pros and cons of the different lifestyle choices will help owners decide what is best for their cat. Whatever owners choose, there is agreement that if a cat has to stay indoors, then owners need to work hard to compensate for the stimulation the cat would have got outside.

It is better to opt for an indoor lifestyle for a cat right from the outset than to try to convert an outdoor cat into an indoor one. If confined, an outdoor cat is more likely to experience frustration related to denial of access to activities it used to relish.

While owners of indoor cats do not have to put up with the daily receipt of offerings from successful hunts, they must balance this against the indoor cat's lack of freedom to express its natural hunting behaviours. Providing alternative opportunities for the cat to practice these will help. Much will depend on the temperament of the individual cat and on the owner's circumstances. For further information on cat behaviour, health and welfare please visit [www.icatcare.org](http://www.icatcare.org).



The benefits of keeping a cat away from possible dangers outdoors have to be weighed up against the possible negative effects on the cat's behaviour

## Further Information

For more information on indoor cats see [www.icatcare.org/advice/satisfying-needs-indoor-cat](http://www.icatcare.org/advice/satisfying-needs-indoor-cat)

American Association of Feline Practitioners (AAFP) and International Society of Feline Medicine (ISFM) Feline Environmental Needs Guidelines <http://jfm.sagepub.com/content/15/3/219.full.pdf+html>

ISFM Guide to Feline Stress and Health <http://icatcare.org/product/isfm-guide-feline-stress-and-health>