

Enrichment Indoor Cats May Be Missing

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Mouse-shape toys, carpeted towers, wands with strings and feathers... Most cat owners are great at providing these common forms of enrichment. But, there are other ways to keep your indoor cat mentally and physically engaged. Here are a few.

Hunting

Think your indoor kitty can't hunt for her food? Think again. Cats are natural hunters, and having the opportunity to hunt, seek, and pounce is incredibly satisfying for them. Rather than using the typical food bowl, hide your cat's kibble in areas around your home each day. Or, you can purchase an [indoor hunting feeder similar to this](#).



Grooming

Grooming can provide many health benefits to your feline companion. From the interaction with you to helping eliminate shedding hair, brushing your cat comes with many perks! Find a gentle brush or comb that is suitable for your cat's fur length and spend a few minutes each day bonding while brushing her. By doing

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some of the work your cat would have done on her own, you are reducing the occurrence of hairballs and mats along with any associated discomfort. Groom in short spurts to avoid overstimulation.

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Scents

Catnip is a plant that can have energizing and calming effects on cats. When ingested, it can put your cat into a tranquil state. But, when your cat smells catnip, the opposite reaction occurs. With short-lasting effects, catnip can be a fun treat to get your cat in a playful mood.

Pheromones are used by cats as a form of communication. They are produced in glands throughout the body and in saliva and urine. When a cat scratches, she will deposit pheromones, so be sure to provide your cat with multiple scratching posts as an outlet for this type of feline communication. Do not overuse cleaning products in cat-specific areas, such as near bedding or scratching posts, because the presence of your cat's own pheromones can produce a sense of

security for her. Artificially created pheromones are also available for purchase. These can be beneficial when moving, traveling, or introducing new pets into the household.

Running water

Allowing water to continuously drip from your kitchen sink isn't the most economical or environmentally friendly option to provide your cat with access to running water. Fortunately, water fountains for pets are available. Electric pet fountains provide running, filtered water to satisfy your cat's thirst. The re-circulated water is fresher than water sitting in a bowl, and it encourages your cat to drink more. Many cats enjoy playfully batting at the flowing water, too.

Alternating toys

Indoor cats can begin to show favoritism to different toys depending on what is made available to them. When selecting items for your cat to use for play, be mindful of the materials, sounds, and textures of the toys your cat prefers. One cat may love batting around a noisy plastic ball, while another cat might only appreciate soft, quiet toys. Learn your cat's preference, and then stock up accordingly.

Over time, your cat may become bored with a toy she once loved. A beneficial tip to increase engagement with your cat is to alternate available toys. Leave two or three toys out at a time, giving your feline friend options without overwhelming her. After a week or two, swap out the current toys for different items. Continue to circulate the varying forms of enrichment, and occasionally incorporate new items to the mix.

Training

Training and teaching your cat to do tricks can be a fun and rewarding experience for all involved. Through the use of positive reinforcement, cats can be taught to do simple tasks, such as wave or sit. By rewarding our cats for doing the behavior we requested, mental stimulation and positive association are being established. Clicker training is a popular training method that incorporates a “click” sound after a task is completed. At the time of the click, a treat is given to the cat, creating a positive association between the objective, sound, and treat. Clicker training is a wonderful option for those who would like to venture into more complicated tricks. Some cat owners have gone so far as to use positive reinforcement to train their cats to use the toilet!

Training can also be used for behavior modification. Using positive reinforcement when encouraging your cat to get into her carrier can make trips to see us much easier. When your cat associates the carrier with a yummy treat instead of a terrifying car ride, it becomes a

more pleasant experience for everyone.

By [Sawgrass Veterinary Center](#) | December 6th, 2018 | [Uncategorized](#) | [0 Comments](#)

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