

Setting Up for Success: Litter Box Placement and Maintenance

Introduction: Why the Box Matters

- The litter box is more than just a toilet—it's a key part of your cat's emotional comfort and territory.
- Poor box setup is one of the most common causes of litter box avoidance.
- The result of a good setup: a happy, confident cat—and a much cleaner home.

The Basics of Litter Box Setup

The Golden Rule: One box per cat, plus one extra. This doesn't mean lining up multiple boxes in space. As far as your cats are concerned, 3 litter boxes lined up is one large box. Put some space between the boxes, ideally at least 6 feet or in different areas.

Use an appropriately sized box. Most commercial litterboxes are small for the average adult cat. Your cat's litterbox should ideally be about 1.5 times the size of your cat, which allows them to comfortably turn around in the box. For larger cats, some creativity may be needed. A clear tote box with a large entrance cut out can be a great substitute.

Type of Box:

- **Open boxes are generally best** —most cats dislike enclosed boxes because they trap unpleasant odors and limit visibility while they are most vulnerable.
- **Use low entry litter boxes.** You want to make using the litter box as easy and comfortable a process as possible. Especially for kittens, older or overweight cats a high or top entry adds extra effort.
- **Use caution with automatic boxes.** If you have a shy or timid kitty an automatic litter box may be scary to use if it goes off or makes noise while in use. If your cat is extra curious, they may cause themselves harm or accidentally break pieces.
- **Avoid litter box bags!** Litter bags can be convenient for us but can also be irritating to your cat and causing unnecessary stress in the box. Your cat's claws can get stuck (even briefly) in the plastic and the plastic creates static that your cat can feel.

Litter Box Placement

Location, Location, Location

- Place litter boxes in quiet, low-traffic areas.
- Avoid putting them near noisy appliances (like washing machines) or in cramped corners.
- Each floor of your home should have at least one litter box.

Accessibility

- Make sure kittens, seniors, or mobility-impaired cats can easily reach and enter the box. Low entry litter boxes with high sides can be a lifesaver!
- Avoid steep or high entrances.
- Litter mats can help prevent litter tracking but it's also a great way to provide some extra grip for cats going in or getting out of the box.

Privacy Without Isolation

- Cats appreciate some privacy and quiet but don't want to feel trapped.
- Avoid closets or dead-end rooms where another pet could ambush them.

Litter Type & Maintenance

Litter Preference

- Most cats prefer unscented, fine-grain litter.
- Abrupt changes in litter type or scent can cause refusal. If you must change litters, gradually mix in the new litter with the old.

Depth

- 2-3 inches deep is ideal; too shallow feels unsatisfying, too deep can be difficult for small or mobility-impaired cats.

Cleanliness

- Scoop at least once daily (twice if possible!).
- Only wash the box with mild soap and water—avoid strong disinfectants. Don't feel that you need to scrub down the box super often. If the box is being scooped regularly there shouldn't be much build up to scrub. Your cat will appreciate being able to keep their scent in the litter box area.

Avoid Scented Additives

- Cats' noses are more sensitive than ours; strong scents may drive them away

Do's	Don'ts
● Make sure the litter box is large enough and easily accessible to your cat ● Scoop the box at least daily ● Use an unscented litter ● Follow the golden rule to ensure enough boxes for everyone	● Avoid scented litters ● Don't put the litter box in a high traffic or noisy area ● Let waste build up in the litter box ● Rapidly change litter type